



### **Episode 1: The History of REVEAL**

Today's podcast is all about the history of REVEAL—a story about a survey born in 2004 that's become the gold standard for measuring spiritual growth for churches across the country. More than 2000 churches with 500,000 congregants have taken the REVEAL survey. Beyond size, our database is very diverse, including a broad range of church denominations, locations, sizes, and styles.

#### **REVEAL's Origin Story: 2004-2008**

In 2004, Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, IL, wanted to measure spiritual growth. Spiritual growth was defined using the Great Commandment as a guide, measuring the factors that increase a person's love of God and love of others grow. Cally Parkinson was Communications Director for WCC at the time and headed up the survey effort, eventually authoring two books on findings from REVEAL.

- Three key “inventors”: Bill Hybels + Eric Arnson + Greg Hawkins
- The question wasn't “what drives spiritual growth?” Because we knew the answer—church activities.
- The only question was *which* church activity was most effective at spiritual growth. Was it small groups? Or midweek services?
- The surprising answer—neither one. In fact, we found that participation in church activities does not drive long-term spiritual growth.
- Instead, we discovered that the most significant catalysts that drive spiritual growth are personal spiritual practices, specifically Bible engagement. The things we do outside of the organized church setting are the most powerful influences on growing our relationship with Jesus—and consequently, our love of God and love of others.

The real breakthrough for REVEAL came two years later through the Willow Creek Association. The WCA is best known for its annual Global Leadership Summit, which this year will host 400,000 people in 128 countries around the world. Bill decided to share the survey insights at a

gathering of WCA Summit pastors. Many of the pastors begged WCA president Jim Mellado to take the survey in their churches.

We started with seven churches...then 25...then in 2007, 500 churches took the survey. REVEAL the book and brand were launched, leading to changes at Willow Creek and many other churches. For the first time we had data that churches could use to see how their people were doing in their spiritual growth.

### **REVEAL Best Practice Principles: 2008-2012**

In 2008, studying the results from all of the churches that had taken the survey led to the discovery of the Best Practice Principles.

- The first (and only) REVEAL conference was held to discuss the findings and allow others to hear from the churches we identified as being exceptional in their implementation of the Principles.
- Nancy Scammacca Lewis joined the REVEAL team soon after as lead statistician.
- We built a database of church survey results, mined it for new insights, and published [MOVE: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth](#).

### **REVEAL Archetypes: 2013-Present**

In 2013, a philanthropist with a technology company bought the REVEAL brand and intellectual property. Thanks to this investment, we rebooted the survey to be more user-friendly and published a second book [Rise: Bold Strategies to Transform Your Church](#).

In *Rise*, we describe our findings about eight types of churches—we call them “archetypes.” The eight archetypes emerged out of the richness of data we have on the two key findings we described earlier:

- where congregants are the catalysts of spiritual growth
- how churches are doing on the Best Practice Principles.

Our goal with the archetypes isn't to put churches in boxes—it's to give them practical next steps to make their church more vibrant. Looking across everything we've done and everything we know now about churches and spiritual growth, a pastor's key takeaway from REVEAL should be that there's hope—in fact, a lot of hope—because any church can *RISE*.

We've launched this podcast to share fresh insights from our rich data on how churches can help their people grow. We want to take the guesswork out of churchwork for you!

**Next time on the REVEAL Church Leadership Podcast:** Key concepts you need to know to understand the REVEAL findings