

# Is God Against A Data Driven Church ?



**Sithhavee Teerakulchon (Thailand)**  
Asia Director of FaithTech

Data-driven decision making has become a common practice in the business world, but church leaders don't seem to talk much about it.

## Why is that?

Think about the last time a decision was made in your church. How was it done? In my experience with Asian churches and ministries, we, most of the time, make a decision based on what feels right. I hear things like:

***How do we attract young people to church?***

***"Adopt a contemporary worship style and hire a youth pastor."***

***Where will our next campus be?***

***"God gave me a vision last night that we must go to..."***

Rarely do I hear people in ministry asking for quantitative research or checking their database.

We tend to distrust data and rely more on abstract things such as emotions, prophetic voices, visions, etc.

## This is not necessarily wrong.

Many times, God calls his people to do something beyond rational explanation (from a data -scientist perspective).

For example, in John 6, Jesus asked Philip to feed the five thousand, and Philip replied that he would need more than half a year's wages to do that. Philip used good data-driven logic, but then, using a young boy's 5 loaves and 2 fishes, Jesus fed them all.

I'm not against the things I mentioned above, but I want to propose that it's not always the best thing to do.

Because sometimes

***God encourages his people to  
make a decision on data.***

The Bible is full of miracles like feeding the 5,000, but it's also full of data-driven decisions too.

Consider this example in the book of Numbers. God orders Moses to create and collect a database of Israelite (Numbers 1 and 26) and to see who is able to serve in the army (Numbers 26:2).

Or another example: Jesus invites the crowd to consciously estimate the cost before building a tower. He wants them to calculate the cost of being a disciple before following him. These are data-based decisions.

**So, what's the best model then?**

I suggest church leaders should be "Data-informed, faith-driven." Rather than being data-driven, this means you know the importance of having data and using it for information, but not be driven by it.

"PwC research shows that we make a decision 3 times better with data."

So, what does "data-informed, faith-driven" look like?

Before you start a new campus, you intensely pray, but also undertake the market research in that area. You evangelize to people boldly with a faithful heart but also have in your mind the demographic factors of successful converts.

But remember, God's voice is always bigger than the data. With faith, God can do more than what we see in the data (that's the definition of faith in Hebrew 11:1). Keep being faith-driven!

## **What next?**

Ask yourself, "How can we be more data-informed?"

Creating a data-informed culture will require creativity. When people make a decision, you can start by asking, "What numbers are you using?" "Have you checked any market research?" "Can you take a look at the relevant data before going further?"

We should do our homework and have the metrics before we decide. Not because data has the final say, but because it will tell us when our decision requires faith!

If we don't have the data, we won't know how hard we need to work. Or how hard we need to pray!

After asking questions like this, you might realize that you need to collect more data (e.g., how many people come to church/life group each week, demographics of a new believer, how people first found your church, etc.).

God is not against data-based decisions. Rather, he wants us to be

**data-informed  
and  
faith-driven.**

When we are, we will find that data doesn't diminish our faith. It fuels our faith. ■