

Response

Rev Dr David Wong

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Quick Biblical Note

▶ **Census by Moses**

- ▶ “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.”

Numbers 1.2

▶ **Census by King David**

- ▶ “Go and take a census of Israel and Judah. Enroll the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.”

2 Samuel 24.1-2



Numbers or No?

- ▶ “Numbers focus on **the visible and countable**. They do not always show the **true picture**, or tell the **whole story**.
- ▶ “When we **play with numbers** in the kingdom of God, we play a dangerous game. King David found out the hard way when he called for a census of his fighting men.”

David Wong, *The Narrow Road: Turning Neither Left Nor Right* (2015)

Numbers or No?

- ▶ “Does it mean we avoid numbers altogether?”
- ▶ “No, that would be swerving from one edge of the narrow path to the other. Why should we avoid numbers when **there is a book in the Bible called Numbers** which contains much numerical information?”

David Wong, *The Narrow Road: Turning Neither Left Nor Right* (2015)

Concerns from Census

- ▶ Growth of Christianity—slowing down, stabilizing, peaking, plateauing?
- ▶ Growth of “No Religion”—religion losing appeal, esp among younger Singaporeans?

Concerns from Census

- ▶ Growth of Christianity—is church failing in her mission?
- ▶ Growth of “No Religion”—how should church be reaching younger generation?

Tension # 1

- ▶ Older generation inclined towards Christianity as more rational religion
- ▶ Younger generation inclined towards No Religion as more rational
- ▶ Presenting faith as rational, not antiquated or anti-science

Tension #2

- ▶ What older generation value vs what younger generation value
- ▶ Different definitions of spirituality?
- ▶ Older generation: religious practices (reading Bible, attending church)
- ▶ Younger: practices beyond church (justice issues, climate change)

Tension #3

- ▶ Attracting younger generation to Christianity—giving them what they want?
- ▶ Or giving them what they need?
- ▶ What do they need?
- ▶ Authentic, vulnerable models of faith?
Good works with good news?

Tension #4

- ▶ Conservative views of older generation vs more open views of younger
- ▶ Can church hold on to traditional (and biblical) positions, but practise “speaking the truth with love” (Eph 4.15)?

Finally...

- ▶ Offence of “Christ Crucified”
(1 Cor 1.23)
- ▶ The Cross: Paradox of strength in weakness, wisdom in foolishness
- ▶ Beware: finding strength in numbers and wisdom in worldly benchmarks

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