

Foreword by Doug Fields—bestselling, award-winning author of over 60 books

Good Kids, Big Events, Matching T-Shirts

*Changing the Conversation
on Health in Youth Ministry*

David Hertweck

Good Kids, Big Events, & Matching T-Shirts

*Changing the Conversation
on Health in Youth Ministry*

David Hertweck



MY HEALTHY CHURCH
MyHealthyChurch.com

Copyright © 2015 by David Hertweck

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published by My Healthy Church
1445 N. Boonville Ave.
Springfield, Missouri 65802
www.myhealthychurch.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or, otherwise—without prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations used in connection with reviews in magazines or newspapers.

Cover design by PlainJoe Studios (www.plainjoestudios.com)
Interior design by Prodigy Pixel (www.prodigypixel.com)

Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-62423-254-1

Printed in the United States of America

19 18 17 16 15 • 1 2 3 4 5

chapter one.

KEEPING SCORE

Some things are just hard to watch:

- The junior higher who talks with her mouth full—your will to live fading with every additional glimpse of partially chewed pizza.
- The awkwardness of the teenage years—using words they can't pronounce, telling jokes they don't understand, or wearing clothes that don't match their personality—or just plain don't match!
- The pain all over the face of that youth group kid as you drive him to the nearest ER because you just ran over his leg with your car. (What? No one else ever did that?)

But as a dad of three little girls, I've encountered something much more difficult to watch than any of those: little kids playing organized soccer. Calling it "organized" is a funny joke at best and a cruel joke at worst. Calling it "soccer" is borderline abuse of the English vocabulary.

Still, every Saturday morning, parents drag themselves and their sleepy-eyed children out to a grassy field to endure an hour or more of watching young kids run as a pack all over the field. Sometimes the soccer ball is actually involved in the action. When you're really lucky, someone actually kicks the ball in the right direction. And every once in a blue moon, the ball actually trickles into a goal and all the parents celebrate wildly, trying to convince themselves this whole endeavor was worth it.

After her first game, I asked my then four-year-old daughter, Lilia, if she had fun. She said "yes," but I think that had more to do with the fact that she was holding her post-game tasty snack and sugary drink in her hands. As I poked and prodded some more, I realized that Lilia had no clue about the final score of the game. She gave me a number, but it was way higher than the real score. Normally, that's not a big deal—what four-year old would know that? But three details about my daughter gave me pause:

1. Lilia is incredibly observant—notices everything!
2. She's very competitive—I'd say she gets that from her mom, but I want the credit for it . . . in case someone is keeping score.
3. I'm half Korean, so she's a quarter Korean—being good with numbers is our thing.

The next part of our conversation revealed the fatal flaw in her score tallying approach. For some reason, she believed that every time the goalie picked up the ball with her hands, the defending team earned a goal. While that creates some interesting strategy, it clearly was the wrong way to keep score. So I took it upon myself to teach her the right way to keep score. If she had the wrong understanding of how to measure success in a soccer game, it would have huge impact on the way she played (I envisioned her repeatedly passing the ball to her own goalie) and how she felt about the game (I imagined her celebrating like a lunatic every single time her goalie picked up the ball).

IS YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY WINNING?

In life, there are few arenas where winning doesn't matter. We keep score at sporting events, we get grades in school, and we even go online to rate the places we visit or the restaurants where we eat. Keeping score in soccer is pretty simple, but keeping score in life can be a real mystery. Youth ministry is no exception—how do we evaluate and assess success in youth ministry? Like soccer (even if it's a game between four-year-olds), the right metrics in youth ministry matters! The way we assess it has a completely unavoidable and remarkably powerful influence on how we do ministry—and how we feel about it. I think we would all agree that success in youth ministry looks like a healthy youth ministry. So when we talk about success, we're really talking about health. Whether you like it or not, *everyone* is evaluating the health of your student ministry. Here's just a starter list:

- You
- Your spouse
- Your volunteers
- Your senior pastor
- Your church board
- Your teenagers
- Visiting teenagers
- The parents of teenagers (yikes!)
- The church custodian (Spoiler alert: He thinks you're a failure every time he has to clean Silly String off another piece of church furniture.)

So many voices and opinions are trying to shape the way you assess your youth ministry. How do you sort through those voices and make sure the bull's eye you're aiming at is actually the right one?

When I was a youth pastor, I had all sorts of ways to evaluate the health of our youth ministry. When it came to our weekly large group gathering, I looked at attendance, number of visitors, energy in the room, how the student band did, how engaged kids were during the talk, and any sort of response. I had seasons where the bar was set high, and a great night meant a huge crowd and some really powerful moments. Then there were times when the bar was lower, and a successful night was not losing my temper on stage at the chatty crowd and not having any brawls between students.

Some of my metrics revolved around facilities and technology: Does the room look cool? Are the basketballs in the gym inflated properly? How many light bulbs were broken tonight? How many toilets were clogged up? Are the couches holding up under the years of severe abuse at the hands and feet of hyper teenagers? Did the media work well? Did the movie clip I showed connect well with the students?

I also evaluated the effectiveness of our adult leaders: Did they show up? On time? Did they connect with students or just talk to each other? If they had on-stage responsibilities, did they do a good job? Were they helping our student ministry teams? Did they bring any snacks to share with me?

Lastly, I evaluated myself. Did I feel engaged with students? Was I fully present in conversations? Did I prepare my volunteers well for their responsibilities? Was I funny at the right times and serious at the right times? Did I preach well? Did I steward the opportunity to speak to these teenagers whom Jesus loves? Did my deodorant hold up?

You get the idea. All of those questions would simultaneously run through my mind in a matter of minutes as I drove home from another youth service. I asked similar questions (and new ones) when it came to evaluating the success of mission trips or outreaches or fun outings or small groups or . . . you name it. Measuring health and success—there's just no avoiding it.

So many voices and opinions are trying to shape the way you assess your youth ministry.

THREE GAME-CHANGING QUESTIONS

In my fifteen-plus years of experience in youth ministry, I've found that youth workers often ask the same three common questions when it comes to measuring the health of their ministry. In this book, I want to consider the potential shortcomings and dangers of these questions and suggest that we add three different questions to help us rethink our metrics for assessing and evaluating the health of our youth ministries.

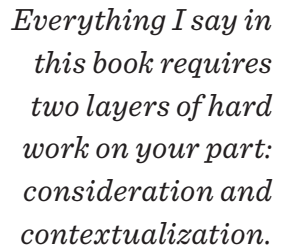
This would be a good time for me to pause and be transparent: I don't look back on my years in local church youth ministry and view myself as a great success by either set of metrics. I'm no expert. I'm a fellow learner—still with much to learn. I'm not writing as someone standing above you on an invisible stage—pontificating about everything you're doing wrong and why I know better. If it sounds that way sometimes, please know it's a direct result of my passion for seeing healthy, disciple-making youth ministries. I'm writing as someone who's coming alongside you and making discoveries *with* you. It's interesting to note that in the sports world the best coaches often weren't the greatest players—they were okay, but nothing special. I hope that I'm better at helping you think through what you're doing in youth ministry than I was at what I actually did in youth ministry.

The three primary questions that I relied upon in youth ministry were:

1. Do the young people behave?
2. Are they having the right experiences?
3. Do they like each other?

In chapters 2, 4, and 6 of this book, we'll take a close look at the potential problems with only using those questions to measure health. Chapters 3, 5, and 7 will introduce three values essential to new metrics: gospel fluency, Spirit dependency, and biblical community. And you'll also find practical ideas from current practitioners to help you move in that direction. I didn't want to suggest these shifts without giving you practical ways to carry them out.

I should be clear upfront that I'm not advocating for a complete abandonment of existing metrics. Good kids, big events, and matching T-shirts can still be indicators of a healthy youth ministry. What I am suggesting is that they can't be the only indicators—and that as indicators, they benefit from a broader and deeper perspective. Keep in mind that everything I say in this book requires two layers of hard work on your part: consideration and contextualization. Take time to consider if you agree—and if you do, take even longer to understand what this might mean in your specific ministry context. Then find people to journey with you. My hope is that the conversation will engage your mind and your heart and that together we can



Everything I say in this book requires two layers of hard work on your part: consideration and contextualization.

move forward in responding to the command of Christ to make healthy disciples.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

After Lilia's soccer game, I finally realized why she had been confused about how to keep score. If you've ever had the misfortune of attending a four-year-old's soccer game, then you know that each and every parent standing on the sideline takes turns shouting for their own kid—especially when God miraculously intervenes and their kid actually does something slightly resembling a soccer move. But there are only two times in a game when the entire sideline celebrates.

One occasion is when a goal is actually scored. This is usually the indirect result of the mass group somehow heading in the right direction and the direct result of the goalie counting the petals on a flower while the ball rolls past her. The other time everyone cheers is when the goalie picks up the ball with her hands. That's when it hit me.

Lilia was standing on the field, hearing and watching all the parents cheer every time the goalie successfully picked up the ball. In her brilliant little quarter-Korean brain, she thought to herself, *They're celebrating. So this must count.*

When we talk about measuring the health of our youth ministries, our students are most at stake. We will celebrate the wins—we will cheer for the moments of success. But unless our celebrations are discerning, our students will believe the wrong things count. And that has enormous implications for how they live out their faith.

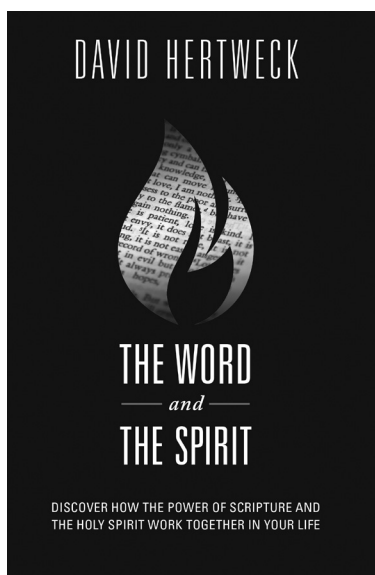
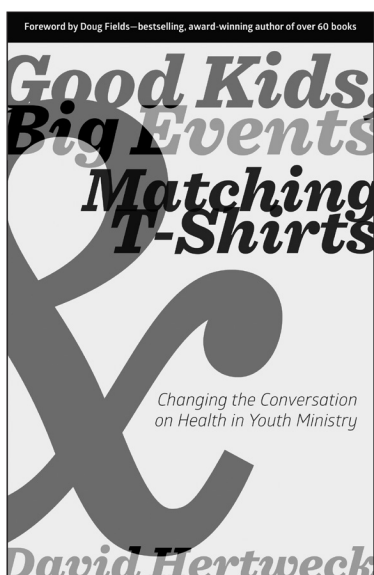
Measuring our ministry health definitely matters. It's always happening. It eventually shapes students. So it's worth having a conversation about. Thanks for picking up this book and joining the conversation.

about the author.

Since February 2011, David Hertweck has served the New York Assemblies of God as the director of youth ministry. Previously, he served as a youth pastor for twelve years in upstate New York. David graduated from Elim Bible Institute where he majored in biblical studies with a focus in worship leadership. He is currently completing graduate work at Northeastern Seminary for his MA in transformational leadership.

David is passionate about helping local church youth workers create and sustain disciple-making environments marked by gospel fluency, Spirit-dependency and biblical community. He is married to Erin and they have three daughters: Lilia, Caraline, and Madelaine. David loves his girls, his family, good music, good food, his Weber grill, his Taylor guitar, Liverpool Football Club, the Yankees, and the gospel.

for more information



*For more information on these and other
valuable resources visit www.myhealthychurch.com*

In Good Kids, Big Events, & Matching T-Shirts, Hertweck invites youth leaders into a game-changing conversation on what a healthy youth ministry looks like. He suggests three important questions:

Is the youth group gospel-fluent?

Are students Spirit-dependent?

Do students have biblical community?

Hertweck shares why shifting the conversation and focus to these new values can help youth leaders respond to Jesus' command to make disciples. The book includes numerous suggestions from current youth leaders on practical and proven ways to carry out these suggested shifts.

Good Kids . . . doesn't promise easy answers . . . it just delivers on biblical ones.

—Jeanne Mayo

Since February 2011, David Hertweck has served a major denomination in New York as their director of youth ministry. Previously, he served as a youth pastor for twelve years in upstate New York. He is currently completing graduate work at Northeastern Seminary

for his MA in transformational leadership. He is the author of *The Word and the Spirit*.

David is married to Erin and they have three daughters: Lilia, Caraline, and Madelaine. They currently reside in Syracuse, New York.



MY HEALTHY CHURCH®

MyHealthyChurch.com

USD \$14.99

RELIGION/Christian Ministry/Youth

ISBN 978-1624232541



5 1 4 9 9

9 781624 232541