



**The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series**  
“Vision, Values, and Building a Great Work Culture”  
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Jerry Hurley

**Intro:** We believe Christian-led organizations should be the gold standard as the best, most-effective places to work in the world. Today we discover the DNA of the tremendous and sustainable growth of Life.Church. Listen in as I talk with Jerry Hurley about the keys to creating their healthy, even flourishing, culture.

**Female:** This is the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*. Here’s your host, president of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, Al Lopus.

**Al Lopus:** Welcome to another episode of the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*, where our goal is to equip and inspire you to build a flourishing workplace. We are here to help you eliminate workplace distrust, improve your employees’ experience, and grow your organization's impact. And before we meet our special guest today, I urge you to subscribe to this podcast. As a result, you’ll receive our action guide. It’s our gift to help you lead your organization’s culture to the next level. To subscribe, simply go to [bcwinstitute.org/podcast](http://bcwinstitute.org/podcast). Hit the Subscribe button, and receive our free action guide.

Also, if you could share this podcast with others, and rate it, it would really mean a lot to me. Thank you.

And now, let's meet today's special guest.

Jerry Hurley is pastor and team development leader at Life.Church in Edmond, Oklahoma. And since its founding in 1996, Life.Church has grown to encompass 34 locations in multiple states, welcoming thousands of people into a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jerry, it's really a pleasure to have you on the podcast. Welcome.

**Jerry Hurley:** Well, thank you very much, Al. It’s great to be here, and I’m looking forward to our time together in our conversation.

**Al:** You know, I love to hear stories about how people find themselves in church-leadership roles, especially after having marketplace jobs, and tell us a little bit about your role at Target before you started at Life.Church.

**Jerry:** Yeah, well, really, retail career, prior to coming to Life.Church, of about 17 or so years, the last seven or eight of those was with Target stores. And the last role that I had there was a district team leader for Oklahoma and West Texas. And so in there, who'd realize that that experience would actually be used in a church setting? But God knew exactly what He was doing, I guess, when He gave me that experience.

**Al:** Yeah. Isn't that amazing how that happens? And at Life.Church, your role is team development leader. And tell us a little bit about the breadth of your responsibilities and maybe even a favorite story of how God has worked through you and your role.

**Jerry:** My role at Life.Church is the team development leader. And operationally, I have got several areas. I lead the HR team and the HR functions in the organization. I lead the financial operations group. I lead the logistics group. On the ministry side, I lead LifeGroups and Missions, that effort; the NextGen ministries, which is birth through 18 years old. And then, also, training and development is another place that I lead.

**Al:** And I appreciate, especially as we talked last year, culture's really at the top of your mind, isn't it, when you think of your role?

**Jerry:** I think if you looked at one of the things—like, I just talked about the things that I do, but I think one of the contributions to the organization, kind of outside my role, is in the area of cultural development, team development, organizational development, those kinds of things is probably where I've probably had as much influence in the organization as anything. So yeah, those would be the input, for sure.

**Al:** Life.Church is certainly well known for placing the health of your staff culture as an important priority. Let's start off with why. Why place staff culture at such a high priority at Life.Church? What's the reason behind that?

**Jerry:** Well, culture really happens 24/7. I mean, culture is happening in every organization. Whether you're intentional about it or not, whether you're careful, whether you understand it, whether you recognize it, whether you're aware of it, that's really irrelevant. Culture is—and it's how things get done in the organization. It's how people feel about what they do.

And I also think that culture is very rarely is at static. In other words, culture is either getting more clear, stronger, more clearly identified; or it is getting weaker, it's deteriorating. I don't think there are many days that we can come in, do what we do, and go home, and say the culture didn't get better, or it didn't get worse. It's going to do one of those two things.

So it's something that we all have to keep our eyes on. Vision leaks, culture drifts. So it's really important, and it's something that we really should focus on all the time.

**Al:** I like that, “culture drifts.” And one way to keep culture from drifting, I know, is to have strong staff values. Could you summarize some of Life.Church’s values and how they’ve come to exist and even maybe how you use them to keep culture from drifting?

**Jerry:** We, actually, really define a lot of different things. We have values at Life.Church, and we have a couple of sets of values that inform a lot of how we do things and what we do and how we go about them. And there are two things. One would be core values, and everybody’s pretty familiar with core values. We, actually, call them aligning values. When we’re talking internally, on our staff team, we call them aligning values. And the thought behind the term is because when we bring people onto the team, we spend a little bit of time, or an appropriate amount of time, on team fit. In other words, on competency, I should say.

So once we determine, okay, does somebody generally actually have the ability to do the role that we’re asking them to? which, by the way, is generally the easiest thing to determine when you’re going to bring somebody onto your team, and it is one of the fewer reasons why somebody actually would step off the team. Competency, we rarely let somebody go or have somebody stay on the team because they’re not competent. That’s really not. And that’s what research would say, the same thing.

So we spend an appropriate amount of time on that, but then the rest of the process, which is probably 90 percent of the rest of the process when somebody’s coming onto the team, focuses on these values. And I’ll get back to aligning values as the thought is, if the same thing that the church is passionate about aligns with what the individual or the potential staff person is passionate about, if those two things are aligned, then we should be able to walk a long way down the road with those paths not diverging, right? It’s just going to be really easy for us to walk together for a long period of time. So that’s why we call them aligning values. And for us, it’s things like evangelism or our passion for the ministry, sacrifice, stewardship, generosity, integrity. Those are, what we call, aligning values.

And then the next set of values that we have is behavioral values, or if you look at some of Lencioni’s work, it would be permission-to-play values. In other words, to be on our team, there has to be certain attributes that a person demonstrates and is true of a person. And we call those sustaining attributes. And the thought there is that if you’re going to have the ability to sustain working on our team for the long period of time, these attributes should be true of you. Things like flexibility, resilience, work ethic, some of those kinds of things, a sense of humor. Those things should be true of you. If you’re going to sustain our team a long time and you don’t have those things, it’s going to be difficult for you to go the long haul because while Life.Church is an amazing place to work and it’s a fun place to work, it is not an easy place to work.

**Al:** Well, I love the differentiation: aligning values and sustaining attributes. That’s something for organizations to think about, for sure.

Let’s talk about one or two things that need to happen in the Life.Church staff culture that can only happen when your culture is healthy and flourishing. And I know you focus a lot on culture and a healthy culture. What are one or two things?

**Jerry:** I think one or two things that can only happen when the culture is healthy, I think I would start with efficiency. And let me just give you some sense. The average church, depending on what you would look at for staff members per attender, the average church is going to be somewhere between, depending on what search, 75 to 85 people, attenders per every staff. Life.Church as a whole right now is running at about 145 attenders per staff member. Now, that doesn't include our intern core, our core of, what we call, LXP. So that's just one of those things that a healthy culture, you can become more efficient, and that's part of the equation. And even in that are things like our YouVersion team that is included in that number, and all of the team that's outwardly focused with our network and open strategy. So, efficiency is one of those things.

And I think the other thing that is necessary or can really only be a byproduct of a healthy culture is trust. And then finally, innovation, which comes from—it's very difficult to have innovation if you don't have trust and if you don't have a healthy culture. It's just, people are never going to get the bandwidth, the emotional bandwidth, the physical bandwidth to actually innovate if the culture is not really healthy and there's a good, high sense of trust and the ability to think out loud and the ability to try a new idea or to push back against the status quo. And so I think those are just three things that come of the top my head that I really believe are very difficult to happen if your culture is not healthy.

**Al:** First of all, I love the idea to even use the word *efficiency*. I don't hear that much in the church world, so I'm going to just round numbers. You're 50 percent more efficient than the average church, as you say, with 77 or 80 attenders per staff person. So that's remarkable. And that's a return on investment on culture, for sure. Wow, I like that.

**Jerry:** And part of culture is it defines what you do, but it also defines what you don't do. And so part of that efficiency comes from a clear definition of, this is the scope of what this ministry is going to look like, the scope of what we're going to do, and everybody understands that. So you don't have mission creep. You don't have those things. It's very defined. And culture helps you define, so everybody knows, "Hey, this is what I'm supposed to do. This is what I'm not supposed to do." And it does make it easier. Especially the bigger you get and the further spread out you get, it's really important that people understand that.

**Al:** Yeah. I love it. Okay, efficiency, trust, and also innovation. That's great.

But even more specifically, as we continue on the conversation, how has having such a focus on culture facilitated the growth of Life.Church? I mean, certainly you're efficient, but in terms in numbers through the fulfillment of your mission to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ, how does that play in?

**Jerry:** Well, it's very difficult. In fact, I don't know that it's possible to have healthy, growing churches, healthy growing locations, if your staff is not healthy and vibrant. And so I don't know that we've ever seen a campus thrive where the team wasn't thriving. And so I think those two things are actually in our team—you know, healthy things grow, and then growing things change. And so I think that health is indicative of growth. And one of the places that we would look, if there was any part of our organization that we felt wasn't growing or we felt we couldn't find the appropriate team members for or whatever the case may be, if there was a sense that something wasn't working right, one of the

places we would look at is, okay, what is the staff health look like in that particular area, and how healthy is the culture within that particular team?

The other thing that's important when you talk about growth specifically is that there has to be a consistent culture throughout the organization. You can't have, for example, with 34 different locations, every location can't have their own culture, because then it just doesn't work. And so if I hear, "Well, that person won't work on my team," or "That person won't work on my campus," or whatever the case may be, then that's an indicator that, okay, there is something going on culturally there that's not like the others. So you have to have a set of common systems, common values, common language, common cause. All of those things actually play into this cohesive culture. No matter where you are in the organization, it is really important, particularly when you talk about growth, because growth involves people, involves more people. That means you have to have a development pipeline of people that are developing to move into new roles. And so if you don't have a consistent culture that kind of cuts across the breadth of the whole organization, it makes that really, really difficult to do.

**AI:** And you've got 34 different locations, at this point, growing every year. And you face, I'm sure, difficulty in maintaining this one-church culture. I know that you're talking about. So what are some other ways to make sure that there is a consistent, vibrant workplace culture across all of your locations?

**Jerry:** Right. And that does get back to—a lot of these things come back to actually having the right people on the team. And that's why it is so important that we have—I talked about when somebody comes in, we have two sets of values, these lenses that we look for a team. So the best way I could describe it is people will ask me sometimes, "How do you infuse Life.Church DNA into your team?" And generally that will come from someone that has come to visit Life.Church, maybe from an outside organization or another church or whatever, and they will interact with a cross-section of our team, and they'll come and say, "Man, how is it that there's such a consistent culture throughout your team? How do you do that?" And the answer surprises some people. I say, "I don't actually infuse Life.Church DNA into our team. I bring people onto the team that have Life.Church DNA already in them," because I think as the developer, we would like to believe that we can actually put more into people than we actually can. And the truth of the matter is it's generally all we can do to draw out of people what is already in them. So that's why the process, having a consistent process and a consistent methodology, where we bring people onto our team, no matter what position, whether it's at a campus or our central support team or our creative team or any of those things, we use the same process, so when people come onto the team, they already are predisposed to have the same values that we do and the same kind of attributes in how they approach their work and those different kinds of things. Now, they're all different. They have different backgrounds, and they come from different places. But this is particularly true.

And the other thing that I think is an important thing to talk about, particularly when it comes to generations, there is a lot of—sometimes there's angst with different generations. And it's been that way from the beginning of time. The next generation's never as good as the last one, from their perspective, which is not ever true. But what that does is it really helps us, because I'm not looking—I want to take, like, Gen Xers or our Millennials or Gen Z. I'm looking for a cross-section of that generation that fits our team, and so then that kind of really helps us a lot with an intergenerational

workforce. I think we have four generations working on our team right now, and about 80 percent of our team is Millennial or Gen Z. So that is—and I think this really does help with bringing people onto the team from whatever generation—it doesn't matter—because I'm looking for a specific set of values and attributes to be present in those people.

And then the other thing that we try to do is when we bring people onto the team, we really try to do a really good job of helping them understand what it means to be part of our team. And there's an interesting—there's a scripture that I looked at in a new way the other day. I was reading in Genesis, and I was reading the creation story. And of course, we know that God created everything, and on the sixth day, He created Adam. And then he gave Adam a specific set of instructions, and then Adam did some more work. And then God says, “Hey, it's really not good for you to be alone, so I'm going to create Eve.” And so then the next thing that you read is they're in the garden, and the snake is there, and you have the fall and all those different kinds of things.

And the truth of the matter is, as Eve did take a bite of the fruit, but the instruction was actually given to Adam. The instruction really wasn't given to Eve. And it was Adam's responsibility to help Eve understand what happened before she got there. And that helped me just understand our responsibility as we develop onboarding processes, as we bring new team members onto our team, it's our responsibility to help new team members understand what happened before they got there. What you do, what you don't do, what's important to us, why we exist, what we're all about. And if our onboarding processes don't answer that question, then I think we're missing the boat. And then we can't really get too upset if somebody does something that's against kind of our values, because we never really let them know what happened and why we do the things that we do. So I've never looked at that scripture in that way before until recently. So I think that's a part of it.

And then another thing that I think is important is that we really do challenge our team members at the individual level. And just as Paul says, if you want to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ, follow my example. And so what we encourage our team to do and kind of charge them to do, so to speak, is we invite all of our team and say, look, it's up to each one of us. If everybody on this team, all 750 of us right now, if every one of us will take that mindset and say, “Hey, new person on the team, if you want to understand what it means to be part of this team and you understand what that looks like, follow my example.” And if every team member will own that and accept that challenge, then what that does to culture is it makes it very easy for that culture to propagate, no matter how far spread out the campuses are, because at each location, there are those people that say, “Hey, I understand what it means to be part of this team. And if you want to know what that looks like, just follow my example.”

**AI:** Right. And that's clearly one of the well-known ways of building culture is, and the way people talk about it is, they see what leaders are doing, and they follow that. That's right. Yeah. I love it. Find people with your DNA to start with, onboard them. And I don't know. I'm kind of waiting, Jerry, for the article on the reason of the fall was because Adam didn't onboard Eve.

**Jerry:** Well, in a way, that's the way I read the story. I'm sure there should be more to it than that, but that's the way I read the story.

**Al:** I like it. I like it.

I trust you're enjoying our podcast. We'll be right back after this brief word about a valuable tool that can pinpoint the true, measurable health of your culture.

**Male:** What if you could get an upper hand on unwanted turnover, relationship conflicts, struggling morale, and unproductive staff, and, at the same time, increase the effectiveness and impact of your organization? You can with the Best Christian Workplaces Employee Engagement Survey. This popular, proven resource pinpoints the true health of your workplace culture and ways to improve it.

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**Al:** All right. Now, let's hear more from today's guest.

One of the things, Jerry, I really find remarkable about Life.Church is the longevity of your leadership team. And we work with a lot of churches, and we see a lot of leadership teams that just are constantly turning. But at Life.Church, you've got this consistency of your top leadership and even the structure. So from your perspective, what are the long-term advantages of having consistency at the top? And, again, you've seen tremendous outcomes. Give us a story of how God has used the lasting leader to inspire, equip, even bless the colleagues at Life.Church.

**Jerry:** That is a great question. I know it is a significant piece, and we have had the blessing of being—our directional leadership team, I think the newest part of our directional leadership, we've been together for 18 years. There are three of us who've been together for over 20. And there is something about a shared knowledge, a passion, trust that is able to build over the course of time. There is a—I have to talk about Craig in this way, because Craig is obviously a significant leader in his own right. But he is an extremely loyal leader. So loyalty works both ways with Craig. I mean, obviously he expects loyalty from us, but he also extends loyalty to us, which is really a special thing. And he's also one that, clearly very capable in his own right as a leader, has empowered those of us around him to lead and to lead with a lot of breadth. And then, so that makes it easy for us to do the same and empower the people that we lead, again with a lot of breadth, because he models that so well.

But just the consistency. You know, when you talk about culture, part of building a culture is consistency. And what can get in our way is chasing after the latest thing that's coming up. What we do when we do that is we just don't ever build fluency. We never build a vocabulary. We never build a language and process. And so I would say it's probably better to take a few tools that you really believe in and stick with them over the course of the long haul. And I think they may not even have to be the best tools, but I think if you stick with it, then it will work. And I think similarly, I don't know that we're the best tools, but Craig has stuck with us for the long haul. So I'm sure there's better tools out there. So there's something that comes from that, though, and there's some consistency there.

And we haven't not just had the directional leadership level, but I look at the last eight years of our highest level of leadership, even beyond the directional level. We've lost only two people. One of them retired, and one left to pursue an interest. So there is a lot of continuity in our team. And that's actually part of how we build the culture and what we reward and what we celebrate. When we bring somebody onto this team, from my perspective, from our perspective, we want that to be a long-term relationship. I want somebody—when we bring one on the team, I talk about, I can't wait for you at your—when we celebrate your 10-year anniversary at this church, and you walk across the stage and our team honors you for being here 10 years, that's what I want." And one of the only things that we actually celebrate at Life.Church is tenure, and that's one of the things that we do every year. It's this big event that we have is we honor and celebrate our team that have been with us for a long time. And what's great about that is the team honors those people. It's not with a golf clap, and it is not—it is with true honor for their work on our team for a long time. And so it's just all of those things all work together. And it helps us have a really high degree of—and an increasing number of people that have been with us for a long time, that really does help us leverage that shared knowledge and capacity and those different kinds of things. And the truth of the matter is, I know most, if not all, of our significant leaders have been pursued by other organizations, with offers of a lot more than they could make here. For whatever reason, they don't go there. So that's a good thing, again, about what culture can do for you.

**AI:** That's the beauty of a strong culture, isn't it. People will stick with you even if they have an opportunity someplace else. Yeah. I love that. Shared knowledge, passion, loyalty, consistency, all of that matters.

I'm curious. Jerry, you mentioned celebrating people's tenure. Is there an annual event that you do that? How do you do that?

**Jerry:** Every year in October, we bring all of our team and their spouses together for—we call it a family reunion. It's three days long, and it is like a conference for our team. And it's just where we use that time to reinforce culture, to build relationships, to have some fun along the way, celebrate what God has done. And one of the things that we celebrate there is—and that's when we do it. We typically will celebrate three, five, 10, 15, 20, 25. So we're not yet 25 years old, so next year will be our first 25-year celebration, where we'll honor Craig for his 25 years at Life.Church. And that's coming up in the next year.

**AI:** A family reunion every year, three days. Yeah. And not only staff but their spouses. Yeah.

**Jerry:** Staff and spouses. And we've put a lot of time and effort and energy into it. I think everybody looks forward to it. And it's really important to—again, one, it's important particularly for our spouses to feel valuable, and we really work hard to include them culturally as much as we can. So, for example, anytime a person is brought onto the team, we never interview somebody that we don't have their spouse with them. For any role at any time at Life.Church, the spouse is going to be interviewed at the same time with the person—now, not necessarily interviewed, but as part of that process—because we want the spouse to know that they're included. We want them to know they're important to us. We want them to be able to sit into the same conversations and understand why we came to the conclusions that we did.

And then, also, we try to include them in as much of the development conversations as we can. And we extend some of our development tools that we use for our team, we extend to the spouses. We will typically pay for that. And that way, what that does is someone can then begin to speak—an organization builds a certain language around how it develops people and how people grow and all those different kinds of things. And so we want for there to be able for our team members to go home and their spouses can have the same understanding of the language that they're speaking and how they're growing and developing so there can actually be developing relationships at home around some of those same tools that we use. And we think that that's important and it's worth investing in. And our spouses genuinely do, I think, appreciate the investment in them. And it lets them know—because in ministry, Christian work can be difficult, and it can be sometimes the most difficult for spouses because sometimes they're close enough to be wounded, but they're not always close enough to take advantage of all the ways that you can heal. And so it's just important that we keep our staff's spouses as close as we possibly can to the wonderful things that are happening, as well as some of the challenges that happen.

**AI:** I love that focus on building—essentially, you're building marriages, to have spouses closer and all of that.

Jerry, creating a leadership pipeline is a big topic in growing organizations. And for several years, you've added a number of campuses every year, creating a need for talents in those key jobs. Give us a high-level description of how you develop leaders to plug into your open leadership jobs as you grow.

**Jerry:** Right. So, first thing I think it's important—I don't think a development program is enough. I truly believe that you have to have a leadership and development culture. I think it has to be part of the overall economy of just being here. The environment, I think, growth has to be a part of that, no matter where you are, no matter what role you're in. And I do believe that most growth happens as a byproduct of somebody's day-in, day-out work in their role. That's where most growth happens, and we have to recognize that that's the case.

For us, the most pressing need, obviously, is leadership at the campus level. And so we have, over the last several years, intentionally invested in our leadership pipeline, which is important. But that is an investment. And I don't know the exact number—we're going to actually figure that out—but it's, I'm guessing, somewhere in the \$1 million to \$2 million a year that we invest simply in people on the team, solely in a developing role. Operationally, we don't need them necessarily. I mean, obviously, they're valuable operationally, but the reason they're there is because we know we have opportunity for those people, and we need them.

The other thing that's an important part of the pipeline, particularly when you talk about campuses, or churches, is because what we've done is we've—and this is a key concept that I think is important and what I'm going to talk about—we've identified some key competencies that are consistent in all of our leadership positions at the campus level, and, honestly, at even our central-support level. And so these core competencies are consistent, and they're portable from each different ministry. They exist in all of them. So what that allows us to do is, what I call, it allows us to have, what I call, developmental alignment. So all of the positions on our campuses, we have seven kind of core positions on our campuses, and all of those are developmentally aligned, so they all kind of flow into what we would

call the top position at a campus, which is our campus pastor. So what that allows then is a nice, clean flow of development all the way up to the campus pastor, which then allows us to have the ability to actually launch five or six or seven new locations in a given year. And because all of that development is aligned and we're working on those key competencies that cut across all the different specific types of ministries, that makes what we do—it adds a level of—it takes a level of complexity out and then also allows some efficiency to come into it.

And the things that we have recognized as those key competencies is they need to be able to inspire people to action. They, obviously, need to exemplify our values and the passion for the ministry. That's obvious. They need to be able to clearly identify and develop high-capacity leaders. And then they need to be able to operationally lead a team over time. "Lead team over time" effectively is the keyword there.

And so what we do is we develop those specific skill sets, and it doesn't matter whether I'm a youth pastor at church or whether I'm working our LifeKids team or whether I'm operations or host or worship, those skill sets are going to help me be successful.

Now, obviously, a worship pastor has to be able to sing.

**AI:** That's helpful.

**Jerry:** That's helpful. And a youth pastor needs to be able to connect with teenagers in a convincing, compelling way. But outside of those anomalies, most of those are—everybody has their own passion. But how we develop those is very similar.

**AI:** And those four, again, Jerry: inspire people to action, identify and develop high-potential talent, lead a team over time—there's one—

**Jerry:** And just exhibit our key values. You have to be a person that people can look at and say, "Okay, I'm going to follow that person. And if I do that, I know I'm going to end up in the right spot."

**AI:** You know, unemployment is at the lowest level now in 50 years, and we're all facing a tight labor market to fill open positions. And we've got a fair number as you grow. What are a couple of your strategies to help you address the tight labor market out there?

**Jerry:** I think that, one, I do think having a clear mission and a compelling mission for the organization, I do think that that helps us some. I do think that we have—I do believe a talented team attracts talented people. So I do think that that's part of it. And that's, again, part of—I think a lot of culture is having the right people on your team to start with. And I think if you don't have the right people on your team to start with, I don't know, no matter how good a leader you are, it's going to be difficult for you to build a culture that you want, with the wrong people in your team. And that can be—not that they're bad people or not that they're not great people. They just may not have the same set of values or exhibit the same set of attributes that you actually need in that particular context.

But in addition to that, we focus a good bit on retention and making sure—and we don't look at retention or turnover as a problem to solve necessarily. I think the approach that we would try to take is, I want to make the experience of working here so compelling that people would not think of leaving here. And I think that's the win. So I don't think I'm going to find us talking about how we're going to stop turnover. We're going say, "Okay, how can we make this place the best place in the world?" And I do think the Christian workplaces—and you and I have had this conversation, and I know we feel the same way about this—but I think the Christian workplace should be the standard bearer of all organizations for having cultures that are life giving and compelling, because I think that our missions are compelling, and I think that why we exist matters to people, and we should exhibit the love of Christ in everything that we do. So I think Christian workplaces should have a culture that is a standard bearer in being life giving and healthy and strong and vibrant. And I think if we do that, I think if we do that, I think turnover and retention and a tight labor market are not—there's always people looking to do something that's bigger than themselves.

**Al:** And they want to be part of it, that's for sure. Yeah. Well, preach it, brother. That's all I can say. We certainly feel that saying that Christian organizations, to use your term, should be the standard bearer.

You know, one of the things that Life.Church is really known for and that is developing resources and giving them away to other churches so that they can benefit from your experiences. And you've developed an online performance-management system that is available, that you make available, to other churches. And as I've worked with a number of churches, that's one of the things that are missing in many churches. How do you have good, first of all, goal setting, but also good development discussions? Tell us a little bit about your program.

**Jerry:** You know, we do. It's called Develop.Me, and it is something that's free on Open, and it's something that we've used for years. We built the tool because we've been doing performance evaluations for 24 years, and we realized that it is an important part of the overall performance culture. You talk about efficiency and some of those things, and I just believe where performance is measured, performance improves. I think that's a human condition. I think of why we fill football stadiums or basketball arenas or hockey arenas or whatever it is, because people, for whatever reason, they're built to compete in that way. If we didn't keep score, nobody would watch a professional football game. They just wouldn't do it. It just tells you something about human nature. And it's human nature. It's not—and I don't think that if you're in a Christian organization, somehow that part of our nature, it doesn't exist anymore, because it does. And it doesn't—an evaluation doesn't have to be a bad thing. It doesn't have to have a negative—because there's nothing spiritual about, in my opinion, about evaluation. But it is interesting how rare it is, honestly, that churches have meaningful systems in which they evaluate performance on their team; meaningful key performance measures that they even understand; key performance indicators, what they are. That just has always interested me, I guess.

And it is interesting. We do offer this tool, and it is free for any church that wants to use it, but by far, the church uses our tool more than other churches use our tool, just because there's not a culture in most churches where performance management is even part of the conversation. And it doesn't have to be, it does—it's not unspiritual, and it doesn't have to be a negative thing. I think my encouragement would be no matter where you are, in whatever Christian workplace you're in, I think I would find a way to incorporate some meaningful measurement or performance-management system, start

wherever you are, and then work and build from there. But I think you'll find that is actually a good thing for your team and organization over the long ball. And I think that our team looks forward to our annual review process. As much as you can say that that is true, I believe it is true because we also reward performance, and our performance-management system is a part of that overall process of helping people grow over time. And part of engagement with individuals is, do I have the sense that I'm going to be able to grow? And is somebody going to help me grow, is somebody going to encourage me to grow? And everybody wants to do that. Nobody wants to have this sense that I'm stuck, and I think this is just part of the overall process and system that helps people feel invested in, and they recognize, "Hey, I am growing, and you're recognizing that I'm growing." And I think that's an important part. And if we don't have that, I don't know how you get it.

**AI:** Yeah. We've seen over and over and over again how having good performance-management systems really improves the relationship between the manager and the employee, how it brings them closer together. It allows the manager to, as you say, to recognize the development of the individual; that if there's issues that are happening, they get addressed quickly; it gives the employees a sense that somebody cares about their development, cares about the opportunities to learning and growing. Yeah, there's just a lot of benefits to it. Absolutely.

Well, Jerry, this has just been a great conversation. Let's put a bow on our discussion. And we've talked a lot about a number of different things, from culture to leadership over time to performance management. What's one final thought or maybe even encouragement you'd like to leave with our listeners?

**Jerry:** Just the encouragement to—I think building a great culture is not complicated, but it takes a lot of intentionality, it takes a lot of hard work, and it takes a lot of resolve to actually do it well. And so I would just encourage people to, one, just take a good look at where your culture is, an honest look at, where really are we today? Where do we aspire to be? And then begin to work a plan on how can we make the culture more clear, or how can we make it more life giving, or how can we make it more vibrant, or how can we get people to own it at the individual level? Because at the end of the day, I can have whatever thoughts I have on the wall, whatever savings, whatever values. I can put them all over the place. But if people aren't actually living those values out day in and day out, where it actually matters, then it's not real. And so I think I would just encourage you to take that approach, or whoever might be listening, and take an honest, hard look at, where are we at culturally? Where do we really want to be? And then start to map out a plan to get there, and realize that it's going to take a bit of time. It's probably not complicated, but it probably will take a lot of intentionality and resolve and consistency for it to actually happen the way that you want it to. And I would just encourage people to do that because there is a huge return on that investment.

**AI:** And you've already talked about, like, a 50 percent productivity level above other organizations of a similar nature.

I love what you are saying. It's true with culture, isn't it, where performance is measured, performance is improved. And that's true with culture. If you can measure it, and it can be improved.

**Jerry:** Absolutely, 100 percent.

And the thing about having an engaged, really a fully engaged, workforce, where they wake up every day, and they're excited to come to work, and they're proud of the mission, they feel like they're known, they feel like they're proud of their team, they're proud of the work that they do, and they feel like they have an opportunity to grow, I think when somebody can wake up in the morning and be excited about coming into work, I believe we get, what I call, discretionary energy. And that is people will bring something to the role, to their job, every day that I may not even have the right to ask of them, but they're going to bring it willingly. And I think that's where the real payoff is because they're going to bring something I don't even have the right to ask, but they're going to bring it voluntarily and willingly, and they're going to feel great about it. And if you can get to that point, then I think that's a tremendous win, and it is a very powerful force in being able to do everything that God would have our organizations do.

**Al:** Jerry Hurley, pastor and team development leader at Life.Church based in Edmond, Oklahoma, well, thanks for sharing your wisdom, insights, and stories, and for investing yourself with your time today and in everyone who is listening and benefiting from all you've shared with us. Thanks, Jerry.

**Jerry:** Well, Al, thank you for having me on. I really enjoyed our conversation.

**Outro:** I want to thank you for joining us on the *Flourishing Culture Podcast* and for investing this time in your workplace culture today. If there's a specific insight, story, or action step you've enjoyed in these past few minutes, then please share it with others so they can benefit as well. If you've enjoyed this podcast, please be sure to show your support by rating, reviewing, and subscribing wherever you listen. You can also share this podcast with friends on social media.

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