

## Use of Stats

Robert Carreo

***Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.***

**Proverbs 27:23**

**Prov. 27:23** Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds;

**Statistics** is the study of the collection, [analysis](#), interpretation, presentation, and organisation of [data](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

The use of statistics for numerical analysis is inherently neither good nor bad. Statistics can be used in good healthy ways to reveal and discover needs or in bad ways to shame or blame, depending on the user. Used properly, they serve as a useful tool to monitor the health of the church.

- I. What is the “good” about numbers and statistics.
  1. They reveal an undeniable truth about the fruit of a ministry.
  2. They tell an important part of the story of the well being of a ministry
  3. They can highlight what the Lord is doing. i.e. 2 Samuel 18:7
  4. They can validate or expose the actual impact of a leader or a program.
  5. They can draw attention to needy situations that otherwise might be overlooked

### **WARNING & DANGER**

- II. What is potentially “wrong” with using statistics.
  1. They can cause men to take pride in the fruit of their own labor
  2. They can cause men to put their security in the numbers instead of God (Like David in 1 Chron 21:1)
  3. Numbers can glorify the leadership instead of the Lord.
  4. They can create a competitive spirit among the brothers.
  5. They can cause the church to focus on numbers instead of relationships.
  6. They only tell part of the story of what’s happening. Some might think they tell the whole story and judge everything by them.
  7. Some people erroneously think that numerical growth is proof of God’s blessings or evidence of the spirit. There are many groups with rapid growth that are clearly not godly or spirit lead.

### **Scriptures exposing potential problems with stats ...**

#### **1 Chronicles 21 / 2 Samuel 24**

**“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”**

This to me is the most compelling warning against stats. There are several theories as to why the census was wrong. They all have to do with David not trusting God. It is not the “census” itself that is necessarily wrong. The issue is David’s heart relying on his numbers instead of God and not the use of numbers. God previously told Moses to do exactly what David did “Count the men”. The problem was David’s heart behind the census not the census itself.

### **Scripture legitimising the use of numbers and statistics**

1. The most obvious is that God counts the number of people many times in the old and New Testament. From Moses taking a census to the numbers of the early

## Use of Stats

church counts of members and baptisms (Exodus 30:3, Numbers 1, 4:2, 22, 26:2, Acts 2:42, 4:4)

2. In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15) the shepherd is well aware of *one* lost sheep out of *one hundred* sheep. It is nearly impossible to notice one missing sheep unless a person counts their sheep regularly.
3. The book of numbers is about God commanding Moses to count the people. If this "Census" of his people were sinful, God would not ask Moses to do this. (Numbers 1)
4. The book of Acts records several times exactly how many were baptised and their membership. Clearly someone was counting (Acts 2:41, 47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31)

### Conclusion points

- There is no biblical prohibition against taking a count of God's people or recording baptisms in order to organise them and take care of them.
- There are many precedents noted above in the scriptures for this.
- Using numbers to glorify ourselves, boast or to measure each other is sinful and wrong.
- Over emphasis of stats can tempt some leaders into deceit.
- Banning all use of statistics would be an over reaction to past mistakes not biblically founded. It would imply that God was in sin when he counted members and baptisms in the Bible.
- Using statistics presents a temptation toward pride and competition.
- Therefore they should be used for the specific purpose of checking the health of the church.
- Their use should be controlled so as not to tempt too many people, especially leaders.
- They should be publicly shared only in the context of glorifying God as used in the scriptures.
- As a human body has vital statistics, so does the body of Christ.
- They must be interpreted correctly

It is important to ..

1. Teach future generations how to use statistics properly.
2. Not use statistic in public ways without proper explanations.
3. Not use statistics to shame or blame or create competition

### **Important stats:**

Every day 11 churches close their doors in America.

The USA now has less church attendees than India or China.

Since 2000, American Mosques have increased by 74%

The largest growing denominations average 2% growth per year.