



Podcast 18 Transcript: Systems Map: A Failing U.S. Armenian Christian Ecosystem: 12 Body Parts — Currently Underperforming with Extraordinary Potential

(0:00 - 0:09)

So let's get into this. We're doing a deep dive today on a new systems map from Khachkar Studios, and it looks at the entire U.S. Armenian Christian ecosystem. Mm-hmm.

(0:10 - 0:30)

The big takeaway here is, and it's really surprising, that the core problem might not be a lack of faith. Right. It might actually be a dramatic lack of management discipline. Of measurement. Exactly. And so our mission today for you listening is to really walk through the data that led them to that conclusion.

(0:31 - 00:53)

They've identified what they call 12 body parts or structural flaws in the system. OK, so where do we even start? Well, the potential for renewal is extraordinary. But first, you have to see the problem. And the baseline data, it is. It's pretty sobering. The map defines faithful simply as, you know, regular non-holiday church attendance. A really basic metric. By that metric alone, the U.S. Armenian Christian ecosystem is in the bottom decile.

(00:54 - 1:05)

Nearly last among similar Orthodox Christian groups. And the number itself is just 3%. Only 3% of U.S. Armenians are categorized as faithful. But here's the critical part. It's the perception gap.

(1:06 - 1:24)

The source material says many people in the community think that number is closer to 30%. 30, so a 10x difference. A 10x difference. That 27-point gap between reality and perception, that's maybe the single greatest barrier to even acknowledging there's a problem to solve. Okay, so if the whole community is underperforming,

(1:25 - 1:43)

Where does the leak start? Is it a generational thing? It is. The data points to a really critical failure in let's call it long term faith formation. A handoff to the next generation. Precisely. You look at the youth engagement and it's stark. Only 1 percent of U.S. Armenians between 18 and 29 are faithful. 1 percent.

(1:44 - 2:11)

Just 1%. Now here's the comparison. About 10% of that same age group attend accredited Armenian schools. So you have a 10 to 1 ratio. A massive institutional leak. It shows a complete failure to translate that cultural education into any kind of sustained adult commitment to the church. And that leads right into what Khachkar Studios sees as the core opportunity here, right? The total absence of measurement and management. Exactly. This is where the whole conversation shifts. Oh,

(2:12 - 2:40)

away from faith, towards structure. - They have these shocking 0% metrics. - They do. The data shows 0% adoption of any kind of biblically inspired world-class benchmarking or management. - It's like trying to run a major company, but refusing to look at the financials. - That's a perfect analogy. - I have to ask for our listeners, what does biblically inspired benchmarking actually look like? What are we talking about here? - It's about measuring transformation, not just attendance.



(2:41 - 3:04)

So another 0% metric from their findings is that there is zero systematic effort to train or even retain church role model households. So no one is tracking what success even looks like. No one. And that's supported by other data points. 0% read the Bible daily. 0% attend Bible study classes. The discipline, the structure, it just isn't there. And you can see how that weak management kind of ripples out.

(3:05 - 3:10)

beyond just the church itself. Oh, absolutely. It affects the whole ecosystem. Like with the major philanthropist.

(3:11 – 3:33)

The report says they only dedicate about 2% of their donations to religious activities. Only 2%. And even when they do invest, the social return on investment, the SROI, is incredibly low. Right, the SROI. That's the actual impact you get for every dollar you put in. And their return is 3.7x. That's only 39% of the U.S. Orthodox median, which is up at 9.4x.

(3:34 - 3:51)

So resources are being wasted because there's no data guiding the decisions. No data at all. You even see it in the media. Only 3% of articles, 5% of ads in Armenian English news outlets have any religious content. When the media and the money aren't prioritizing the spiritual core, the whole system just kind of

(3:52 - 4:13)

withers. So the map really shows how this one problem is lack of measurement just cascades through all 12 of these body parts and creates these really deep barriers. It compounds. And that's the central insight from Khachkar Studios. They argue that if you just apply basic financial discipline and management excellence, you can dramatically improve church vitality. So it leaves you with this final provocative thought.

(4:14 - 4:42)

If we agree that what isn't measured can't be improved, then the fact that there's 0% adoption of this kind of structure suggests the path to renewal is less about, I don't know, spiritual fervor and more about just getting the right systems in place. It reframes the entire discussion. It makes it a solvable organizational problem. And for you, the listener, if you want to explore this full systems map, the framework, all of the evidence-based analysis, you can find it at khachkarstudios.com.