



The Metrics White Paper

A Shared Framework for Measuring Digital Gospel Engagement and Discipleship

Executive Summary

The 153 Collective exists to help the global Church reach a digitally connected world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and guide people into lifelong discipleship.

To do this effectively—together—we must measure what truly matters.

The 153 has built a VITAL framework that provides a shared standard for measuring one critical dimension:

Meaningful engagement with the Gospel of Jesus Christ that leads toward transformation and lived-out faith.

VITAL is not designed to measure all ministry activity. Instead, it focuses specifically on how individuals online engage with the Gospel and progress along a spiritual journey—from first exposure to active participation in the Kingdom of God.

1. Why VITAL Exists

Across digital ministries, we commonly measure:

- Reach
- Traffic
- Activity
- Engagement

However, these metrics do not answer a deeper question:

How clearly are people encountering the Gospel, and how deeply are they responding to Jesus?

VITAL addresses this gap by providing:

- A shared language
- A consistent engagement model
- A framework for tracking spiritual progression

By aligning around these definitions, ministries can:

- Strengthen collaboration
- Improve clarity with donors and partners
- Learn from one another
- Measure what truly matters

2. Foundational Principles

2.1 Gospel-Centered Measurement

VITAL measures engagement with **defined Gospel content at every stage of the journey**.

This means:

- Views must reflect Gospel or scripture exposure
- Interactions must involve Gospel or scripture content
- Engagement must reflect a response to Gospel truth

Not all spiritual or inspirational content qualifies.

A metric is only counted when it is tied to **clear communication of scripture or the Gospel of Jesus Christ**.

2.2 Seeker-Centered, Not Ministry-Centered

VITAL measures the **individual's spiritual journey**, not their level of engagement with a specific organization.

This means:

- Progress is defined by movement toward Christ—not toward a platform
- The goal is not retention within a ministry
- The goal is transformation and discipleship

2.3 People Over Events

The VITAL framework begins with event-based measurement (views and interactions), but ultimately focuses on people.

The progression moves from:

- Anonymous exposure → to known individuals → to active participants pursuing faith

This reflects the reality that ministry is not about events—it is about people encountering Jesus.

2.4 Engagement as a Journey

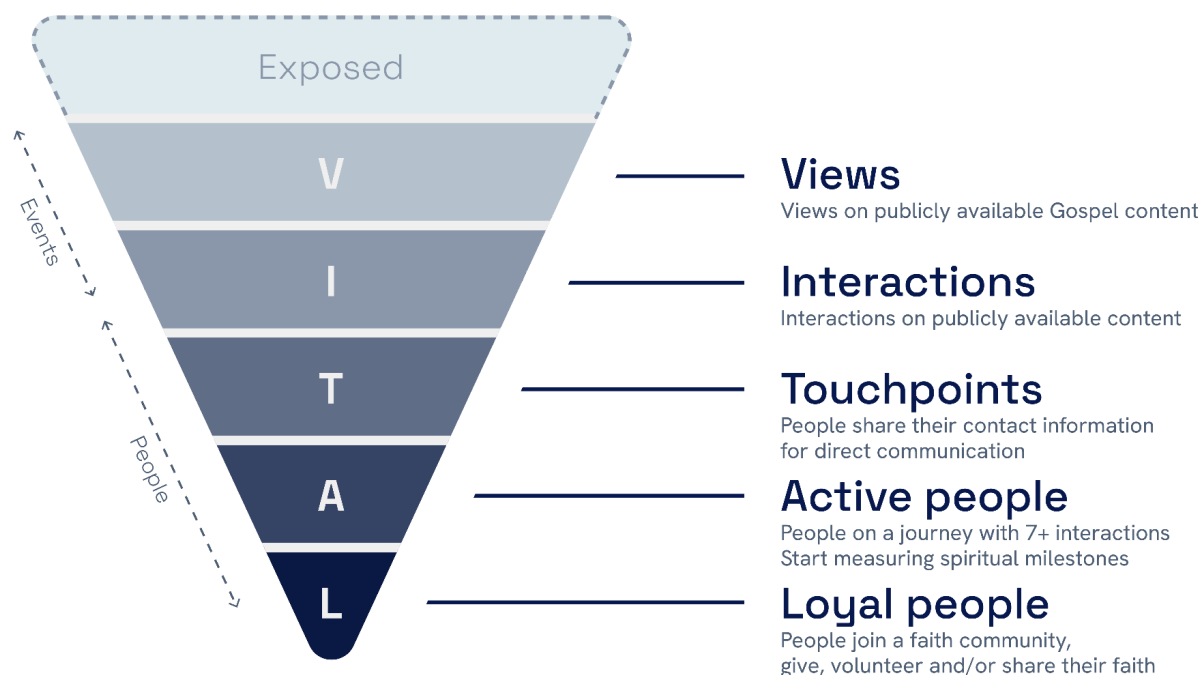
VITAL reflects a progression—not isolated actions.

A spiritual journey is defined by:

- Repeated engagement
- Increasing intent
- Movement toward transformation

This requires measuring patterns over time, not single moments.

3. The VITAL Engagement Journey



The VITAL framework defines five stages of engagement:

1. **Views** – Views of Gospel or scripture content
2. **Interactions** – Interactions with publicly available content
3. **Touchpoints** – Contact information provided for direct communication
4. **Active People** – Ongoing direct communication (7+ turns) and spiritual intent
5. **Loyal People** – Faith expressed through outward action of joining a faith community, baptism, sharing faith, tithing/donating, etc.

This journey reflects movement from awareness to transformation to multiplication.

4. Standardized Definitions

4.1 Views

Note: See [the appendix](#) for the more detailed definitions and a technical implementation guide.

Definition: Views on publicly available Gospel-centered content

A *View* is a moment in which an individual views content that clearly communicates one or more essential elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Gospel View must include one or more of the following:

- God's nature (His character, holiness, love, justice, sovereignty)
- The identity of Jesus (who He is as Savior and Lord)
- Sin and forgiveness
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- A clear invitation to salvation

Principle:

A view is counted when a portion or a full presentation of the Gospel was meaningfully presented.

4.2 Interactions

Definition: Interactions with publicly available Gospel-centered content

Examples include:

- Clicking, scrolling, or engaging with scriptural or Gospel presentations
- Liking, commenting, or sharing content
- Completing biblical or Gospel reading plans or videos

Principle:

Interactions are only counted when they involve **clear Gospel or scriptural content**.

4.3 Touchpoints

Definition: People who give their contact information.

A person provides contact information after engaging with Gospel content, opening the door for a relationship.

This marks the transition from: Anonymous → Known individual

A person is considered "known" if the organization has any unique identifier that enables direct communication with them.

Principle:

The relationship begins around the Gospel—not simply content interest.

4.4 Active People

Definition:

Definition: 'Known' people who have 7+ identity-resolved engagements.

Divided into Self-Guided/Mass Media journeys and Person-Guided/Chat-Based journeys across applicable channels.

- Self-Guided / Mass Media: 7 opens, responses, or equivalent engagement actions.
- Person-Guided / Chat-Based: 7 turns in a conversation.

Why 7+?

- Demonstrates repetition and intent
- Indicates meaningful interest in spiritual growth
- Reflects early-stage discipleship engagement

4.5 Loyal People

Definition: People who demonstrate active, outward expressions of their faith connected to the ministry or the broader Kingdom of God.

Loyalty is not defined by commitment to a ministry, but by **commitment to Christ expressed in action**.

A person is categorized as Loyal when they demonstrate **one or more** of the following outward expressions of faith:

- Participating in a local church or faith community (including seeker self-reporting)
- Serving or volunteering in ministry
- Giving financially to a ministry
- Praying for your ministry
- Sharing their faith with others (including seeker self-reporting)

Principle:

These individuals are not passive consumers of spiritual content.

They are **active participants in the Kingdom of God**.

5. From Engagement to Discipleship

VITAL is an engagement model. It is a pathway toward:

- Transformation
- Formation
- Multiplication

The goal is not to move people deeper into a platform—but deeper into a life with Christ.

6. New Active Faith Journeys

“New Active Faith Journeys” is the 153 Collective’s agreed-upon core metric to represent Active people. Additional clarification on this metric:

- The intent is to report only **new** active faith journeys **initiated during** the reporting period, which will be based on calendar year.
- For **both email and chat/messaging**, a back-and-forth conversational "turn" is considered one indicator for Person-Guided journeys, while opens, clicks, or equivalent actions count toward Self-Guided journeys.
- We will not weight types of indicators. While realistically true, the complexity to measure is not beneficial as this metric represents a gateway and starting point. More depth and qualitative measures come later.
- Ministries should independently track New Active Person-Guided Journeys and New Active Self-Guided Journeys. Both the rolled-up number and breakdown will be reported to the 153 Collective. Tracking separate journeys will guide a ministry on improvement and growth in each journey and provide transparency to donors.
- For those with capacity, there are benefits to additional differentiation within the data:
 - Tracking to language and country
 - Demographics: gender, age, etc.

7. Spiritual Milestones

As individuals become Active, we begin prioritizing **spiritual milestones**, not just activity.

- Belief
 - Indicated decision - self-reported using a form they submit. This goes beyond just anonymous clicks of a salvation button.
 - Confirmed Profession of Faith - validated or reported by someone else
- Bible Engagement
- Prayer Habits
- Baptism
- Faith community
- Christ-Likeness

These represent:

- Changes in belief
- Changes in behavior
- Growth in spiritual maturity

They are indicators of transformation—not just engagement. A separate white paper will be produced later that delves into this topic in greater detail.

8. Why This Matters

For the Global Church

- Aligns efforts across a fragmented digital landscape
- Ensures clarity in Gospel communication
- Connects outreach to discipleship

For the 153 Collective

- Enables shared measurement and learning
- Strengthens collaboration and unity
- Multiplies collective impact

For Donors and Partners

- Provides transparency and clarity
- Demonstrates meaningful engagement
- Connects metrics to real transformation

9. Guardrails for Integrity

To preserve the integrity of this framework:

- All stages must be tied to **Gospel-centered or scripture content and engagement**
- Metrics must reflect **spiritual progression, not platform activity**
- Success must be defined by **transformation, not retention**
- Loyalty must reflect **Kingdom participation, not organizational affiliation**

9. The Road Ahead

VITAL is a foundation—not a finished system.

The 153 Collective will continue to develop:

- Spiritual growth measurement
- Personalization of seeker journeys
- Shared learning systems across organizations

Together, we can grow in clarity, effectiveness, and unity.

Final Thought

VITAL helps us answer a deeper question:

**Not just how many people we reach—
but how clearly we share the Gospel,
and how deeply people respond to Jesus.**

And that is where transformation begins.

Appendix: VITAL – Technical Definitions

Counting rules (apply to all metrics)

Before the per-tier definitions, these rules govern how anything gets counted.

- **Platform measurement standards:** Wherever possible, we use the platform's default measurement standards. Whatever the source dashboard shows as its standard count is what VITAL uses.
- **Reporting period:** Every VITAL number is reported for a specific time window (e.g., April 2026, Q1, last 12 months, all-time). The definitions below describe what counts within whatever window is being reported.
 - **Note:** For the reporting to the 153 collective, the reporting period will always be a **calendar year**.
- **Identity resolution:** "Known" means identity-resolved — tied to a specific person record that the ministry is able to contact. Cookie/device IDs alone do not qualify a person as Known.
- **Sequencing:** Views and Interactions are *events* (can repeat per person within a period). Touchpoints, Active, and Loyal are *deduplicated people* (each person counted only once). This deduplication happens whenever possible. If not possible, this needs to be disclosed in the reporting.
- **Scope:** This is a digital framework. In-person events are out of scope, except where a digital signup for an in-person event creates a Touchpoint (e.g., a conference registration form on the website).
- **Retroactive interaction attribution:** Interactions that occurred before a Touchpoint may be counted if they can be reliably linked to the same person record after identity resolution. These retroactively attributed interactions also count toward the Active People threshold.
- **Gospel content tagging:** All content in the VITAL-framework needs to be gospel-related. Content is tagged at the most specific level possible. Where platform limitations apply, page-level tagging (e.g., Facebook/Instagram page or website) is accepted.
- **Meaningful engagements:** Engagements should be meaningful. We strive to exclude incidental interactions such as viewing a privacy policy or navigating a menu.

Global definitions

Tier	Definition
Views	Views on publicly available content in the reporting period

Tier	Definition
Interactions	Interactions with publicly available content in the reporting period
Touchpoints	People who gave their contact information for the first time ever in the reporting period
Active People	'Known' people who cross the lifetime threshold of 7+ identity-resolved engagements in the reporting period. Divided into Self-Guided/Mass Media journeys and Person-Guided/Chat-Based journeys across applicable channels. Any identity-resolved engagement counts toward the threshold, including Views-tier actions such as email opens and logged-in page loads.
Loyal People	People who demonstrate active, outward expressions of their faith connected to the ministry or the broader Kingdom of God.

Views

General definition: Views on publicly available content in the reporting period.

Platform	Definition
E-learning	Not applicable for this stage
Email	Not applicable for this stage
Web	Page view (GA4 standard)
YouVersion	Bible reading plan start
Mobile App	Page view (GA4 standard)
YouTube / Video Platform	View (Organic) / TrueView Views (Ad Supported) (YouTube Analytics standard)
Podcast	Listen / Download

Platform	Definition
Facebook	Views (Meta Business Suite aggregate, paid or organic)
Instagram	Views (Meta Business Suite aggregate, paid or organic)
TikTok	Video view (paid or organic)
LinkedIn	Impression (paid or organic)
Direct Messages / Chat	Not applicable for this stage

Notes for technical teams:

- Meta renamed/redefined "Views" in 2024 as a unified metric across formats. Historical comparisons to pre-2024 "Impressions" may not be directly comparable.
- LinkedIn reports "Impressions" rather than "Views" at the platform level — this is accepted as the platform standard, even though the bar is lower than a Meta view.
- Podcast "Listen" should use the host's standard download/listen count (IAB-compliant where available).

Interactions

General definition: Interactions with publicly available content in the reporting period.

Platform	Definition
E-learning	Not applicable for this stage
Email	Not applicable for this stage
Web	Engaged session (GA4 standard: 10+ seconds, or a conversion event, or 2+ pageviews)
YouVersion	Bible reading plan finish
Mobile App	Engaged session (GA4 standard)
YouTube / Video Platform	Subscription / Like / Comment / Share (YouTube standard)
Podcast	Like / Comment / Share

Platform	Definition
Facebook	Interactions (Meta Business Suite aggregate, paid or organic)
Instagram	Interactions (Meta Business Suite aggregate, paid or organic)
TikTok	Like / Comment / Share (paid or organic)
LinkedIn	Engagement (paid or organic)
Direct Messages / Chat	Not applicable for this stage

Source note: For Meta platforms, use either Meta Business Suite or the Graph API Page Insights endpoint — Meta is actively aligning these to return the same numbers (the legacy **impressions** metric was replaced by **views** in November 2025 specifically to match the dashboard). Do not use legacy or breakdown API fields (e.g., **post_engagements**, individual reaction counts) for VITAL totals; use the unified **views** and **total_interactions** metrics. Technical teams should track the Meta changelog — a major deprecation wave lands June 15, 2026, replacing several Page Insights metrics with new "Media Views" / "Media Viewers" equivalents.

Touchpoints

General definition: People who gave their contact information (through which you can contact them privately) **for the first time ever** in the reporting period. Counted person-centric — each person counts once regardless of how many platforms they sign up on.

Platform	Definition
E-learning	Individuals who sign up for the platform
Email	Individuals who sign up for an email list or other email communication
Web	Individuals who submit a form or register on a website
YouVersion	Not applicable for this stage
Mobile App	Individuals who register in an app
YouTube / Video Platform	Not applicable for this stage
Podcast	Not applicable for this stage

Platform	Definition
Social Media	Individuals that submit their contact information through a lead form or something similar
Direct Messages / Chat	Individuals who send a direct message

Counting rule for reporting periods: Touchpoints in a given period are unique people who provided their contact information for the first time ever, during that period. A person who became known in a prior period is not counted again, regardless of subsequent contact events.

For example, Touchpoints in April = unique people who gave their contact information for the first time in April. Someone who signed up for the email list in February and registered on the app in April does not count as a Touchpoint in April — they already became known in February. Someone who gives their contact information for the first time in April counts as a Touchpoint in April.

Implementation note for technical teams: For most situations, this is the date a contact is created in your CRM system.

Active People

General definition: 'Known' (they have had a touchpoint) people who cross the threshold of 7+ identity-resolved engagements in the reporting period.

Interactions (from the [interactions](#) segment) that you can attribute to a 'known' person count, even if they happened before the touchpoint.

Engagement tracks are strictly categorized into two types across applicable text and message-driven platforms:

1. **Self-Guided / Mass Media:** Requires 7 opens, responses, or equivalent engagement actions.
2. **Person-Guided / Chat-Based:** Requires 7 turns in a conversation.

Platform	Definition
E-learning	Logged-in individuals who interact with 7+ pieces of content on an e-learning platform
Email	a. Self-Guided / Mass Media: Individuals who open, click, or respond to 7+ distinct emails b. Person-Guided / Chat-Based: Individuals who

Platform	Definition
	have 7 turns in a conversation
Web	Logged-in individuals who interact with 7+ pieces of content on a website
YouVersion	Not applicable for this stage
Mobile App	Logged-in individuals who interact with 7+ pieces of content on a mobile app
YouTube / Video Platform	Not applicable for this stage
Podcast	Not applicable for this stage
Social Media	Not applicable for this stage
Direct Messages / Chat	a. Self-Guided / Mass Media: Individuals who open, click, or respond to 7+ distinct direct messages b. Person-Guided / Chat-Based: Individuals who have 7 turns in a conversation

Counting rule for reporting periods: Active People in a given period are people who cross the 7+ lifetime threshold in the reporting period.

For example, *Active People in April 2026* = people with any identity-resolved engagement in April 2026 whose lifetime engagement count is 7 or more by the end of April.

Implementation note for technical teams: Recommended pattern is a timestamp on the person record (e.g., `date_activated = 2026-05-21`) set once when the 7th engagement is recorded and never unset.

Note on data quality: Email opens on iOS are inflated by Apple Mail Privacy Protection, which auto-fetches images. This inflation flows into Active People counts. Treat Active People as a proxy for "in our orbit," not a precise measure of intent.

Loyal People

General definition: People who demonstrate active, outward expressions of their faith connected to the ministry or the broader Kingdom of God.

A person is counted as Loyal in the reporting period if any one of the following events happened for the first time:

Loyal – within your digital ministry

Loyal event	Data source
Participating in a local church or faith community	Self-reported via survey, check-in form, or direct conversation
Giving financially to your ministry	Donation recorded in CRM / donation system
Volunteering or serving within your ministry	Volunteer shift, training comp or role activity recorded in ministry CRM
Sharing their faith with others	Public testimony form, self-reported survey response, or direct conversation
Praying within your ministry	Subscription to a prayer list

Note: In the future we want to add 'reaching the multiply stage of a spiritual growth pillar' as a loyal event, but this model needs to be developed further first.

Counting rule for reporting periods:

- *Loyal People yesterday* = distinct people that had their first loyal event yesterday
- *Loyal People last 12 months* = distinct people with their first loyal event in that window
- *Loyal People ever* = distinct people with at least one loyal event on record
- De-duplicated at the person level within the reporting period

Implementation note for technical teams: Recommended pattern is a timestamp on the person record (e.g., `date_became_loyal = 2026-05-21`) set once when the first 'loyal event' happened.

Notes for technical teams:

- Survey responses are treated as the event itself — someone is "Loyal on the day they filled out the survey." Periodic re-surveying is recommended.
- Loyal People are independent of Active People. A donor who never engages digitally still counts as Loyal.