

Assemblies of God Pastor Ray Baumann bio and article:

Wearing many hats typically come easy to a minister. Such is the case with Ray Baumann. Youth Pastor, Associate Pastor, Coach, Husband, and Father, Ray wears them all, while continually trying on more. Ray is a former emergent, postmodern relevant, purpose-driven church growth thinker that God has dramatically transformed. Currently serving as Associate Pastor at First Assembly of God in Belleville, IL, Ray is a 10-year youth ministry veteran turned family pastor. While he spent the first eight years of his ministry focused on growing the church, Ray has recently changed his focus to growing the believer. Coupled with a passion for speaking on youth culture and church issues, Ray enjoys coaching and training high school soccer players at Belleville East High School year round. Juggling ministry, coaching, and family isn't always easy, but Ray's easy going personality, quick wit, and his desire to disciple students are truly God-given gifts, gifts that God has used to bless Ray in both his ministry and his family. Ray and his wife Kristi have four children and have taken on the challenge of working to home school their children, all the while teaching them of the importance of leading Christ centered lives. **Their active, lively household is located in Shiloh, IL.**

Church Growth Hormone - a Biblically Banned Substance

I used to be a Church Growth Hormone addict. For my first eight years in the ministry, I was on a daily diet of books and videos centered around the latest church fads and trends that focused on church growth. I was on the cutting edge of ministry thinking, learning more and more about marketing and the psychology of connecting people. I believed that numbers equaled success, even if that meant changing the name of the church, offering self-help programs, or implementing any other sort of method I thought would help to boost the numbers.

Like many pastors, I could be compared to a professional athlete when it comes to how we view success and how we perceive we are valued. For an athlete, the math is pretty simple; if you score goals, hit home runs, and nail the three point shot, its all about the numbers. The more successful you are in making the score, in essence, hitting your numbers, the greater your worth. For pastors, it's the number of people that are sitting in the seats that seems to be the measure of success. This is something, however misguided it may be, that we all strive to obtain. Now, more than ever before, there are numerous books that place emphasis on the subject of church growth and there seems to be a greater desire to be a mega church. This desire then facilitates the thought pattern of, "If I grow the church, I'm doing more for God than the next guy."

What we have seen in recent news is that many professional athletes have been taking illegal substances to build muscle and strength to improve their performance. These players will do whatever it takes to bump up the numbers that they think give them value. To these players, the end result justifies the means no matter what the side effects. Pastors around the world have come to believe that church growth equals success. Thousands have attended conference after conference, read book after book, and are even listening to audio messages regarding church growth. Just like the professional athlete on steroids, pastors have been caught taking Church Growth Hormones for growth's sake. Many have seen the fast, "successful" results and have signed on, thus endorsing this dangerous pill. They have

improved their performances on Sundays and Wednesdays to attract people. The Church Growth Hormone contains some very ugly ingredients. Let's take a look.

The ingredients are as follows: man-centered theology, relevant messages that solve people's problems by meeting their needs, events and programs that reach out to the community, and music that is contemporary and entertaining. For best results, remove pews, dress casual, and install a 5000 lumen projector. If taken weekly and if you follow a regimented marketing strategy, you are guaranteed growth. The side effects may include unbelievers in leadership, false converts, uncommitted members, and shallow minds.

On my own, there is no way that I could see the damaging effects of what I was participating in. To top it off, I was encouraged in this sin by many people. If anyone asked how the church was doing, what they really wanted to know was how our attendance numbers were, not how God was working or what He was doing in our congregation. My world view was filled with garbage and I was blinded. My flesh was in constant need to be validated, which was coming directly from numbers and growth instead of how God was moving. That's right, I said flesh, and this was my first problem. It was all about me. When I took me out of the equation, my sight started becoming clearer. The Word had to become my number one reference for all things.

After some study, I actually began to be discerning. Those many books that I owned went right into the trash and I learned how to inductively study the Bible. When it came down to it, Jesus basically rewrote the hard drive of my mind. Steering away from a numbers-driven thought process, growing the church was no longer my focus. Now my focus is about training the believer.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." - Proverbs 16: 25