

10 "Different Numbers" That Really Matter

Being loyal to a denomination, I'm no stranger to filling out forms and reporting stats. There are good reasons for this accountability, and we at 12Stone® Church are good team players in the Wesleyan Church. We report all numbers requested. I'm not saying it's fun, but it's a healthy practice.

We also keep a demographic spreadsheet of more numbers than you could imagine, from attendance to car counts. Again, these stats are kept for good and practical reasons. They help us in everything from decision-making to setting budgets. But I've been thinking about the things we care about, things that are more difficult if not near impossible to track, and started making a list.

I'm not sure how well we track all of them. Some we are good at, others we might need to improve. We do chase stories of life change, and that is a great practice, but I think there may be more to learn about strengthening a local church ministry by knowing some of these "other numbers."

How about you, how close of a pulse do you have to these ten in your church?

1. Serving the poor

Jesus speaks much about caring for those in need and those who are poor among us. A mark of a strong and healthy church is how it cares for people who may never attend and can do nothing for the church. Your church, and the one I serve, can't help everyone, but I believe there are certain ones in need that God intends for us to serve.

2. Visitors that don't look like you

When I travel to churches I'm amazed at how similar everyone looks. That's not bad, I fully understand natural connections, culture, and how people invite friends. All good. But recently I sat by a twenty-something with some cool looking tats, a full sleeve, piercings and carried a well worn bible. He worshipped with passion and was warm and genuine when we said hi. He looked the opposite of me, (and way cooler). I couldn't help but think that was a good thing and that God smiled.

3. Next Gen called to ministry

I will admit a personal passion and bias for this one. It seems to me that for nearly twenty years or more, we are losing ground on young "sharpies" being called to full time ministry nation wide. The church today is not attracting them enough for God to get a chance to capture their hearts. Yes, I know that God can call young leaders any way He wants, but He often uses the local church. The future of the church depends on the "best and brightest" being called and committed to vocational ministry. That's one of the reasons we are so fired-up about our two-year post college residency training program for ministry students.

4. Restored marriages

Divorce is rampant. I think the accepted norm is that 50% of all marriages will end in divorce. We can't settle for that as acceptable. Each time the ministry of your church helps to prevent a divorce that is a huge Kingdom win! That really matters! From pre-marital training, to biblical teaching, to workshops and referrals to professional therapists, all your efforts for strong marriages are worth it!

5. New Christians / Baptisms

This may be the most common number on this list, but I couldn't write this article and not include it. Salvation is at the core of the Great Commission. A redeemed life is at the very epicenter of what we do! Each baptism represents an amazing story. I'm confident you feel the same about reaching people, and I want to encourage you to stay fired-up about seeing people come to Christ.

6. Addictions broken and Fear conquered

This may not be as common as divorce in our culture, but it's more prevalent than I would have imagined, and far more so than twenty to twenty-five years ago. I won't attempt to list addictions, the list is long, and we all understand fear. The point is that the freedom that comes from an individual breaking through and living out of bondage is incredibly powerful. Your church may not be equipped to deal with these complex issues, but there are organizations in your community you can partner with in order to help make a difference, even for a few.

7. First time tithers

When it comes to Christian maturity, the returning of a tithe from one's income is often the last thing to happen in a Christian's life. And for many, it never happens. It's not about the money. Yes, your church needs money to operate, but it's really about a surrendered life that chooses to trust God. Few things are more powerful than when someone realizes that they may be in charge but they are not in control. Be bold in your teaching about trusting God with finances!

8. New Leaders and Volunteers

Next to the favor of God, everything rises and falls on leadership. My personal belief is that it's nearly impossible to over invest in leadership development. Leaders raise up volunteers and volunteers make ministry possible. Recruiting, inspiring, encouraging, training and empowering your volunteers is essential and your leaders will help you do that!

9. Hours devoted to prayer

I don't really think we should count how many hours we pray, but I can't help wonder what the correlation might actually be when you compare hours in prayer to the health and life change impact of a local church. I don't think God is keeping score, but I do think He cares about what our heart treasures and how we chase after Him. Candidly, I believe prayer makes a huge

difference, in fact, I think it is the true difference maker for any local church.

10. Kids treated with respect

Jesus had some very clear thoughts about how we are to treat the children. How strong is your children's ministry? Do you put as much effort toward the kids as you do the adults in "big church"? It's not a competition, but doing your best in children's ministry really matters. If your children's ministry needs a lot of work, don't stress over it, but commit to improving it a little bit at a time and you'll be surprised at what can be accomplished in 6 to 9 months!

So there you have it --a list of ten different numbers. How would you evaluate your ministry with these ten? Are there one or two that you want to focus on? What would you take off this list? What would you add?

[The Pastor's Coach](#) is written by Dr. Dan Reiland, and is available via a free email subscription. You can subscribe by [clicking here](#).