



Episode 8: Five Best Practice Principles for Churches

One of the most influential findings from REVEAL is its discovery of five best practices for churches—specifically, best practices for developing disciples of Jesus Christ. This was a discovery the REVEAL Team intentionally pursued. After we developed the Spiritual Vitality Index (SVI), we were able to identify the top 5% of churches in our database and find out what they were doing to be so effective at discipleship.

Practice #1: Get People Moving

People going to Best Practice churches feel like they're on a spiritual "moving sidewalk"—there's always a clear path and a next step to pursue in their spiritual journeys. Instead of an abundance of ministry opportunities and church activities, there is a prescribed path, which is exactly what people need, *especially* when they first come and experience church. For example, in most of our top churches newcomers are encouraged to go to classes to hear (ideally from the senior pastor) about the vision and history of the church, then they're encouraged to figure out their spiritual gifts, and challenged to connect to the church through serving and small groups.

Practice #2: Embed the Bible in Everything

Best Practice churches embed the Bible in their culture. They make it easy for people to access a meaningful reflection on Scripture everyday with emails and texts to take away the excuses. They often connect these devotionals to the weekend teaching, so their message has a chance to take root. Some connect their teaching themes all the way through—from weekend services, to small groups, even to the children's ministries, at least for a couple months in the ministry season.

Practice #3: Create Ownership

Best Practice churches tend to have highly effective small group systems. In addition, the culture of these churches empowers people to go out and make a difference in the world. They inspire their people to believe that they don't just *go to* church. They believe they *are* the church. Top churches blur the dividing lines between pastors and congregants by assigning high levels of ministry accountability to lay leaders.

Practice #4: Pastor the Local Community

To pastor the community means being invested in solving the biggest problems in your community—coming to the table prepared to work with other churches and with non-profits

and local government to do something about those issues. We see this kind of commitment in Best Practice churches in their decisions about how to spend resources and how to direct their church leaders and congregants. Best Practice churches set a high bar for serving in the church *and* in the community. These churches challenge their people to make community service a priority. They also make it easy for their people to find service opportunities that match their spiritual gifts.

Practice #5: Christ-Centered Leadership

It is not easy for church leaders to maintain a focus on making Christ the center of their lives in the very demanding, highly operational world of church leadership. Church work is 24/7. Best Practice church leaders shepherd their churches with a focus on growing hearts, more than growing numbers. For these churches, numbers are a by-product of an unrelenting focus on growing their people's love of God and love of others.

Want to learn more about how your church is doing on the Best Practice Principles?

This work on best practices is some of the most important research we've done to help churches become more effective. About half of the report churches get when they take the survey is all about the best practices. It lets church leaders know how congregants are experiencing (or not experiencing) all five best practices so they know where to focus their energy. Learn more at www.revealforchurch.com