

Top Churches to Watch in America*

The act of ranking churches is a dangerous thing when approached with an unhealthy perspective of competition, idolization, or biblical immaturity. So before we get to the rankings let's cover some do's and don'ts:

- **DO** remember that what man says is a successful church isn't always what God says is a successful church.
- **DO** understand that we're incapable measuring what God values (i.e., heart attitude, authentic conversions, true discipleship, selfless advancement of the gospel, etc.) so we settle for measuring things that only hint at the possibility of spiritual fruit (i.e., church size, growth rate, influence, church planting, etc.).
- **DO** recognize that man's inferior metrics are still helpful in identifying some churches worth learning from.
- **DO** remember that the majority of great work in God's Kingdom flies under the radar and doesn't get noticed by man's systems for measuring ministry.
- **DO** remember sometimes exceptional churches have humble results in terms of size, growth, and influence. Try to discover these ministries and learn from them, too.
- **DO** remember sometimes unhealthy churches know all the right formulas to give the appearance of spiritual success.
- **DON'T** assume the churches on these lists have it all together.

Learning from other churches can give us new perspectives that help us better understand the gospel as a whole and better identify what is truly biblical vs. just cultural in our own ministries.

There are roughly 320,000 churches in the United States, and obviously no one has time to study them all. In fact, few people have time to study all 493 churches from the 22 big "top churches" lists published since 2004. If you are looking for some top churches to watch in America, here are mashups of the top churches to study in the areas of growth, innovation, church planting, size, influence, and overall.

The methods for ranking the churches are simple. Churches are ranked (1) by how many lists they have been included on and (2) by the average ranking they have had on the lists. See the end of the article for a list of all lists referenced.



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TOP 12 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from about **CHURCH GROWTH.**

These are the top churches to learn from about how to consistently experience high level growth.

1. [Crossroads Community Church](#) (Cincinnati, OH) Brian Tome
2. [Lancaster County Bible Church](#) (Manheim, PA) David Ashcraft
3. [Mars Hill Church](#) (Seattle, WA) Mark Driscoll
4. [Church of the Highlands](#) (Birmingham, AL) Chris Hodges
5. [Central Christian Church](#) (Las Vegas, NV) Jud Wilhite
6. [NewSpring Church](#) (Anderson, SC) Perry Noble
7. [Seacoast Church](#) (Mt. Pleasant, SC) Greg Surratt
8. [Elevation Church](#) (Charlotte, NC) Steven Furtick
9. [Woodlands Church](#) (Woodlands, TX) Kerry Shook
10. [Christ's Church of the Valley](#) (Peoria, AZ) Don Wilson
11. [Gateway Church](#) (Southlake, TX) Robert Morris
12. [Eagle Brook Church](#) (White Bear Lake, MN) Bob Merritt

TOP 10 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from about **CHURCH SIZE.**

These are the top churches to learn from about running a large church.

1. [Lakewood Church](#) (Houston, TX) Joel Osteen
2. [Willow Creek Community Church](#) (South Barrington, IL) Bill Hybels
3. [North Point Community Church](#) (Alpharetta, GA) Andy Stanley
4. [Second Baptist Church](#) (Houston, TX) Ed Young, Sr.
5. [LifeChurch.tv](#) (Edmond, OK) Craig Groeschel
6. [Saddleback Church](#) (Lake Forest, CA) Rick Warren
7. [Southeast Christian Church](#) (Louisville, KY) Dave Stone
8. [Phoenix First Assembly](#) (Phoenix, AZ) Tommy Barnett & Luke Barnett
9. [Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale](#) (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) Bob Coy
10. [Woodlands Church](#) (Woodlands, TX) Kerry Shook

TOP 10 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from about **CHURCH INNOVATION.**

These are the top churches to learn from about innovative methods.

1. [LifeChurch.tv](#) (Edmond, OK) Craig Groeschel
2. [Granger Community Church](#) (Granger, IN) Mark Beeson
3. [Mars Hill Church](#) (Seattle, WA) Mark Driscoll
4. [Seacoast Church](#) (Mt. Pleasant, SC) Greg Surratt
5. [Fellowship Church](#) (Grapevine, TX) Ed Young, Jr.
6. [Mosaic Church](#) (Los Angeles, CA) Erwin McManus
7. [North Point Community Church](#) (Alpharetta, GA) Andy Stanley
8. [National Community Church](#) (Washington, DC) Mark Batterson



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9. [Community Christian Church](#) (Naperville, IL) Dave Ferguson
10. [Saddleback Church](#) (Lake Forest, CA) Rick Warren

TOP 10 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from about CHURCH PLANTING.

These are the top churches to learn from about planting multiple churches.

1. [Redeemer Presbyterian Church](#) (New York, NY) Tim Keller
2. [Mars Hill Church](#) (Seattle, WA) Mark Driscoll
3. [Northwood Church](#) (Keller, TX) Bob Roberts
4. [Perimeter Church](#) (Duluth, GA) Randy Pope
5. [Spanish River Church](#) (Boca Raton, FL) David Nicholas
6. [East 91st Street Christian Center](#) (Indianapolis, IN) Derek Duncan
7. [Community Christian Church](#) (Naperville, IL) Dave Ferguson
8. [Fellowship Bible Church](#) (Little Rock, AR) Bill Wellons
9. [Kensington Community Church](#) (Troy, MI) Steve Andrews
10. [Church at the Springs](#) (Ocala, FL) Ron Sylvia

TOP 10 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from that are INFLUENCING OTHER CHURCHES.

These are the top churches that are influencing how other churches do ministry.

1. [Willow Creek Community Church](#) (South Barrington, IL) Bill Hybels
2. [Saddleback Church](#) (Lake Forest, CA) Rick Warren
3. [North Point Community Church](#) (Alpharetta, GA) Andy Stanley
4. [Fellowship Church](#) (Grapevine, TX) Ed Young, Jr.
5. [Lakewood Church](#) (Houston, TX) Joel Osteen
6. [The Potter's House](#) (Dallas, TX) T.D. Jakes
7. [LifeChurch.tv](#) (Edmond, OK) Craig Groeschel
8. [The Brooklyn Tabernacle](#) (Brooklyn, NY) Jim Cymbala
9. [The Church of the Resurrection UMC](#) (Leawood, KS) Adam Hamilton
10. [North Coast Church](#) (Vista, CA) Larry Osborne

TOP 30 U.S. CHURCHES to learn from in ALL AREAS.

These are the top churches that excel in all the measured areas from lists.

1. [Seacoast Church](#) (Mt. Pleasant, SC) Greg Surratt
2. [North Point Community Church](#) (Alpharetta, GA) Andy Stanley
3. [Saddleback Church](#) (Lake Forest, CA) Rick Warren
4. [Mars Hill Church](#) (Seattle, WA) Mark Driscoll
5. [New Hope Christian Fellowship](#) (Oahu, HI) Wayne Cordeiro
6. [Willow Creek Community Church](#) (South Barrington, IL) Bill Hybels
7. [Woodlands Church](#) (Woodlands, TX) Kerry Shook



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8. [Southeast Christian Church](#) (Louisville, KY) Dave Stone
9. [Second Baptist Church](#) (Houston, TX) Ed Young, Sr.
10. [NewSpring Church](#) (Anderson, SC) Perry Noble
11. [NorthRidge Church](#) (Plymouth, MI) Brad Powell
12. [LifeChurch.tv](#) (Edmond, OK) Craig Groeschel
13. [Fellowship Church](#) (Grapevine, TX) Ed Young, Jr.
14. [Christ's Church of the Valley](#) (Peoria, AZ) Don Wilson
15. [Central Christian Church](#) (Las Vegas, NV) Jud Wilhite
16. [Crossroads Community Church](#) (Cincinnati, OH) Brian Tome
17. [Lancaster County Bible Church](#) (Manheim, PA) David Ashcraft
18. [Lakewood Church](#) (Houston, TX) Joel Osteen
19. [Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale](#) (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) Bob Coy
20. [Prestonwood Baptist Church](#) (Plano, TX) Jack Graham
21. [Eagle Brook Church](#) (White Bear Lake, MN) Bob Merritt
22. [Community Bible Church](#) (San Antonio, TX) Robert Emmitt
23. [The Church of the Resurrection UMC](#) (Leawood, KS) Adam Hamilton
24. [Mariner's Church](#) (Irvine, CA) Kenton Beshore
25. [Christ Fellowship](#) (Palm Beach gardens, FL) Todd Mullins
26. [First Baptist Church Hammond](#) (Hammond, IN)
27. [McLean Bible Church](#) (Vienna, VA) Lon Soloman
28. [Gateway Church](#) (Southlake, TX) Robert Morris
29. [Harvest Bible Church](#) (Rolling Meadows, IL) James MacDonald
30. [North Coast Church](#) (Vista, CA) Larry Osbourne

These lists prove that success in ministry can be achieved with a variety of models. They represent a wide spectrum of denominations and ministry philosophies that reach an equally diverse spectrum of cultures and communities. Something valuable can be learned from each church.

Referenced Lists

1. *Outreach* magazine's 2012 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
2. *Outreach* magazine's 2012 100 Largest U.S. Churches
3. *Outreach* magazine's 2011 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
4. *Outreach* magazine's 2011 100 Largest U.S. Churches
5. *Outreach* magazine's 2010 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
6. *Outreach* magazine's 2010 100 Largest U.S. Churches
7. *Outreach* magazine's 2009 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
8. *Outreach* magazine's 2009 100 Largest U.S. Churches
9. *Outreach* magazine's 2008 America's 25 Most Innovative Churches
10. *Outreach* magazine's 2008 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
11. *Outreach* magazine's 2008 103 Largest U.S. Churches



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12. Outreach magazine's 2007 America's 25 Most Innovative Churches
13. Outreach magazine's 2007 101 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
14. Outreach magazine's 2007 100 Largest U.S. Churches
15. The Church Report's 2007 50 Most Influential Churches
16. Outreach magazine's 2007 America's Top 25 Multiplying Churches
17. Outreach magazine's 2006 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
18. Outreach magazine's 2006 100 Largest U.S. Churches
19. The Church Report's 2006 50 Most Influential Churches
20. Outreach magazine's 2005 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches
21. The Church Report's 2005 50 Most Influential Churches
22. Outreach magazine's 2004 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches

Special thanks to [Outreach magazine](#), [Ed Stetzer](#), and [Church Growth Today](#) for their work in compiling the data for the original lists.

* **Source:** www.churchrelevance.com