



Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth

By Greg L. Hawkins, Cally Parkinson

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Most church leaders are passionate about their calling to “go and make disciples.” However, despite their most creative thinking, diligent efforts and rigorous assessments, year after year they arrive at the end of a ministry season with no way of knowing for sure whether they have succeeded or failed in their calling. “I want to serve God,” the refrain goes, “and on most days, I believe I’m doing what I’m called to do. But what if my approach is off-track? What if the work we’re doing as a church doesn’t really help people grow at all?”

The only indicators of success most leaders have are numbers. Is attendance up? Are giving trends on the rise? Are we baptizing more people this year than last? Numbers are helpful, but they still come up short. Numbers may tell leaders how active their congregants are, but they reveal very little about whether or not anyone’s heart is changing as a result.

Leaders need more than numbers to help them assess their efforts and make strategic ministry decisions. The crux of spiritual growth is not how busy people are with spiritual activities but how engaged they are with Christ. How close is a person to Christ? Are they fully surrendered to his will and his teaching? Do they prioritize faith in their daily lives? Are they growing in their love of God and others? In order to answer these questions, leaders need more than numbers; they need to see inside people’s hearts.

In 2004, Willow Creek Community Church completed research that would eventually become the REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey. Based on those initial findings, as well as data from more than 150,000 congregants in 500 churches, the REVEAL team discovered a way to see inside the hearts and minds of congregants. The Christ-Centered Heart presents discoveries not from a hypothetical, theoretical or opinion-driven point of view, but from an empirical one. By linking biblical principles with spiritual attitudes and behaviors, REVEAL research

The Christ-Centered Heart provides a foundational understanding of this new lens for spiritual growth and presents findings from the latest REVEAL research.

Focusing on Jesus' definition of spiritual growth as increasing love of God and others (Matthew 22:36 – 40), the book draws on compelling stories of real people as well as engaging charts and graphs to illustrate key concepts and insights. It includes four parts:

PART ONE: The Heart of the Matter explains the brutal truth about spiritual growth and an orientation on how REVEAL takes us “inside” the hearts of congregants.

PART TWO: The Spiritual Continuum identifies the five segments of intimacy with Christ and describes people with “closed hearts,” who are Far from Christ; people with “searching hearts,” who are Exploring Christ; people with “open hearts,” who are Growing in Christ; people with “engaged hearts,” who are Close to Christ; and people with “surrendered hearts,” who are “Christ-Centered.”

PART THREE: Spiritual Movement details the distinct spiritual catalysts that move people toward increasing intimacy with Christ. This includes four spiritual movements: from rejection to searching for Christ; from searching to accepting Christ; from growing in Christ to becoming close to him; and from close to Christ to becoming Christ-centered. We name two primary barriers to spiritual growth—becoming “stalled” along the journey toward intimacy with Christ, and becoming “dissatisfied” with the church’s ability to lead people there.

PART FOUR: Spiritual Leadership presents five key findings based on REVEAL’s proprietary “Spiritual Vitality Index,” which ranks a church’s effectiveness in helping people grow. The findings explain the importance of getting people moving once they express interest in knowing Christ; embedding the Bible in everything the church does; creating ownership on the part of the Christ-follower; pastoring the local community rather than merely “doing ministry” inside the church’s four walls; and re-establishing

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Greg L. Hawkins is executive pastor of Willow Creek Community Church. He is also co-creator of REVEAL, an initiative that utilizes research tools and discoveries to help churches better understand spiritual growth in their congregations. Greg and his wife, Lynn, live in the Chicago suburbs with their three children.

Cally Parkinson is brand manager for REVEAL and previously served as the director of communication services at Willow Creek Community Church, a role she undertook following a twenty-five-year career at Allstate Insurance Company. Cally and her husband, Rich, live in the Chicago suburbs and have two grown children.

Users Review

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Fern Rodriquez:

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