

# 12 Reasons Why Your Church Doesn't Produce Spiritual Growth

Several weeks ago I read [\*Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth\*](#) by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson. Greg is the executive pastor at Willow Creek Community Church. Cally is Willow's director of communication services.

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1. **You focus more on Bible teaching than Bible engagement.** – “We learned that the most effective strategy for moving people forward in their journey of faith is biblical engagement. Not just getting people into the Bible when they're in church—which we do quite well—but helping them engage the Bible on their own outside of church.”
2. **You haven't developed a pathway of focused first steps.** – “Instead of offering up a wide-ranging menu of ministry opportunities to newcomers, best-practice churches promote and provide a high-impact, nonnegotiable pathway of focused first steps—a pathway designed specifically to jumpstart a spiritual experience that gets people moving toward a Christ-centered life.”
3. **You're more concerned about activity than growth.** – “Increased church activity does not lead to spiritual growth.”
4. **You haven't clarified the church's role.** – “Because—whether inadvertently or intentionally—these churches have communicated to their people that, no matter where they are on their spiritual journey, the role of the church is to be their central source of spiritual expertise and experience. As a result, even as people mature in their beliefs and embrace personal spiritual practices as part of their daily routines, their expectation is that it will be the church, not their own initiative, that will feed their spiritual hunger.”
5. **You're focused more on small groups than serving.** – “Serving experiences appear to be even more significant to spiritual development than organized small groups.”
6. **You're not challenging people to reflect on Scripture** – “If they could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice would be equally clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible—specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives.”
7. **You're unwilling to admit that more is *not* better.** – “Based on findings from the most effective churches, however, this ‘more is better’ way of thinking is not the best route for people who are new to a church, and it is particularly unsuitable for people who are taking their first steps to explore the Christian faith... Instead of offering a ministry buffet with multiple tempting choices of activities and studies, these churches make one singular pathway a virtual prerequisite for membership and full engagement with the church.”
8. **You haven't raised the bar.** – “Too many churches are satisfied to have congregations filled with people who say they ‘belong’ to their church—who attend faithfully and are

willing to serve or make a donation now and then. But that belonging bar is not high enough; simply belonging doesn't get the job done for Jesus."

9. **You've created a church staff dependency.** – "Taking too much responsibility for others' spiritual growth fostered an unhealthy dependence of congregants on the church staff."
10. **You believe that small groups are *the* solution to spiritual formation.** - "Based on the churches we have studied, including our own, there is no evidence that getting 100 percent of a congregation into small groups is an effective spiritual formation strategy."
11. **You focus on what people should do rather than who people should become.** – "Unfortunately, churches often make things harder still by obscuring the goal—to become more like Christ—with a complicated assortment of activities. For instance, encouraging people to: Attend teaching and worship services every week. Meet frequently with small community and Bible study groups (often requiring follow-up communications and homework). Serve the church a couple times a month. Serve those who are underresourced on a regular basis. Invite friends, coworkers, and family to church, special events, support groups, etc. When the church incessantly promotes all the things people should do, it's very easy for them to lose sight of the real goal—which is who they should become."
12. **You aren't helping people surrender their lives to Jesus.** – "Spiritual growth is not driven or determined by activities; it is defined by a growing relationship with Christ. So the goal is not to launch people into an assortment of ministry activities; it is to launch them on a quest to embrace and surrender their lives to Jesus."