

Related to this lack of laudable direction and courageous initiative is the failure of ministries to measure the outcomes that matter. Churches – and, by extension, the people associated with them – continue to evaluate the success or failure of a congregation and of individual lives according to factors that do not do justice to the life, death, resurrection and teachings of Jesus Christ. Churches measure attendance, donations, numbers of staff, numbers of programs and square footage as their primary indicators of spiritual health and growth. Jesus did not die on the cross for such incidental outcomes. Individual believers, taking their cues from their church, measure their spiritual vitality on the basis of the frequency of their church attendance, whether they donate money to the ministry, and their general sense of personal “goodness” on a day-to-day basis. Again, such measures insult Christ. The axiom “you get what you measure” is certainly true for the Christian body in the U.S. Until we start to think about, pursue, and measure genuine spiritual transformation in individual lives, we will continue to get what we’ve been getting, as unsatisfying as that is, for years to come.

The State of the Church Report 2005

By George Barna