

Leaders Count People Because People Count

Fifty years ago, many churches had signs posted within the building showing weekly numbers on them: worship service attendance, Sunday School attendance, offering total, and even how many people brought their Bibles. We live in a different age now.

Today, some frown upon “counting.” But I actually think it’s worth doing – and doing better than we’ve ever done before.

There’s an old but true cliché: **We count people because people count.** We count because we care about the souls of each person we count. We count because we want to be effective in what we are doing.

Among our churches, we need to ask if we are reaching people. We need to ask if we are discipling people. Are we reaching our goals or are we falling short? These are important questions to ask and important things to count.

My contention is that we need to keep a scorecard. The challenge is in deciding what we are going to measure and how are we going to measure it. I’m convinced that the things we’ve been counting for years on those church attendance boards are helpful to count – but they’re not all we should count.

The two I believe we *must count* include those core ones that most churches are already counting: conversions and baptisms. But there are other areas that matter as well. They matter deeply to me, too.

Namely, **we need to find out how to count transformation.** Are people being transformed and becoming agents of God’s mission? Are they sharing Christ with their neighbors? Getting converts is great, but are they learning to live and grow as believers and are they sharing Christ with others? We must begin tracking discipleship and missional living.

I talk about measuring these things in [Transformational Church](#), the book I coauthored with Thom Rainer. We have to consider things like:

- **What percentage of people in the church are serving?**
- **How many are serving inside and outside the church?**
- **How many are in small groups?**
- **How many are being trained into leadership in groups and in the church?**

Here’s a key: Some of these things are self-reported in groups. That’s a very helpful way to keep up with how God is using your people, and it takes minimal effort to keep track of it. It trains your people to be observant and proactive about those around them – those they are called to disciple and train.

So yes, we should count, but we need to **count the right things.** Sunday by Sunday, pastors

and church leaders should get a report on, for instance, the percentage of people who were in small groups, the number of people who are on mission and ministry – and so on.

Metrics can help us know where we are and where we need to change. We need to be careful not to be slavishly driven by numbers, but to use them as a tool. And to that end, check out [Transformational Discipleship Assessment](#) for maturity issues and also the [Transformational Church Assessment Tool](#). These are helpful tools for counting well, using the best measurables, and bringing health and strength to individual Christians and your church as a whole.

Measure your church over long periods of time and notice the trends, but I suggest that you keep track of the short-term numbers, too. There needs to be a regular keeping of data so that we can see our progress week to week.

As we learn more and more about our churches, we need to shore up some of the areas we discover are weak. But don't downplay your church's strengths. If the strength of your church is vibrant worship, for example, go with it.

Doing metrics and counting numbers actually can bless our churches and the communities around them. **Learn to love the numbers that can better help you love the people they represent.**

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