

By NELSON SEARCY

Lead Pastor, The Journey Church www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com



"Nelson is one of the most strategically-minded leaders on the planet. He uses his gift to share with other leaders the steps we can take to ensure our churches are healthy."

Perry Noble

Pastor, NewSpring Church

"I will read anything I can get my big hands on if Nelson Searcy's name is on it. He is one of the most practical writers I've read on any topic relating to the church." Aubrey Malphurs Founder, The Malphurs Group Professor of Pastoral Ministries, Dallas Seminary

"Nelson is not a theorist but a veteran church planter who has successfully planted a purpose-driven church. Listen and learn from this gifted man." Rick Warren Lead Pastor, Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA Author of *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*

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Lead Pastor, The Gathering, Thomasville, GA



MEET NELSON SEARCY

Nelson Searcy is an experienced church planter, coach and church growth strategist, consulting with churches around the world, including many of the largest and fastest-growing ones. He's also the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church in New York City. Started in 2002, this groundbreaking

church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently meets in locations in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, as well as San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL. Nelson is the recipient of the prestigious 2013 Donald A. McGavran Award for Outstanding Leadership in Great Commission Research. He's the author of over 75 church growth resources and 14 books, including *The Renegade Pastor: Abandoning Average in Your Life and Ministry*. He's trained more than 50,000 church leaders as founder of Church Leader Insights and the Renegade Pastors Network, which is designed to help pastors abandon average and strive for God's best in their personal lives and ministry. For more accelerated growth, pastors also participate in Nelson's Senior Pastor and Advanced Coaching Networks. His continued mission is to help church leaders around the world cooperate with God in creating healthy, thriving churches.



Assimilation



Small Groups



Evangelism



Stewardship



Leadership



Strategy



Ministry



Worship Planning





Learn more about getting a copy of my book, *The Renegade Pastor*, PLUS a FREE two-month "test drive" in my Renegade Pastors Network!

See page 10 of this transcript for details, or visit www.RenegadePastors.com/onedollar



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INTRODUCTION

I have always hated doctor appointments. For years, I avoided getting anywhere near my doctor's office unless there was an extreme extenuating circumstance, like if a limb was about to fall off or if I hadn't been able to get out of bed for days. Neither of those things happened very often, so I was able to keep my distance. Then I hit forty, and my wife (strongly) suggested



that I go in for a regular physical. So, I did. After the poking, prodding and questions were through, my doctor pulled a chair over to where I was sitting on the examining table and started talking to me about numbers.

Blood pressure. Resting pulse. Cholesterol. Waist size. These were all things he wanted me to start keeping track of. I pushed back. "Why," I asked him, "is it worth spending time and energy keeping up with these numbers? I feel healthy. If that changes, I'll come see you." He said, "Nelson, these numbers aren't just numbers. They're the gauge of your body's health. They can let us know how things are going internally long before an irreversible problem shows itself."

Point taken, and how could it not be? What he said about my body is exactly what I already knew to be true in measuring the health of a church. How could I have not made the connection before? When it comes to health, whether physically speaking or within a church, numbers matter. Numbers matter a lot.

KEEP READING »



If you are familiar with my materials or coaching, you know that I often refer to the church as a body, with a set of systems at work to keep it healthy. Just as the human body has a cardiovascular system, a respiratory system, and an endocrine system, to name a few, the church also has systems humming beneath the surface: an assimilation system, an evangelism system and a stewardship system, for example. (To learn more about the eight systems of a healthy church, see my free e-book *Healthy Systems, Healthy Church* at www.ChurchLeaderInsights. com.) As with our physical bodies, there are certain indicators we can keep an eye on within the church that will help us measure our well-being and effectiveness. They're specific numbers that, when tracked over time, will either confirm that we're on course or signal an issue that needs to be addressed.

When it comes to analyzing numerical trends within the church, there's only one problem: too many church leaders are scared to talk about numbers. Why? We're afraid of being perceived

Too many church leaders are scared to talk about numbers. as shallow or prideful, or of having anyone think that we are (gasp) all about the numbers! But in reality, being "all about the numbers" is not necessarily a negative thing, if the heart behind it is right. Every number we track represents a person on a journey toward becoming a fully-developing follower of Jesus. Every number

signifies an aspect of growth or change in someone's life. When we are focused on the numbers that matter for reasons that matter, we aren't being prideful at all. Quite the opposite. We are simply taking responsibility for keeping a gauge on our church's health so we can recognize what's working, identify potential problems, and be quick to respond accordingly. As I work with church leaders around the country, there is one question that comes up time and time again. People want to know, "What do you measure each week at The Journey?" These leaders know that we take numerical measuring seriously. Keeping track of specific numbers on a weekly basis is the single best way for us to get an accurate sense of what's going on in various areas of our church. The same is true for you. After all, you can't manage what you don't measure. If you aren't staying on top of what your numbers are indicating, then you can't make adjustments; you don't know what's working and what's not. In a sense, you are flying blind. On the other hand, consistently measuring the right numbers gives you an ongoing opportunity to get better in the areas God wants you to improve.

KEEP READING »



KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

In life, we keep track of numbers for the things that are important to us. We measure birthdays and anniversaries. We make our kids stand against a wall and mark their height each year. We constantly know how much money is in our bank account and how much principal is left on our mortgage. And as my doctor was quick to point out, we (should) keep a close eye on the numbers that correlate to the health of our body. We measure things that matter.

There are indicators we can track that will let us know whether or not we are on the right course. In the same way, we should measure the things that matter within the church. Obviously, we can't track actual spiritual growth or life transformation with hard numbers, but there are indicators we can track that will let us know whether or not we – and our attenders and members – are on the right course.

Now, I didn't just wake up one morning and have a revelation about how important numbers are. This was a slow process of realization. My first clue came from the book of Numbers in the Old Testament. The name alone should tell us something. With further study, I started becoming more and more aware of the emphasis God puts on numerical specificity throughout all of scripture. We know twelve spies went into Canaan – not a handful of spies, but twelve – and ten of them failed to see God's power and provision. We know that the flood lasted exactly forty days and forty nights. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand were saved. These are just a few random examples of the scriptures' careful attention to numbers. There are hundreds more. I couldn't help but think that if the Bible pays attention to such specific numbers, I should take an interest too.

Another book also played into my thinking about tracking numbers, a secular novel by Michael Lewis called *Moneyball*. You may have seen the movie version. It takes an in-depth look at the numbers, or statistics, behind baseball. Traditionally, scouts and managers have always weighed a player's talent by eyeballing his performance on the field. In the book, Lewis makes the case that there is a much better way to see how a player really performs than by sizing him up visually. He argues that by looking at the pattern of a player's statistics over a period of time, you can know with a high level of certainty whether or not that player is going to succeed in upcoming seasons.

A lot of times, we take the eyeball approach in our churches, don't we? We stand on the podium during a weekend service, look out over the crowd, and think, "Well, there are a lot

of people here. Whew, we must be healthy." But what you see on any given Sunday is an illusion. Under the surface, there could be all kinds of cracks and potential problems you aren't even aware of yet. *Moneyball* challenged me to look past the surface-level varnish

What you see on any given Sunday is an illusion.

of our weekly services and really begin to measure how both our short-term and long-term numbers were looking in critical areas. By doing so, we are now able to keep a close eye on the overall health of our church. We can see what's working, and what's not. As you learn to measure what matters and let those numbers speak to you, you will be able to do the same.

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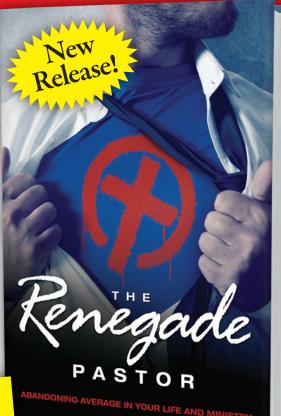
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NELSON SEARCY is the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church. Started in 2002 in New York City, this ground-breaking church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently meets in Manhattan, Queens, San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL. He is the author of over seventy-five church-growth resources and ten books. Nelson is also an experienced church planter, coach and church-growth strategist. He is also the founder of ChurchLeaderInsights.com, the Church Leader Training Ministry of Nelson Searcy and The Journey Church.

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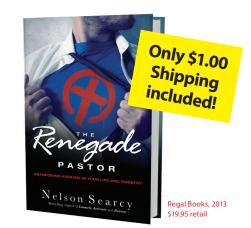
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person

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Time for an inside peek at how weekly measuring happens at The Journey. Imagine you are a fly on the wall in our Monday afternoon staff meeting, where all of the pastors and staff have come together to evaluate the weekend's services. As part of this meeting, we spend some time talking numbers – and not only do we talk numbers, we write them up on the big whiteboard in our conference room. We want everyone on staff to know how the week went, numerically speaking.

On one side of the whiteboard, there is a column indicating the specific things we measure:

- Overall Attendance
- First and Second-Time Guests
- Volunteers
- First-Time Decisions for Jesus
- Giving

We write up the week's numbers in each of these areas, and then we sit back and let them speak to us. As we look them over, we ask ourselves two simple questions:

Are any of these numbers unusually high?

Are any of these numbers unusually low?

If numbers are up in an area, we go to work figuring out what may have led to the surge and how we can build on the momentum. If numbers are down in an area, we try to determine why. Is there a definable problem? Is it a random fluctuation? How can we do better next week? At the end of the meeting, an assigned staff person enters all of the numbers for the week into an Excel spreadsheet so we can track and evaluate them over time.

That's the bird's-eye view. Now, let's get down to the implications of these numbers and what they can say when given the opportunity to speak...

Overall Attendance

Attendance is the most basic number you can measure. If you have multiple services or are a multisite church, make sure you track your attendance for each specific service and location,

but don't stop there. Once your overall attendance numbers are in place for the week, break them down into adults versus children. Know your adult number for each service. If you don't take this step, it's easy to wind up confused. Since kids don't tithe or serve, allowing them to skew your attendance numbers will lead to lots of problems in your understanding of your church's health.

Breaking down your numbers between adults and children will help you organize an effective children's ministry.

Breaking your numbers down between adults and children will also help you organize and run an effective children's ministry. At The Journey, we dissect the children's number yet again and look at the number in nursery versus the number in our student ministry. This helps us keep a gauge on how well our Journey Kidz space is being utilized, how many volunteers we need within specific age groups and what times of the year are best for reaching the most kids. Unusual spikes or decreases in these numbers will give you insight into events you may not otherwise notice and allow you to take follow up action. For example, if your numbers tell you that a particular service has a lot more students than usual one week, you can track down the reason and try to harness it for an upcoming student outreach.

Over time, you'll see natural rhythms develop in these numbers which will help you plan more efficiently in many areas, not the least of which is your preaching. When we first started The Journey, a lot of well-intentioned pastors already serving in New York told me that Labor Day

The numbers are your friends. Pay attention to them. would be a low Sunday. So, working from assumption rather than fact, I always scheduled a guest speaker for Labor Day weekend. Then, one day, after we had been measuring our numbers for a while, I was looking at our attendance trends and I realized that

Labor Day Sunday is actually a pretty big day in our community. Now I've restructured our service schedule to reflect that. That's one small example of hundreds I could give you to show how crucial it is to closely track every area of your church. The numbers are your friends. Pay attention to them.

For more on using your attendance trends to help you plan your preaching for maximum impact, see my book *Engage: A Guide to Creating Life-Transforming Worship Services* (Baker Books 2011).



First- and Second-Time Guests

Specifically tracking your first- and second-time guests is foundational to your ability to connect with them and assimilate them into your community. Plus, they tell you loads about the health of your church. First-time guests are a good indicator of whether or not your church is growing and how well you are reaching unchurched people in your area. Knowing if those first-timers are returning as second-time guests will help you see how you are doing at welcoming your guests in a way that makes them want to come back.

At The Journey, we use a Connection Card to gather first- and second-time guest information. In every service, everyone fills out a Connection Card with their name, contact information and whether they are members, regular attenders, visiting for the second time or visiting for the first time. By tracking the information you get from the Connection Cards, you will be able to see what services attract the most guests. If your first-time guest number

gets low, you will know there is a problem with your evangelism system. If your second-time guest number is low, you'll know you need to work on your assimilation process.

By staying on top of these numbers, you'll soon be able to determine your first-time guests per regular attenders ratio, a major indicator of how well your church is evangelizing the community. As a rule, churches with seven first-time guests for First-Time Guests / Regular Attenders: 3 / 100 = A church in maintenance mode 5 / 100 = A steadily growing church 7 / 100 = A rapidly growing church

every hundred regular attenders are growing rapidly; churches with five first-time guests for every hundred regular attenders are growing steadily; churches with three first-time guests for every hundred regular attenders are in maintenance mode. How are you doing? Measuring your numbers week to week will let you know, so you can tweak your processes to bring more people through your doors and then to keep them coming back.

For a more detailed study on assimilating newcomers into your church, see my book, *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests Into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church* (Regal 2007).



Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of any growing, healthy church. Since that's the case, keeping an accurate account of who is volunteering and where they're serving can't be overlooked. Broadly speaking, make sure to measure how many people volunteer every weekend. Again, break that down by service times and locations. Once those numbers are established, I suggest taking things a step further.

We count the volunteers serving in front-of-house positions, on the worship team, tech team, and in the children's area. At The Journey, we look at how many volunteers we had in each specific area of service opportunity. That is, we count the number of volunteers who were serving in frontof-house positions (ushers, greeters, program distributers), on the worship team, on the tech team and in the children's

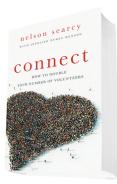
area. Not only do we want to know what our overall volunteer force for the weekend was, we also want to know how well each specific area was manned. Also, as part of our weekly volunteer number, we look at how many people served in the office in some capacity during the week or led a small group. Sometimes we will have a week with a low number of volunteers at a specific service, so we'll know we need to be especially aware of that number over the next couple of weeks to make sure it's not a trend developing. Or maybe we'll notice that the number of volunteers over the course of a month is declining at a certain location, so we go to work to recruit more volunteers. We also use the numbers in a positive way. We often use the information we've gathered to write thank you notes to people the week after they serve. Tracking specific numbers helps us know what to celebrate in addition to letting us get on the proactive side of any negative trends that could be happening.

I'm convinced that for a church to be healthy and for people to be growing, a certain standard of volunteering needs to be in place. To that end, I have developed a "30/50/20 Rule." At any given time, I want 30% of our church to be sitting on the sidelines. I think of them as "pre-servers." Next, I want 50% of

You'll never know how healthy you are (or aren't) if you can't determine your current numbers.

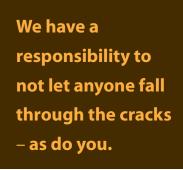
our church serving one hour per week, whether that's at the service, in the office or by leading a small group. As the church grows, the number of active servers expands accordingly. If you consistently hit that 50% mark, you'll never lack volunteers. Lastly, I want 20% of the church involved in some kind of evangelism or outreach ministry. They may invite a friend to church or take part in an evangelism event.

Thinking back to those indicators of physical health, the 30/50/20 Rule provides you with an accurate snapshot of your pulse and blood pressure combined. If you are hitting close to the 30/50/20 mark, you have a strong cardiovascular system pumping away. But you'll never know how healthy you are (or aren't) if you can't determine your current numbers. Keep track of these realities week to week. Don't leave a heart attack lurking unnoticed. To dig more deeply into recruiting and maintaining passionate volunteers in your church, see my new book, *Connect: How to Double Your Number of Volunteers* (Baker Books 2012).



First-Time Decisions for Jesus

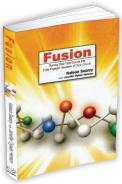
While salvations are an important number to measure, they are also a difficult number to get an accurate read on. The number of people who tell you they made a first-time decision to trust Christ may be very different from the number of people who actually did. Still, it's well worth putting a system in place to get as close to the actual number as you can.



In our system at The Journey, the primary way people let us know they've made a first-time decision is by indicating it on their Connection Card. We track that number closely and tweak it as we follow up with people. Getting a read on this number allows us to celebrate what God is doing in our church and in the lives of the

individuals who are coming to know him. It also allows us to help each of these people take the next step of baptism and begin getting plugged into the community more deeply. We have a responsibility to not let anyone fall through the cracks, as do you.

For more detailed information on incorporating a Connection Card into your church culture, see *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church* (Regal 2007).



Giving

Stewardship is obviously an area that demands close measurement and management, and to a more extensive level than you may initially think. It's not enough to just watch your overall giving number. You need to be able track all of the different ways people give in your environment. For example, we chart separate numbers for how much was given in person at each service, how much was mailed in, how much came through online giving, how much by direct deposit, and how much was given in some other form such as in-kind giving. God is intentional about bringing resources in through our people, so we want to be intentional about recognizing where every one of those dollars is coming from.

Even though you know that money is an important area to manage closely, you may have never thought about why, beyond the obvious need to keep the lights on. First of all, the level of giving in your church can speak volumes to you about the hearts of your people and their

understanding of stewardship. Having a more exact picture of who gives, how, how much and when can help you disciple your givers more effectively, and can help you grow new givers. Secondly, when it comes to money, detailed management increases your ability to identify a problem immediately.

The level of giving in your church can speak volumes about the hearts of your people.

Not long ago, for example, we noticed during our Monday discussion that our mailedin giving was down dramatically for the week. Where we would usually have anywhere from \$4,000 to \$15,000 mailed into our office on an average week, this particular week the number was more like \$1,500. So we knew there was an issue we needed to look into. As it turns out, the low number wasn't a result of people not mailing in their giving; it was a problem with the post office. They had been holding all of our mailed-in envelopes for over a week because of a simple question regarding our account that needed clarification. If we hadn't been measuring our mailed-in giving number, those offerings could have been held up at the post office for weeks, without us even realizing where the drop in our overall giving was coming from. Specific week-to-week tracking headed off a small problem that could have snowballed if left unidentified.

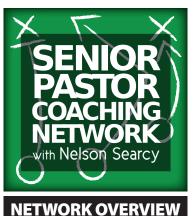
For more about tapping into God's desire for you to have a fullyresourced church, see my book, *Maximize: How to Develop Extravagant Givers in Your Church* (Baker Books 2010).





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Lock in a low monthly rate and get **FREE access to the Renegade Pastors Network**, PLUS get over \$1,679.00 in bonus resources, including all eight Systems Seminars. This is an investment in the future of you and your church, and is your best opportunity to lead your church to greater growth and health. Nowhere else will you have this kind of access to personal coaching on the proven systems you need to implement NOW. **Nelson will be YOUR coach to church growth!**

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The poet Maya Angelou has often been quoted as saying, "When you know better, you do better." Her simple statement holds a lot of value for those of us who are church leaders. You and I have a responsibility to do what it takes to know what's going on in our churches.

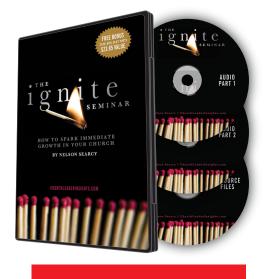
Measuring the numbers that matter gives us a systematic way to know better, to know more specifically what is happening beneath the surface of our services week to week, month to month and year to year. With that information, we'll be able to do better in every area of our ministry.

Commit to knowing your numbers. Don't take them for granted.

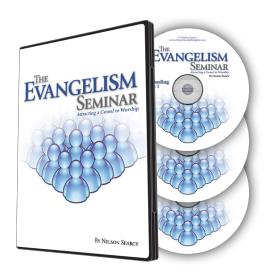
While charting numbers isn't always glamorous, it's essential to keeping our churches healthy and on the right path. Let me urge you, as my doctor urged me (in a different context perhaps, but with the same base truth), commit to knowing your numbers. Don't take them for granted. Watching your numbers will help you stay healthy. And as you do, you will be able to partner with God even more effectively in accomplishing his incredible purposes for your church.



RESOURCES TO HELP GROW YOUR CHURCH



Secure Your CD Resource or Download Now!



Secure Your CD Resource or Download Now!

THE IGNITE SEMINAR

The Ignite Seminar is the ultimate how-to training for church leaders who want to reach more people for Jesus Christ. In this three-hour seminar, Nelson Searcy will provide practical, inventive guidelines for bringing first-time guests through the doors. You can expect to learn:

- How to DOUBLE your church in a day (it can be done!)
- · How to mobilize your congregation to reach their friends
- · How to spark growth in a stalled church
- How to excite your people, even if they've not been motivated in the past
- How to influence your leaders to reach out to the community
- · How to plan and implement a proven BIG DAY process
- And much more!

THE EVANGELISM SEMINAR

The first step in reaching our communities for Jesus is getting new people through our doors. But how do we invite the unchurched in? How do we turn our vast unreached communities into our first-time guests? *The Evangelism Seminar* discusses practical steps that will help you draw first-time guests through your doors by creating a climate of evangelism and outreach. This resource includes:

- How to raise the evangelistic temperature of your church
- How to influence your leaders to reach out to the community
- · How to maximize your church's publicity
- How to teach and challenge your congregation to bring their friends to church
- How to pray for the unchurched in your community
- Plus much more!

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BRAND-NEW:

The Eight Systems of a Healthy Church Webinar

FREE for you to attend – \$29.95 value!



Maximize your effectiveness through healthy systems!

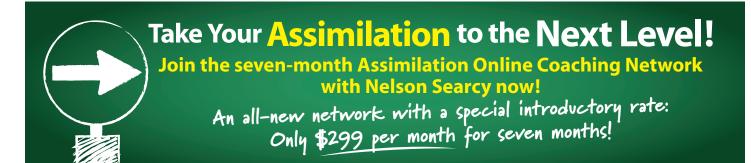
Your church has eight systems. You don't have to build them. They're not some new initiative that you have to start. The eight systems are uniquely part of the church by God's design. God calls the church a "body," and just like any physical body there are systems working together, allowing us to fulfill His purposes on Earth. Both of those respective bodies function best through well-developed systems.

Join Nelson Searcy in this BRAND-NEW webinar as he teaches you the eight systems of the church, and how to maximize those systems for greater effectiveness.

In this FREE 85-minute webinar, you'll learn:

- How your church could be seeing much greater Kingdom results than it is now.
- The eight systems of your church, and why God designed them to fulfill the purposes of His church.
- How each system will Save You Stress Time Energy and Money (and reduce your leadership headaches).
- Which system you can upgrade now to see immediate growth...as quickly as next Sunday!
- How one system holds the key to reduced stress and increased creativity each week.
- Your clear next steps to begin upgrading your church's systems immediately.
- And more!

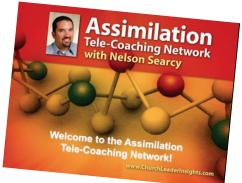
For dates of upcoming webinars and to sign up, visit: <u>www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com/systemswebinar</u>



The Assimilation Online Coaching Network will be based on the Assimilation principles identified and taught by Nelson to thousands of churches – through books, resources and live events – and will be provided to you in convenient online modules that you can watch at any time.

NOTHING CAN CREATE FASTER GROWTH IN YOUR CHURCH THAN THE POWER OF ASSIMILATION!

Just think: keeping just two more first-time guests a week would grow your church by more than fifty people over the course of this network!



Here's what you'll receive in this new seven-month network:

- Seven monthly online sessions focused exclusively on Assimilation
- Three group Q-and-A calls between sessions
- Over \$2,138.00 in FREE resources from Church Leader Insights, PLUS special discounts on any new resources
- Unlimited email access to Nelson Searcy and the CLI team
- FREE attendance at most CLI (live or web) training events during your network (up to \$729.00 value)
- Private VIP replay access to the recording of each coaching session
- Private Assimilation documents and strategies not available elsewhere

You'll receive seven sessions that you can fully participate in online anytime. And unlike other networks, you'll receive both the audio and video – your experience will be identical, no matter when you participate.

Yes Nelson, I want to join NOW!

I'm ready to take my assimilation to the next level with the seven-month Assimilation Online Coaching Network (only \$299 a month). www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com/AssimCoaching



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Church Leader Insights helps you maximize your effectiveness in ministry with:

- Cutting-edge resources
- The eight systems of the church
- Solutions to the nine growth barriers
- Monthly e-newsletters
- Monthly podcast training
- Webinars
- Live events
- Tele-seminars
- Coaching Networks
- And much more!

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