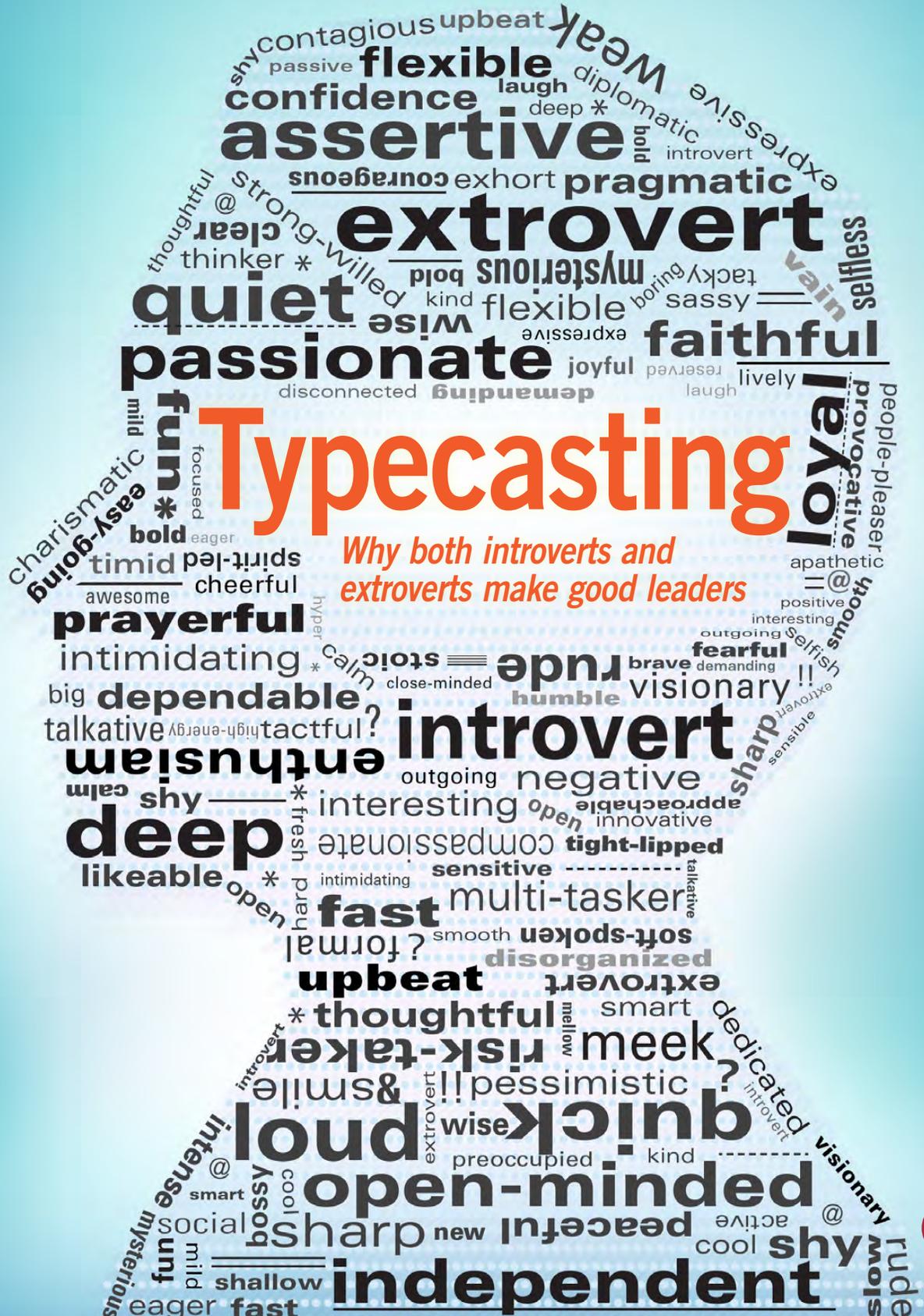


Facts & Trends

WINTER 2014



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Transformational Groups

In *Transformational Groups*, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger provide a map to transformational success for your church's groups ministry. Using data from the largest survey of pastors and laypersons ever taken on the condition of groups in the church, they define a simple process to lead your groups from where they are to where God wants them to be.

LifeWay.com



Bible Studies for Life Small Group Studies

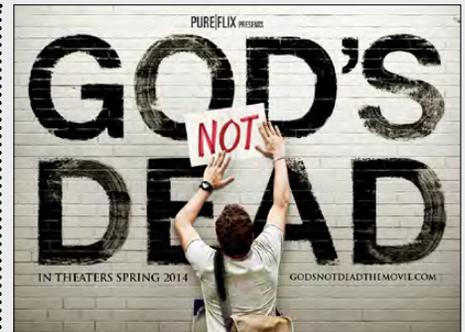
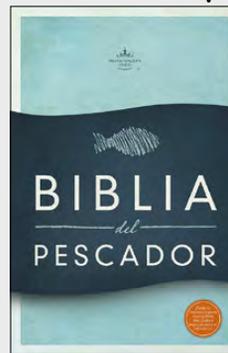
Each six-session study is ideal for small groups that want to study the Bible from the starting point of life application. Topics include facing life's pressures, dealing with conflict, answering questions people have about God and the Bible, and finding joy in our work and in our giving. Group member books are available in print, digital and app formats. Leader kits include Bible commentary, short videos and other helps.

BibleStudiesforLife.com/smallgroups

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BHPublishingGroup.com



God's Not Dead

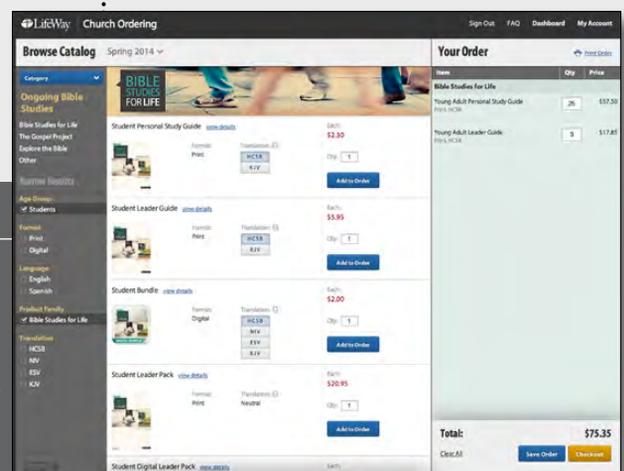
God's Not Dead, a film about the existence of God and defending one's faith, stars Shane Harper (*Good Luck Charlie*) as a college freshman who is forced to defend his position that God is alive in a series of debates with his philosophy professor. The film also stars Kevin Sorbo (*Hercules, Soul Surfer*), Dean Cain (*Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*) and David A. R. White (*Evening Shade*). The movie features special appearances by Duck Dynasty's Willie and Korie Robertson and the Newsboys.

LifeWay.com/GodsNotDead

LifeWay Church Ordering

The new LifeWay Church Ordering system, powered by BUILD-IT, allows churches to easily browse the online catalog and customize their order. Churches will find options for selecting a particular Bible study starting point, age group, translation, and print or digital delivery format. Order Bible studies, magazines, bulletins and select music resources.

LifeWay.com/churchordering



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Facts&Trends

Volume 60 • Number 1 • WINTER 2014

Facts&Trends is designed to help pastors, church staff and denominational leaders navigate the issues and trends impacting the church by providing information, insight and resources for effective ministry.

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Facts&Trends is published quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources.



INSIDE F&T



Playing to type

When you meet new people, do you clam up and retreat to the other side of the room? Or do you converse with them like a long lost friend? After church, are you out the door at the strum of the invitation's last chord? Or do you linger and visit until the last light is turned off? Do you process information internally or externally? What drains you: being with others or being alone?

In this issue of *Facts & Trends*, we take a look at the differences between introverts and extroverts. You'll hear from Christian leaders on both ends of the spectrum. Authors Ron Edmondson and Alvin Reid examine the strengths and challenges of their respective personality types and how they adapt to be better leaders.

God has created each of us as a unique blend of personality, talents and skills. As comfortable as we may be functioning within our unique personality patterns, God often calls us to stretch a bit outside our comfort zones, especially when leading others.

Whether you are an introverted or extroverted leader, you're inevitably going to lead people with the opposite personality type at some time or another. The more you understand your own personality type and that of those around you, the better leader you will be. It's important that we learn to value, appreciate and serve one another.

As you read the cover section (pages 14-21) and columns by Thom Rainer (page 7) and Ed Stetzer (page 50), ask yourself: Where do I find my energy? How do I process information? How do I communicate? What about the people I work with and lead?

Also in this issue:

Pastors, pundits and reporters like to quote statistics that fit their narrative. A sermon on divorce includes the statistics that Christians divorce as much as anyone else. A conference about the church's future hypes the latest "news" that everyone under 20 is abandoning the church. In "False Facts" (page 23), Bob Smietana debunks several bad stats about Christians and the church. He explores their appeal and why they persist.

Carol Pipes, Editor

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Seven Tips for Introverted Leaders

Some people are surprised when, as CEO of a large company, I confess to being an introvert. Admittedly, it's an odd combination. I'm required to be out front leading and speaking every week when, honestly, I'd rather be alone.

Being an introvert doesn't mean I don't like people or that I'm quiet all the time. Introversion has to do with where I get my energy.

Think of an introvert as an automobile with a tank of fuel. The longer an introvert is in a meeting or public setting, the more fuel is depleted. At some point we introverts run out of fuel and become almost non-functional. We can only refuel by moving to a more private setting. I'm personally fueled by the time I spend alone with my thoughts, in deep study or writing.

Introverts are usually comfortable communicating behind the quiet clicks of a computer with no face-to-face interaction. We relish times of solitude, reflection and personal study.

Surely, other introverts can identify with my dread at being placed at a dinner table where I'm expected to carry the conversation. I don't like being the center of attention. To the contrary, a lone corner of a room with no one noticing me suits me just fine. Introverts are often perceived as unfriendly. I am not gregarious or outgoing, but I am deeply loyal to friends and family. Still, I have to work on my appearance of unfriendliness.

Compensating for Introversion

Through the years, I have tried to compensate for my strong tendencies

toward introversion. Indeed any leader must compensate to lead effectively. Here are seven principles for leading as an introverted leader.

- 1. Practice LBWA, leadership by walking around.** I shouldn't stay confined to the comforts and seclusion of my office. I must be seen by my staff, as well as by constituents and customers. I need to be around people in order to develop relationships. The same goes for pastors. While an introvert should not plan too much interaction, force yourself to get out among the members of your church frequently, even if only for brief periods of time.
- 2. Be transparent about your introversion.** Being open will allow people to understand you better. If people know you are an introvert, they will be less likely to misinterpret a quiet and reticent nature as a lack of interest or unfriendliness.
- 3. When possible, I try to keep meetings short.** The longer a meeting, the more I get drained.
- 4. As much as possible, I try to have an extrovert with me when I'm in public or group settings.** That extrovert can help carry the conversation. I can nod my head and smile.
- 5. Be accountable to an extrovert.** It's important to have someone you trust

who can speak to you truthfully and remind you when you are sinking into extreme introversion. If I appear to be acting like an uninterested jerk, that friend does not hesitate to tell me. He tells me how my actions or lack of actions may be perceived.

- 6. Use social media as your voice.** Introverts often struggle with being social in person, but typically don't mind writing. The more people see you on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or a blog, the more they will feel like they know you, even though you don't have one-on-one interaction with them. Social media is a great tool for introverts.
- 7. Schedule time to recover.** If I don't recharge my batteries often, I become a useless leader. But I can't succumb to the temptation to perpetuate my downtime. I must return to all of the principles stated above.

It is possible for introverts to lead. But it takes effort. Don't allow your personality to be an excuse to keep you from doing what God has called you to do. ■

In His Service,

Thom S. Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources.



Prayer and Mental Illness

Nearly half (48 percent) of evangelical, fundamentalist, or born-again Christians—believe prayer and Bible study alone can overcome serious mental illness.

Fifty-four percent of Americans say churches should do more to prevent suicide. That number jumps to 64 percent among evangelical, fundamentalist or born-again Christians.

At the same time, a third of Americans—and nearly half (48 percent) of evangelical, fundamentalist, or born-again Christians—believe prayer and Bible study alone can overcome serious mental illness.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, said Christians care about those affected by mental illness. But he worries some Christians see mental illness as a character flaw rather than a

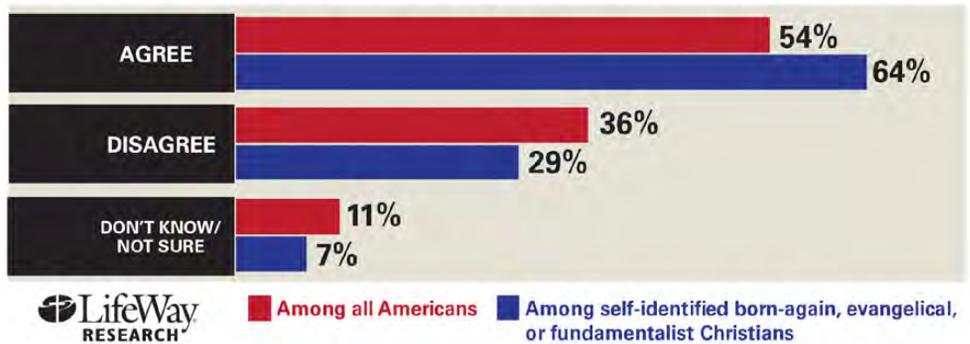
medical condition. Christians will go to the doctor if they break their leg, he said. But some may try to pray away serious mental illness.

“They forget that the key part of mental illness is the word ‘illness,’” he said. “In a typical evangelical church, half the people believe mental illness can be solved by prayer and Bible study alone.”

The study also found, just over half (51 percent) say someone close to them has experienced mental illness. And most Americans (68 percent) say they would feel welcome in church if they were mentally ill.

Source: LifeWay Research

Christian churches should do more to prevent suicide in America today.



QUOTABLES

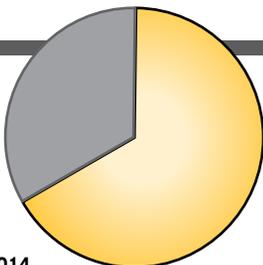
“The family needs to be restored as the ultimate small group.”

—Randy Frazee, senior pastor of Oak Hills Church, San Antonio, Texas

Preferred Careers

When asked what kind of career people would want if money didn't matter, 42 percent of Americans answered they'd want to help others—as a nurse, social worker, human rights worker or philanthropist. Another 15 percent answered that they'd work as teachers, and 13 percent as artists and musicians.

Source: Fast Company



NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS AGREE THEY CAN TRUST THE BIBLE TO TELL THEM WHO GOD IS.

Source: Bible Studies for Life and LifeWay Research

Childhood faith impacts adult commitment

Homes with serious faith tend to produce children who carry faith into adulthood, according to a recent study by Focus on the Family. “Parents who provide a home where faith is vibrantly practiced—even imperfectly—are remarkably likely to create young adults who remain serious Christians, even as they sometimes to through bumpy spots in the road,” the study said. Sixty percent of Millennials categorize themselves as keeping faith.

60%
of millennials categorize themselves as keeping faith.

The study tracked the religious trends of Millennials and found only a fraction are leaving their childhood faith—most likely because they didn’t have much of one to begin with. About a fifth (18 percent) of young adults raised in homes with any measure of religious influence are now unaffiliated with a specific faith.

Of the unaffiliated, only 11 percent say they had a strong faith as a child and lived in a home where vibrant faith was practiced and taught. In other words, the majority of young adults leaving Christianity never had a strong faith to begin with. The Focus on the Family study noted, “this is not a crisis of faith, per se, but of parenting.”

Churches have an increasingly important opportunity to help parents build strong, godly families.

Source: Focus on the Family

Sounds for Work



PHOTO BIGSTOCK

Are you among the masses who prefer to put in office hours at your local coffee shop? If so, there may be a scientific reason. Research published in *The Journal of Consumer Research*, found the background noise of a typical coffee shop provides just the right level of sound, about 70 decibels, to stimulate creativity and help people concentrate.

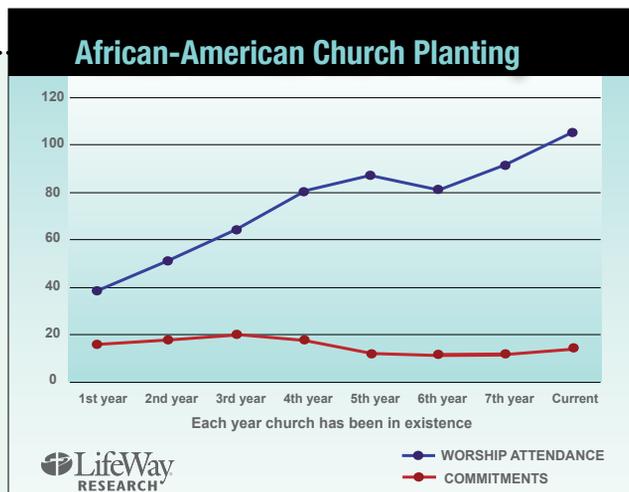
Not ready to fork over \$4 for a cup of Joe? You’re in luck. A new website, Coffitivity.com, plays a looped coffee shop soundtrack, providing listeners the same background noise without all the caffeine. Researchers warn that moderate noise only works for creative tasks, though. Quiet environments are best suited for detailed projects like doing your taxes.

Source: New York Times

AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH PLANTS

A steady increase in attendance is the overall trend among African-American church starts, according to a study by LifeWay Research on African-American church plants. Conversions peaked in year three at 20 and then remained at 12 or higher for the rest of the years measured. Two activities common among a majority of churches that positively impacted new commitments to Christ were door-to-door evangelism and new members’ classes.

Source: LifeWay Research





God and football

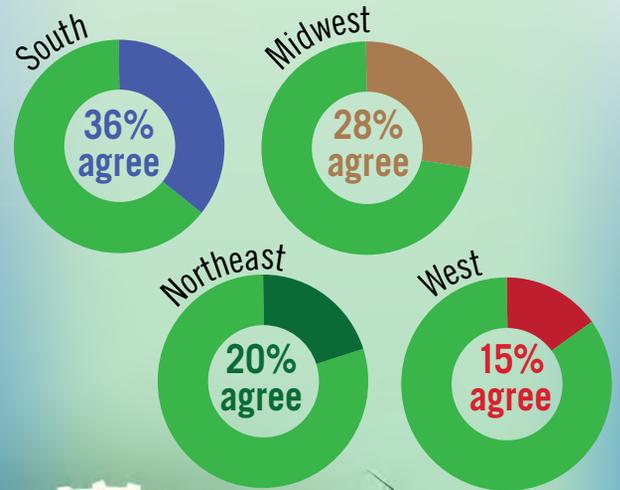
Nearly 3-in-10 (27 percent) Americans believe God plays a role in determining which team wins sports events, according to a Religion and Politics Tracking Survey, conducted by Public Religion Research Institute during the weekend of Super Bowl XLVII.

Americans in the South are most likely to think God has a stake in the outcome of sports games. More than one-third (36 percent) of Southerners say that God plays a role in who wins, compared to nearly 3-in-10 (28 percent) Americans in the Midwest, 1-in-5 (20 percent) of Americans in the Northeast, and 15 percent of Westerners.

When it comes to watching sports, Americans are just as likely to say they watch sports at least once a week as they are to say they attend church or another place of worship. More than 4-in-10 Americans say they watch college or professional sports more than once a week (22 percent) or once a week (19 percent). Similarly, nearly 4-in-10 (37 percent) Americans say they attend a church or place of worship at least once a week.

Source: RNS

GOD PLAYS A ROLE IN OUTCOME OF SPORTS GAMES BY REGION:



Weight of regret

Almost half of Americans feel the weight of a bad choice from their past, according to a recent study by LifeWay Research.

The study, sponsored by *Bible Studies for Life: Do Over*, a group study from LifeWay Christian Resources, also found the vast majority of Americans believe God gives second chances for those who have made a bad decision.

Almost half of Americans (44 percent) believe God's offering of a second chances depends on human action.

On what basis does God give second chances?



LifeWayResearch.com



Source: LifeWay Research

The Cost of a Job

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “After drug dealing, trafficking of humans is tied with arms dealing as the second-largest criminal industry in the world.” People fall victim to trafficking for many reasons. Some may simply be seeking a better life, a promising job, or even an adventure. Others may be poverty stricken and forced to migrate for work, or they may be marginalized by their society. An estimated 20 million men, women and children around the world are victims of what is now often described with the umbrella term “human trafficking.”

Most people think only about how much they will earn from a job. But for people desperate to obtain employment to provide for and support their families, a job can also come with extreme costs, sometimes in the form of modern slavery:

- A 15-year-old Indian girl spends three years of her life working in a garment or textile factory, forced to work excessive hours in dangerous conditions, and often subjected to verbal or sexual abuse. At the end of this three-year period, she might receive a payment of approximately \$645 - \$860, which would be used as a dowry to give to the family of her future husband.
- An undocumented Guatemalan worker in the United States is



PHOTO BBC ASIA

Victims of forced labor lose an estimated \$20 billion of earnings every year.

forced by traffickers to perform labor that is not covered by the visa provided by his labor broker. He is then forced to repay the broker and travel fees, all while working nearly 80 hours a week for less than minimum wage.

- The cost of a job for Vietnamese migrant workers seeking work abroad may be the equivalent of \$4,250 or three times Vietnam’s per capita income. When they go abroad, some of these workers have debts that exceed the earnings they expect in the first year of typical three-year contracts.

Victims of forced labor lose an estimated \$20 billion of earnings every year.

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Find out how your church can make a difference: PolarisProject.org, theA21Campaign.org, rescueandrestore.org.

Source: *Trafficking in Persons Report, U.S. Government; International Labour Organization*

QUOTABLES

“We have to intentionally equip people to follow Jesus and to multiply.”

—John Burke, pastor of Gateway Church in Austin, Texas, and author of *No Perfect People Allowed* (Zondervan)



Are you happy?

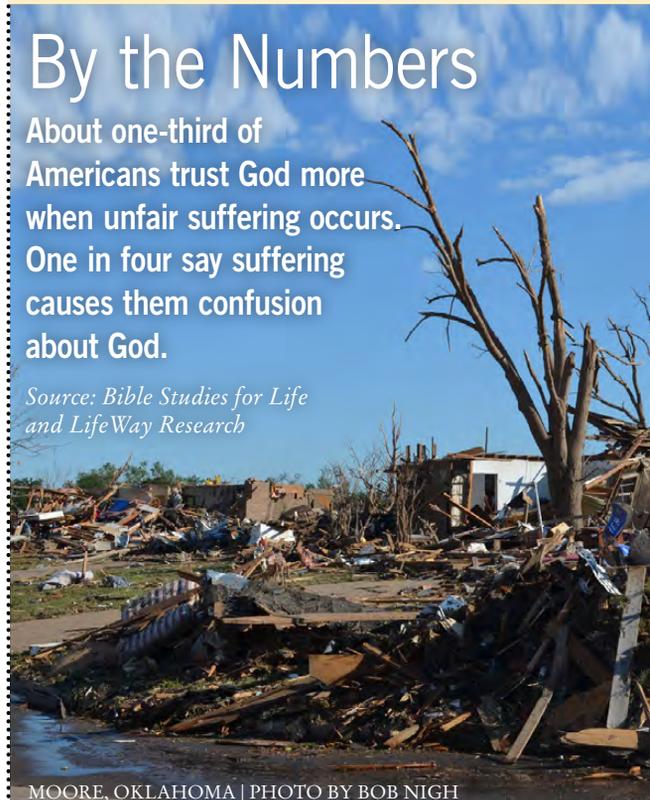
Only one in three Americans say they are very happy, according to a poll by Harris Interactive. Fewer Americans say they are optimistic about the future (down from 75 percent in 2011 to 67 percent in 2013). Seventy-three percent of Americans say their spiritual beliefs are a positive guiding force, down from 77 percent in 2008.

Source: *Harris Interactive*

By the Numbers

About one-third of Americans trust God more when unfair suffering occurs. One in four say suffering causes them confusion about God.

Source: *Bible Studies for Life and LifeWay Research*



MOORE, OKLAHOMA | PHOTO BY BOB NIGH

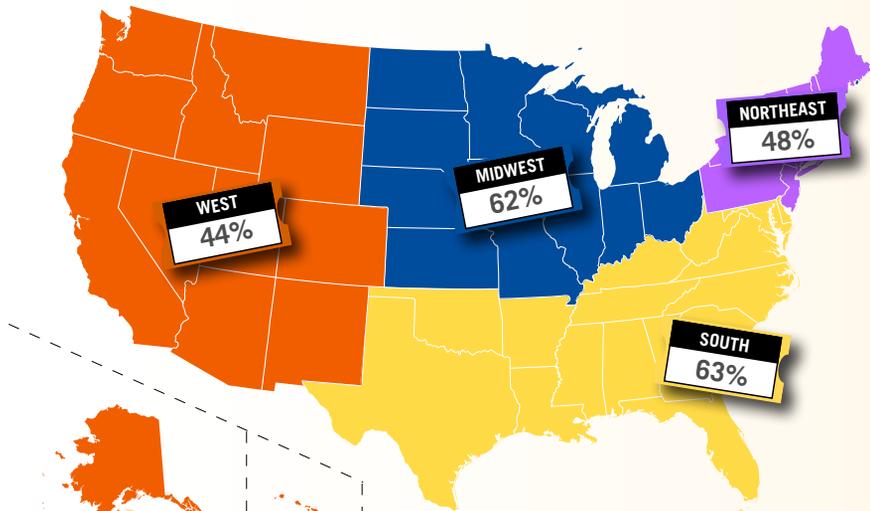


Jesus at the box office

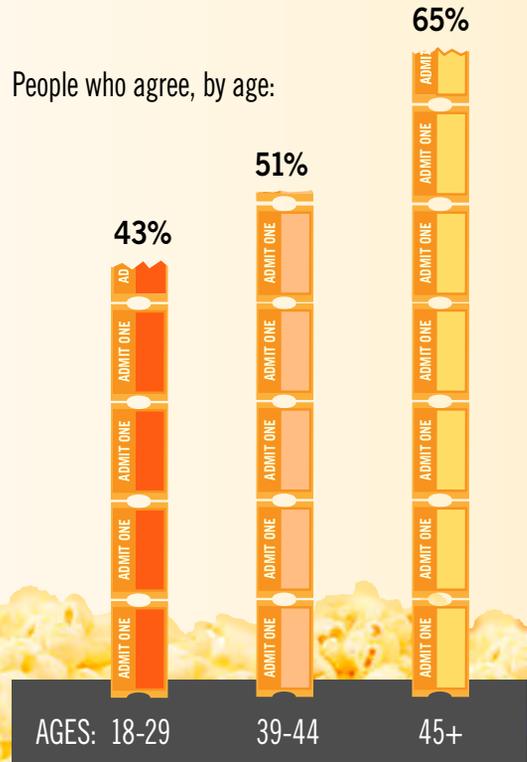
The majority of Americans (56 percent) want more than popcorn with their movies—they want to see Christian values. The exception is young adults who are more likely to disagree than agree with this sentiment.

“I wish there were more movies that reflected Christian values.”

People who agree, by region:



People who agree, by age:



Source: LifeWay Research

Church giving continues to fall

Worshippers are putting less cash in the collection plate at Protestant churches, according to the latest report from Empty Tomb Inc., a nonprofit that studies church giving patterns.

Empty Tomb reported that church members gave 2.3 percent of their income in 2011, the last year statistics are available. That's down from 2.4 percent in 2010, and the fourth year in a row that giving declined, according to Religion News Service.

The decline is part of a long-term pattern of diminished giving. “In 1968, church members gave an average of 3.1 percent of their income,” reported RNS.

Empty Tomb looked at giving from 23 Protestant denominations for their report.

Some of the giving figures from the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, according to RNS. Researchers also contacted some denominations directly.

Researchers said that churches are failing to teach church members how to be generous. “Is the issue that the church is not providing an authentic alternative to the consumer mindset?” Sylvia Ronsvalle, executive vice president of Empty Tomb, told RNS. “Over a period of time, if the church isn’t providing more of an authentic alternative, the church will lose.”

See page 27 for ways to create a culture of generosity in your church.

Source: RNS



In 1968, the average amount of giving was 3.1% of income

In 2011, the average amount of giving was 2.3% of income



The Benefits of Multisite Mega-Ministry

More and more megachurches and gigachurches are multiplying their ministries through multi-campus ministry. Warren Byrd of Leadership Network reported the rate of growth for the number of multisite churches now outnumbers and outpaces the number of megachurches (churches with 2,000 or more in weekly attendance).

More than 5,000 multisite churches meet weekly in North America. Leadership Network's research underscored the benefits of multisite ministry:

- Multisite churches reach more people than single site churches.
- Multisite tends to spread healthy churches to more diverse communities.
- Multisite churches have more volunteers in service as a percentage than single site.
- Multisite churches baptize more people than single site.
- Multisite churches tend to activate more people into ministry than single site.

Source: Leadership Network



Virtual sermons get thumbs down

Most Americans still prefer a real-live preacher to a video sermon, according to a LifeWay Research survey of 1,001 Americans. About a third (35 percent) say they'd only visit churches with a live sermon. In addition, 3 in 10 say they'd prefer live peaching to video, while the same number say either was fine. Less than 1 percent prefer video preaching to a live sermon.

Source: LifeWay Research



WEDDINGS LESS RELIGIOUS

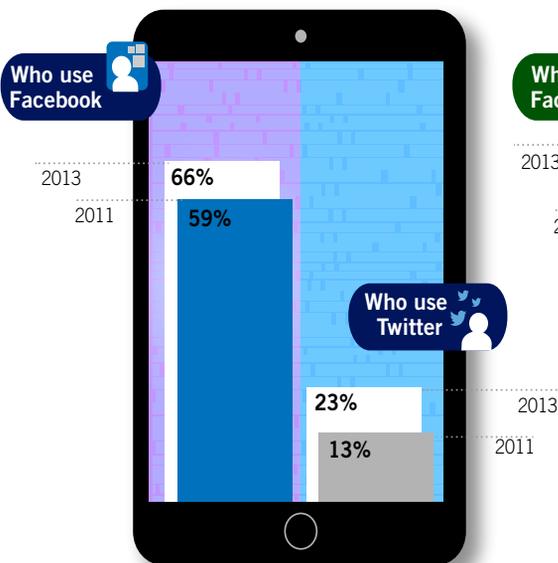
In hand with the move toward more-casual weddings, religious institutions are chosen less frequently for the wedding ceremony. Only 35 percent of brides opted to hold their wedding in a house of worship in 2012, down from 41 percent in 2009. Additionally, more couples are opting to have a friend or family member officiate the ceremony. In 2012, 1 in 3 (33 percent) couples chose a friend or family member to officiate, up from 31 percent in 2011 and 29 percent in 2009.

Source: TheKnot.com and WeddingChannel.com 2012 Real Weddings Study

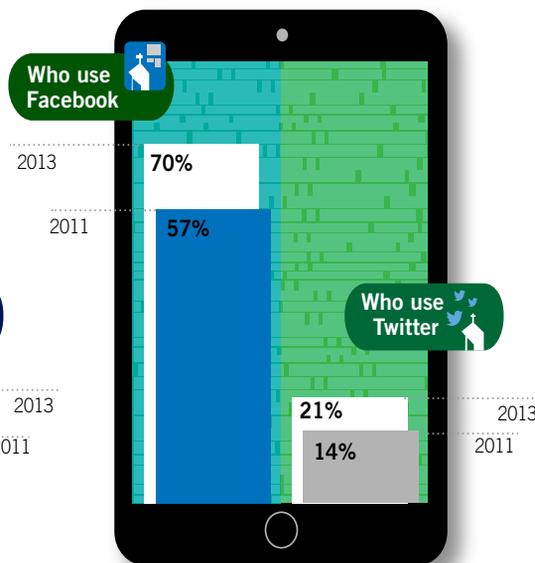
Rise of the @pastor

The last two years have seen a significant leap in the number of pastors and churches engaging social media. The use of social media for ministry doesn't show signs of stopping: 65 percent of pastors say they think social media will be a significant part of their ministry over the next two years.

PASTORS



CHURCHES



Source: Barna Research



The truth is, both personality types can make strong leaders. How someone recharges (alone vs. in a group) has little to do with leadership success. But understanding and indentifying personality type can help leaders maximize strengths and pinpoint areas of weakness.

How to get the best out of everyone

Every day we come in contact with a variety of personality types, from extreme extroverts and introverts, to everyone in between. Because personality affects how people lead, how they communicate, even how they react to challenges, Christian leaders need to understand the differences between personality types to get the most out of people.

Even though personality type *influences* behavior, it doesn't have to *limit* behavior. Taking into account personality differences and adapting to the preferences of others can be the key to successful leadership.

E>I Here are four things extroverted leaders can do to help the introverts on their team.

- 1. Introverts need time to process information.** Provide written information before staff meetings so introverted team members have time to reflect on the material and prepare for discussion. If big changes are on the horizon, try to give them as much advance notice as possible.
- 2. Introverts prefer one-on-one conversations.** If you have to reprimand them, do it privately.
- 3. Give introverts an opportunity to share their thoughts.** Introverts tend to avoid

the limelight, so they may not speak up in meetings. That doesn't mean they don't have anything of value to add. Be intentional about inviting introverts into the conversation.

- 4. Make meetings efficient.** Because extroverts find energy from dialogue and engaging others, they often allow meetings to go longer than necessary. This can drain the introverts on your team. Follow an agenda and keep meetings as short as possible.

I>>E Here are four things introverted leaders can do to help extroverted team members.

- 1. Extroverts need to be around people.** If sequestered to their offices for too long, extroverts can become unfocused and unproductive. Allow them the freedom to interact with others in the office or assign ministry tasks that involve engagement with people. Create social situations for your staff or team away from the office.
- 2. Extroverts often process things externally.** Be patient and listen. Encourage their enthusiasm by allowing them to explore ideas and talk things out.
- 3. Extroverts are prone to action.** They act first and then reflect. At times this can be beneficial. Depending on the situation, you may need to help them think through the appropriate way to act or react depending on the desired outcome.
- 4. Give extroverts time to shine.** Allow them to take the lead in settings that require charisma, energy and charm. ■

Carol Pipes is editor of Facts & Trends.



I'm not shy

Secrets of an introverted leader

by Ron Edmondson



confess.

I am an introvert.

I am also the pastor of a large church.

For many people, this doesn't add up. Big church pastors are supposed to be extroverts, with larger than life personalities in order to draw a crowd.

Not me.

This worried me when I first started as a pastor. I'd been in business for years and felt God calling me to vocational ministry. But I didn't think that would work for an introvert.

So at first, I tried to hide my introversion, out of fear that people would reject me as a leader if they knew my secret. No longer. Today, I'm glad to be an introvert, because it makes me a better pastor.

Strengths of introverts

This may be difficult for overly extroverted people to understand or appreciate, but there are some benefits to being an introvert.

For one, we tend to spend a lot of time thinking. It often makes us good strategizers. If you need help thinking a project through, call on an introvert. We'd be glad to help.

Plus, we usually think before we speak. Introverts choose our words very carefully. Everyone sticks their foot in their mouth occasionally—but we are likely to do it less often. That has proven to be quite helpful as a pastor.

Misconceptions about introverts

Still, there are lots of misconceptions about introverts. Here are a few false as-

sumptions people have made about me:

I'm shy. That may be your word, but it's not mine. I prefer purposeful—I will speak when there's a reason for me to do so.

I need more courage. When I choose not to speak, it's not that I am scared. I'm just comfortable being quiet.

I've got nothing to say. Actually, I have lots to say. I blog almost every day and often update Twitter and Facebook. But I often choose to communicate in writing rather than speaking.

I'm arrogant or I don't like you. Honestly, I love everyone. Or at least that's my personal goal and a biblical command. Listening is a way I can show you love and respect.

I need you to talk for me. Actually, I'd rather you not – unless you're my wife. If I have an opinion I think needs sharing, I can speak for myself.

I need to change, mature, grow as a person or leader. There is nothing wrong with me. I am just quieter than some. I'm not perfect. In fact, I still sin. There are lots of things wrong with me, but introversion is not one of them.

Challenges of leading as an introvert

There are some downsides to being an introverted pastor.

I can often fail to network when in a crowd. I will go to a conference, expecting to meet new people, but instead of engaging I stand in the corner waiting to be spoken to first.

I am also not good at making small talk. That's a problem, because small

“When I choose not to speak, it's not that I am scared. I'm just comfortable being quiet.”

— Ron Edmondson

talk is the first step toward building healthy relationships or in making new people at church feel welcome.

Because of my limitations, I've learned a few tips on how to do effective ministry as an introvert.

Prepare mentally. I try to prepare myself mentally for Sundays. I remind myself that I have a job to do, that people expect me to engage with them, that it is not going to be easy but I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. I do this as a mental exercise before any event where I need to be outgoing.

Act purposeful. I remind myself there

is a reason to be extroverted in some occasions. Often people are waiting on me to engage them. To be a Kingdom builder, I have to converse with others even when it's uncomfortable. I'm willing to act outside of my comfort zone to show people that I love them.

Discipline myself. At some point, I just do it. I simply have to make myself do what I may not want to do. Work the room. Make the initial approach for a new relationship. Talk. Engage. Connect. Do it.

Practice. It gets easier with time. It really does.

Reward myself with down time. Af-

ter an extremely extroverted occasion, I crash. Sunday afternoon I've found, is a great time to nap. If the weather is nice, I will run for miles after church to unwind.

It's important to remember people are different. We are unique. God designed us that way, and He didn't make a mistake. He never does.

Learning to appreciate introversion, rather than resist it, and adapting accordingly, has been a part of maturing as a person and leader. ■

Ron Edmondson (@ronedmondson) is pastor, conference speaker, blogger and leadership consultant in Lexington, Ky. You can connect with him at ronedmondson.com.

7 Ways Extroverts Can Help Introverts

By Ron Edmondson

Chances are you have lots of introverts on your team, in your organization, at your church, or even in your family. If you're an extrovert, here are some ways you can help introverts.

1. Give us advance warning. Don't put us on the spot for an answer or opinion. Give us time to formulate a response.

2. Don't assume we don't have an opinion. We do, and it may even be the best one. But we are less likely to share our opinion surrounded by people who are always quick to have something to say and tend to control the conversation.

3. Don't assume we are unfriendly or anti-social. We may not be talking,

but that doesn't mean we do not love people or that we don't want to communicate with them. Plus, we talk one at a time, so if there's someone always talking, we may not get a chance.

4. Give us time to form relationships. Introverts don't form relationships fast. We may appear harder to get to know, but when we do connect, we are loyal friends with deep, intimate connections.

5. Allow us time alone. All of us need personal time, but we require even

more time alone than an extrovert. We energize during these times, not just relax. There's a huge difference.

6. Don't expect us to always love or get excited about extroverted activities. The social activities where you get to meet all the cool people you do not know...that's not too exciting for us. It may even be a little scary. We'll find excuses not to go, even if we know we need the experience or will have fun once we do them.

7. Allow us to use written communication when available. We often prefer emails to phone calls. We are usually more engaging when we can write out our thoughts ahead of time. ■



I need help, too

Confessions of an extroverted leader

by Alvin Reid

Our culture loves extroverts.

We love the brash, outspoken athletes, the most extravagant of actors and musicians, and the most extreme spokesmen on TV. Add the glut of 24-hour sports and news networks and it seems the louder and more extroverted you are, the more popular you will be.

That's often true in church as well.

Pastoral search committees love hyperactive pastors with relentless energy and great people skills. Congregations love preachers who can "shuck the corn" and interact with crowds.

When it comes to choosing leaders in churches, extroverts (like me) often have an advantage over introverts.

That's not always a good thing. We all know of extroverts who go too far. They're bullies, poor listeners, and often are short tempered and impatient.

But if we're honest, we also know extroverts who genuinely love people and show they care without reservation, who lead groups of people to do remarkable things for God, and who take the time to learn and listen.

In my mind, there are at least five ways that being an extrovert can help a pastor or church leader:

1. Extroverts tend to be risk takers. The mission of God and the fact that we as believers are a sent people requires

risk for the gospel. As a seminary professor, I have watched students over the years, and those who go to the hardest places and take greater risks most often are extroverts. This is not to say that introverts won't; I have seen many introverts take serious risks for Jesus. But the extroverts tend to answer the bell more quickly and more often.

2. Extroverts thrive in social settings, and the church is a social community of people.

3. Extroverts tend to be more likely to share Christ, although I would argue that introverts may in fact be better personal witnesses when they endeavor to do so.

4. Extroverts are also typically early adopters, those vital people needed in any new initiative.

5. Extroverts tend to be more openly happy about life and thus are effective at creating positive momentum.

Challenges of leading as an extrovert

We extroverts have our issues as well:

1. We can easily become utilitarian — thinking bigger is always better and might makes right.

2. We care more about crowds than individuals. We'd rather read in the Book of Acts about 3,000 coming to Christ than one person being saved.

3. We are easily dissatisfied. We can

"We tend to be more excited when things go well, but more moody and easily upset when dealing with people who do not see the world the way we do."

— Alvin Reid

yearn so much for the next great thing, we fail to rest in the goodness of God today.

4. We struggle to keep balance in our lives.

5. We tend to be more excited when things go well, but more moody and easily upset when dealing with people who don't see the world the way we do.

Learning from others

In order to be successful in ministry, we extroverts can and must learn from others, especially from the introverts in our families and congregations, because they are all around us.

About half of the people who take the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, a common personality test, are introverts. Other studies suggest that somewhere between one-third and one half of Americans are introverts.

My wife, Michelle, is one of them.

We epitomize the "opposites attract" idea of marriage. She is as introverted as I am extroverted, and has been the greatest blessing of my life.



Michelle has helped me understand and appreciate introverts. She has taught me by her example how vital it is to sit at Jesus' feet for lengths of time, alone, to know Christ more. She is also the greatest listener I have ever known.

Our personalities offer a great example for the need of community in the church. I have been in class when an extrovert begins to wax eloquently (in his own mind) while other students roll their eyes. Pulling that student aside and taking the time to give him a little perspective on when and where to expound his learning has helped more than a few.

That young minister who wants to change the whole world and do it yesterday needs to be helped to see how his ambition to make God famous can easily become ambition to be famous himself.

Living in community where we encourage one another to see the strengths in different personalities while being aware of the dangers can play a vital role in spiritual growth.

God has given us such a variety of personalities, interests, talents and gifts, why not celebrate them and encourage one another to be who we are for the glory of God. ■

Alvin Reid (@alvinreid) is professor of evangelism and student ministry at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. You can read more from him at alvinreid.com.

6 Lessons Extroverts Can Learn from Introverts

By Alvin Reid

- 1. Slow down.** No, really, slow down. Jesus rested. God rested on the seventh day. You can actually do more for God long term by learning to rest as well as working hard.
- 2. The goal is not to change the world. The goal is to honor Christ.** The result is to impact that world, but introverts can help us add the why to our how.
- 3. See God in the little things.** We tend to be so big picture focused that we miss the little, daily ways God moves.
- 4. See life more as a series of relationships than a list to check off.** We extroverts can easily fall into the trap of turning life into a to-do list.
- 5. Do not just learn about Christ, learn Christ.** Related to the previous point, extroverts can fall into the habit of studying the Bible to learn more facts to communicate better to change the world more. But the goal is not to learn more facts, but to learn Christ, to become more like Him.
- 6. Don't rush through your devotional time.** Take a deep breath, cut off your phone, open your Bible, and dine with the Father. For me, journaling helps me slow down and focus less on the cares of the day and more on time with Him.

Dig Deeper

- *Type Talk* (Dell) by Otto Kroeger and Jane Theuson
- *Introverts in the Church* (IVP) by Adam McHugh
- *Margin* (NavPress) by Richard Swenson



FALSE FACTS

Why we love bad stats

by Bob Smietana

One of the dangers of being a reporter who goes to church is that you know when the preacher is wrong.

Not wrong in theology. Wrong in facts.

Like this one, which came halfway through a recent sermon on marriage. Things are scary out there, the preacher told us. And there's no difference between people sitting in these pews and everyone else when it comes to divorce.

It made a great sermon illustration.

Only it's not true, says Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut and author of "Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites ... and Other Lies You've Been Told."

Wright looked at marriage statistics from the General Social Survey (GSS), a national random survey of Americans, taken since the 1970s.

Half of the "Nones"—people who claim no religious identity—were divorced. Only 42 percent of self-identified Christians—and members of other faiths—were divorced.

Catholics (35 percent) were least likely to divorce, followed by Mainline Protestants (41 percent) and evangelicals (46 percent).

Believers who show up to church every week were even less likely to divorce.

Wright, who has been writing about faith and divorce rates since 2006, found that only about a third of evangelicals (34 percent) and Mainline Protestants (32 percent) and a quarter of Catholics (23 percent) who go to church are divorced. Still the myth that churchgoers get divorced at the same rate as everyone else persists.

Wright thinks we pay more attention to bad news than to good news.

“We pay a lot more attention to things that are dangerous,” he said. “If I’m driving down the road, I can pass 200 parked cars and not notice them. But if I see an accident—I will stop and look.”

Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas in Austin, says something called “confirmation bias” might be at work. In other words, people like statistics that reinforce their beliefs. If people are fearful that marriages are in trouble, he said, they’ll tend to believe statistics that confirm those fears.

Even if those statistics aren’t exactly right.

Regnerus said using bad statistics about marriage is appealing—because bad news can motivate people to action. But it can also undermine the credibility of a pastor’s message.

“I am glad that pastors want to strengthen marriages,” he said. “And bad news can be galvanizing.... But we trust our pastors to tell us the truth.”

Are Christians really bad tippers?

Marriage isn’t the only subject where the facts don’t match up to perceptions about Christians.

That’s also the case when it comes to tipping and believers.

Earlier this year, a trip out to eat turned into a nightmare for the Rev. Alois Bell of the World Deliverance Ministries Church in Granite City, Ill. Bell and a large group of friends went to Applebees. Following company policy, their server, Chelsea Welch, added an automatic tip to the bills.

Bell was not pleased.

“I give God 10%,” Bell wrote on the bill. “Why do you get 18?”

Welch posted the bill on Facebook and it went viral. She eventually was fired, while Bell apologized (indicating she’d left a cash tip) after her note made headline news.

Turns out Welsh isn’t the only server to have a bad run in with church folks.

Karen Swallow Prior, an English professor at Liberty University, worked her way through college as a waitress. Christians were notorious for being bad tippers, she wrote in a piece for Christianity Today’s website.

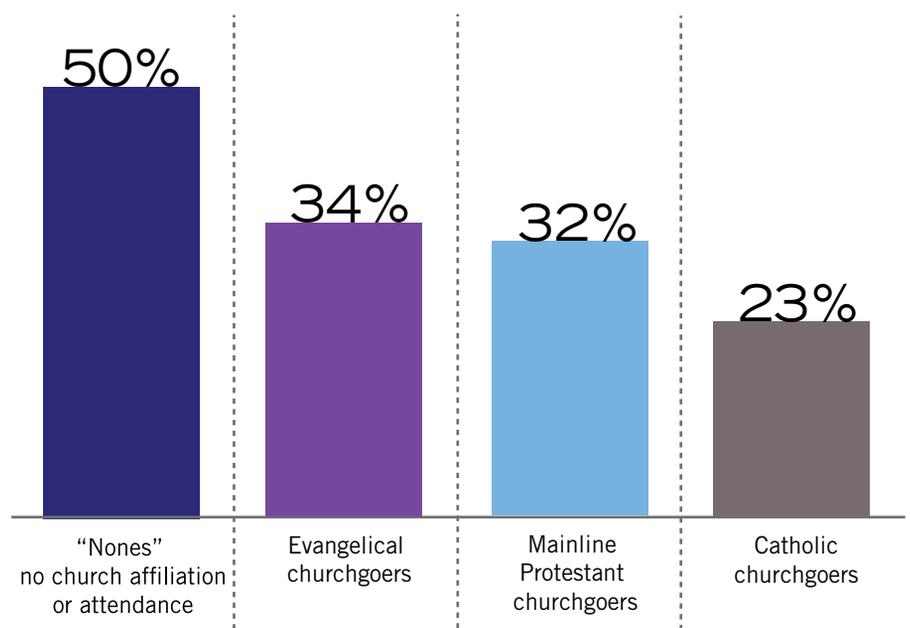
“My fellow servers called them the ‘Holy Rollers,’” she wrote. “Knowing there would be little, if any, tip left at the end of their meal, the servers saw the Christians’ robust attempts at ‘friendliness’ instead as pushy and arrogant. The memories still pain me now.”

But a study from Michael Lynn of Cornell University and Benjamin Katz of HCD Research, showed that, overall, Christians are pretty good tippers. Their online survey of 1,068 Americans found that the average Christian tipped 17 percent for good service. Only 13 percent of Christians left a smaller tip for good service.



The truth about: Divorce Rates in America

The truth is when church attendance is factored in the results, believers who attend church are less likely to divorce than people who do not show up.



Source: General Social Survey (GSS)

“If you can’t think of a way to verify a statistic, it is probably not true.”

— Ed Stetzer

The problem is that there are a lot Christians out there. And since we tend to remember bad news, a few bad tippers give all the other Christians a bad name.

The sky is falling phenomenon

Statistics about the future of the church also give pastors and other church leaders a hard time.

Like this one: “94 percent of Christian young people leave the church never to return,” which was used to promote a major Christian conference several years ago.

It’s partly true; young people do drop out of church.

A 2009 LifeWay Research study of 1,000 young Protestants found that seven out of 10 did drop out of church for a time after high school.

A few more details: the students surveyed had all attended church for at least a year in high school. Most dropped out because of a life change—such as going to college—and just over a third had come back to church by age 30.

The idea of anyone dropping out of church is a concern. But there’s no sign young people are forsaking the church in droves.

Perhaps the best bad statistic is this one, which also was used recently by a megachurch pastor to promote a Christian conference: “There are more left-handed people, more Texans, and more pet cats than evangelicals in America.”

This pastor is apparently quite concerned that the evangelical church is being overrun

by southpaw kittens from the Lone Star state.

This claim, however, isn’t quite true.

There are more cats (and dogs) than evangelicals in the U.S. But not Texans or southpaws.

While there are about 95 million cats in the U.S., according to the Humane Society, there are between 50 million (Religious Congregations & Membership Study, 2010) and 75 million evangelicals (Pew Research).

That’s more than the estimated number of southpaws—between 30 and 45 million Americans—and Texans (26.6 million, according to the U.S. Census).

Going one for three might be good in baseball. But it’s bad for preachers.

Bad statistics persist because they work—at least in the short term.

They help sell books and tickets to conferences, make great sermon illustrations, and get people in church fired up.

The problem, says Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, is that bad statistics don’t solve real problems.

It’s difficult to solve a problem when you don’t understand it, says Stetzer.

Too many bad statistics can also undermine a leader’s credibility. Get too many facts wrong and it’s harder for people to trust you.

Setting the record straight

Perhaps it’s time for preachers—and conference speakers—to be a little more wise when it comes to statistics.

Stetzer says Christians should view all statistics with healthy skepticism.

That’s especially true if a statistic is found in an advertisement.

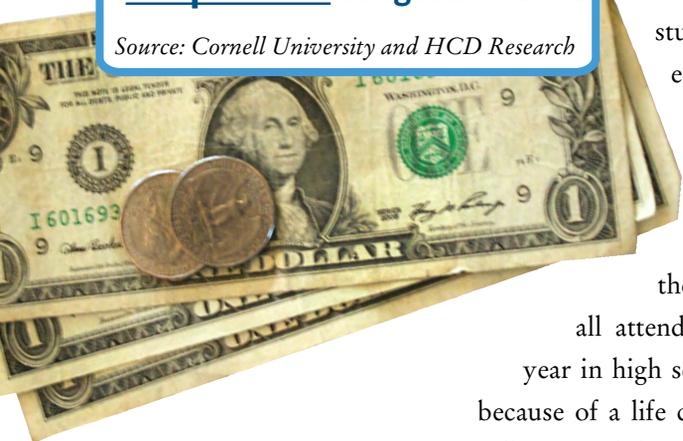
Ads, says Stetzer, are used to sell things.



The truth about: Tipping

The average Christian tipped
17 percent for good service.

Source: Cornell University and HCD Research





The truth about: Evangelicals

They're not particularly concerned with getting the facts right.

Also, beware any statistic that can't be verified.

"Ask, how do you know that?" says Stezter. "If you can't think of a way to verify a statistic, it's probably not true."

He also says to be wary of stats that don't match reality.

"It's okay to apply your own censor to say this doesn't make sense," he said.

It's important to realize that all research is imperfect and context matters. Researchers don't have unlimited resources. They can't interview or poll everyone. Instead they interview a representative sample of people, asking a few questions.

So go to the source. Find out who did the research, how many people they interviewed and what specific questions were asked, before assuming the research is valid.

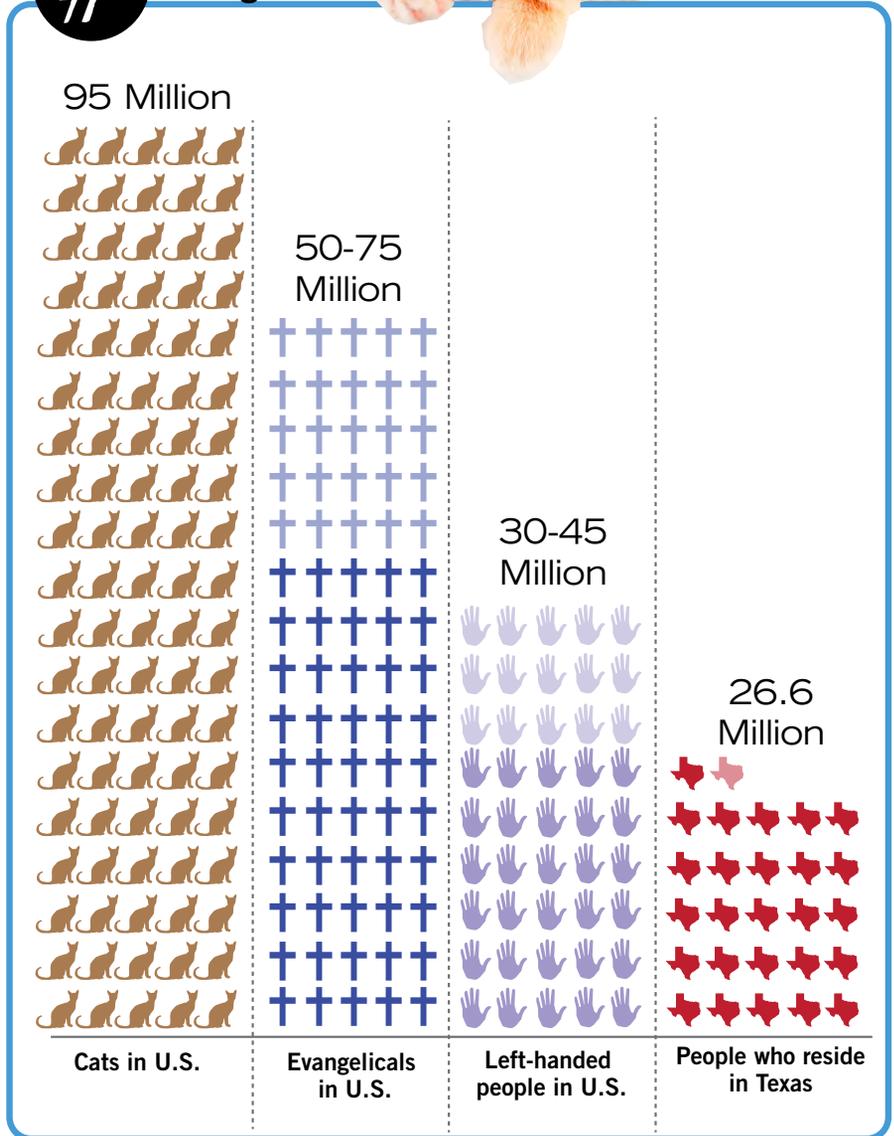
For example, a poll from professional researchers using a large sample will likely be more reliable than an informal poll taken by a professor of the students in class.

Finally, don't look at only one study.

"To understand the whole picture, responsible researchers look at various studies, their methodologies, and their results," Stetzer wrote in a 2010 story about bad statistics for *Christianity Today*. "We reach bad conclusions when we latch onto one finding of one study, drag it out of context, and proclaim it from the rooftops without knowing whether our interpretation is justified."

Facts are our friends, as Stetzer often says. Just make sure the facts are true. ■

Bob Smetana is senior writer and content editor for Facts & Trends.



Sources: Humane Society, Religious Congregations & Membership Study, Pew Research and U.S. Census

Ask Facts & Trends

Want to know if a stat you heard is legit? Send us an email and we'll check it out for you.



Training for the digital age

Ministry Grid (www.MinistryGrid.com) is the latest training model for the digital generation. The on-line training tool offers more than 1,800 videos of pastors, theologians and church leaders offering insights on a range of topics from pastoral ministry and leadership development to discipleship and Bible study.

“Technology has changed the way we educate and entertain ourselves, but up to now it hasn’t affected the way pastors train and develop themselves, their staff and their leaders,” says Todd Adkins, LifeWay’s director of leadership. “Many churches are finding it increasingly difficult to schedule time to attend or host training.”

Ministry Grid changes all that. Subscribers can access Ministry Grid’s videos from a computer, tablet or smartphone, making it convenient for them to train anytime, anywhere. An annual subscription price is based on weekly average church attendance.

Need to train your parking lot attendants? There’s a video for that. Need help with time management? There’s a video for that, too.

The video collection includes real life experiences and insights from ministry leaders who have wrestled or are wrestling with the content they present: Melita Thomas, of LifeWay Kids Ministry, explores the eight approaches to how children learn; Danny Franks, connections pastor at The Summit Church in North Carolina, considers the importance of preparing for guests who visit your church; and Bob Russell, retired pastor in Louisville, Ky., discuss-

es the importance of developing a transition plan for pastors and their successors.

In addition to practical ministry training, videos cover a wide range of theological and doctrinal topics.

Ministry Grid enables leaders to customize training to fit the needs and goals of their staff and volunteers. Church leaders can choose built-in tracks or provided video sessions, upload their own video content, turn off unwanted content and put their church’s logo and look on the site.

So, how does it work? Let’s say you have a new children’s ministry volunteer at your church. She needs training, but doesn’t have time to attend a weekend seminar. You can have her watch videos on how children learn and ways to engage children in spiritual conversations.

On her own time, she logs in from her own computer or mobile device and watches training videos reserved for her. Or she can take a skills assessment and receive training suggestions based on the results. She picks a course, watches a video, and she’s done.

A small groups pastor could have all the small group leaders walk through a course together online where he can host



discussions, create comprehension questions and provide additional resources.

Another church might develop a First Impressions course that instructs volunteers on how to make guests feel welcome and engaged on their first visit.

Church leaders will find Ministry Grid allows them to meet the diverse needs of their volunteers. Leaders can easily organize and assign training courses to different individuals and also track their progress.

“Because this is a digital product, it can change and grow along with the needs of the local church,” Adkins says. “Pastors can be confident their staff, leaders and volunteers receive the training they need to better prepare them to make disciples.” ■



Creating a culture of generosity

by Sam Warner

Hundreds of books have been published on giving, and every pastor, church member or attender has an opinion on giving and generosity. Is there a difference between younger and older generations when it comes to giving in your church? Why do your members give? What motivates them to be generous? What can you do to boost generosity? Let's take a look at what the Lord has to say about these questions.

I talk with new believers almost every day who were not raised in a home where they were taught to tithe. This has definitely had an impact on the giving habits and generosity level of the younger members in your church today. It may take time to teach them to give consistently.

I often hear young people would rather give to a cause than give to the church because they think the money is only going to pay for facilities, staff salaries and administrative costs. It's not true of all young churchgoers, but it is something to keep in mind. It's beneficial to remind givers their tithes and offerings are being used to minister both locally and globally, not just to pay the rent.

In Matthew 19:27, Peter asks Jesus, "Look, we have left everything and followed You. So what will there be for us?" When we are teaching about giving and generosity in the church today, we must remember to focus on the fact that Jesus wants all of us.

We cannot be a part-time Christian and still receive the blessings He has in store for us. Jesus' response in Matthew 19:29 is priceless. He tells Peter that whoever leaves everything because of His name will "receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life." That's a great lesson

for younger generations who might not have been raised in church.

The older generation does not always have it right, either. Some of them have been raised in a home where duty and loyalty to the church have been taught. They may give because it's what they were taught or because they feel obligated.

When looking at your faithful, generous givers, two traits usually stand out—humility and thankfulness.

Humility, which is often overlooked, is a key characteristic. In Proverbs 22:4, we see that 'fear of the Lord' results in humility which ultimately leads to wealth, honor and life. I can see your church members being motivated to be humble when they grasp this truth.

Thankfulness is another key motivating factor prevalent in your generous members. From a grateful heart comes generosity. When members are thankful for what the Lord has done for them, the generosity will flow from them like a fountain. Your faithful, generous givers know the Lord's blessing is a result of giving with the right heart. In Proverbs 28:20, it is clear that the Lord blesses those who are faithful.

Generosity is the sign of a mature believer. We are reminded in the parable



of the unforgiving slave just how important forgiveness is in creating a culture of generosity in your church. When we truly understand what Christ did for us on the cross, it becomes hard not to be generous. The gospel message is the key motivator with your most generous members.

Don't be afraid to talk about generosity and giving in your church. Jesus certainly wasn't afraid to talk about it. You'll find more than 1,000 references to money in the Bible, second only to love. Use the Scriptures to guide your church in the area of giving. If you want your members to be humble and faithful, then it is up to you to provide the guidance they need to become great givers.

I love the advice we are given in Proverbs 11:14: "Without guidance, people fall, but with many counselors there is deliverance." Make sure you are teaching your members why they should give, and you will see a culture of generosity spring up. ■

Sam Warner (@SamWarner914) is a lead navigator for Auxano and senior consultant for LifeWay Stewardship. You can reach him at sam@auxano.com.



Flipping the rap conversation to the gospel

by Aaron Earls

As part of his most recent tour, Kanye West had “Jesus” appear on stage to carry on a conversation with the controversial rapper. Some Christian artists, however, are engaging the hip-hop culture in hopes that Jesus will be an integral part of that world, not just appearing at a concert.

The culturally relevant and doctrinally astute lyrics of the new breed of Christian hip-hop artists give pastors and parents a bridge to the hip-hop culture and their rap-inclined student who may be getting more theology than expected from the top 40 rap song they hear on the radio.

West’s song “I Am A God (Feat. God)” is not only the rapper’s latest and most up front attempt at self-aggrandizement, the track is one of many theologically-driven rap songs seeking to use the depth of biblical imagery as a cover for shallow proclamations of personal opinion.

Breakout artist Macklemore critiques

religious opposition to same-sex marriage in his song “Same Love” by drawing from personal memories of church services. Hip-hop icon Jay Z’s somber “Heaven” encourages his audience to “question religion, question it all” because “religion creates division.” All the while, the man who dubbed himself J Hova (a mash up of his rap name and Jehovah) boasts that he is a prophet who turns arenas into churches with lyrics that carry the same weight as Bible passages.

Despite their insistence on breaking away from a religious, primarily

Christian, heritage, rap artists cannot help but use that imagery in their music. In his blog post “Rap & Religion,” Christian lyricist Trip Lee asserted “few rappers—or any artists for that matter—can shake the urge to include God somewhere in their art.” The question about the art is, as Lee contended, “What are we saying?”

Sounds from the Doctrinal Underground

When Jay Z and his label Roc Nation released “Magna Carta... Holy Grail,” he used three-minute long commercials during the NBA Finals to announce an app specifically for Samsung phones that would allow one million free downloads of his twelfth studio album.

Christian artist Lecrae and his label Reach Records didn’t have such luxuries for “Gravity” or even many radio stations to play his songs, but the Atlanta-based performer’s sixth release still managed to debut at No. 3 on the Billboard 200. Immediately after the debut,

l-r: Jay Z, Kanye West, Macklemore, Lecrae



three of the top 10 spots on iTunes hip hop/rap charts, including No. 1 and No. 2, belonged to Lecrae.

In an interview on LifeWay's webcast, "The Exchange," the Grammy award winning emcee told LifeWay vice president Eric Geiger that hip-hop was a "powerful tool" that could be used for good or bad. He views his role as a missionary to the secular rap culture.

"I'm a big fan of looking at Paul in Acts and in the marketplace, but in the synagogue as well, mixing it up in the culture, and knowing who their modern-day poets were and speakers and philosophers and then being able to integrate their ideals and values in his talks as he's trying to preach Christ to them," said Lecrae.

For Trip Lee, an artist with Lecrae's

Reach Records, that means responding to religious themed lyrics from rappers who "don't understand who Jesus is" in a way that addresses the real problem.

As West's song was the pop culture topic du jour, Trip Lee wrote on his personal blog that the unbiblical theology from rappers was "a reflection of their hearts." His solution was for "the people who do know about Jesus to speak up. Not just in songs and blog posts, but at the dinner table, the boardroom, and in the classroom. Why? Because this ignorance and irreverence isn't unique to rappers. Reckless art is just one expression of it."

But it does need to be in songs as well, which is why Lecrae, Lee and others have been at the forefront of a growth in theologically rich and doctrinally sound rap. In a talk at Resurgence 2012, Lecrae defended his creating music in a genre of music that has historically glorified sinful behavior, while challenging the mindset of a sacred/secular divide.

He told a story of he and friend driving down the road listening to rap music, when his friend turned down the station as they drove past a church saying, "We've got to be respectful."

Thinking back over the incident, Lecrae said, "It's as if God doesn't own every

stretch of highway we're driving down, like He just owns those couple of acres where the church is."

For Lecrae, Christians will only influence culture if they recognize "Jesus' blood purchased this world. It all belongs to Him." And as such, Lecrae and others are seeking to be out in culture where many would never hear the truth otherwise. He challenges believers to rehabilitate and redeem culture. "Go and paint a picture of what it looks like when Jesus radically changes someone."

Music, particularly hip-hop, is an area of culture that is in need of an illustration of redemption because much of it brings a negative influence that can only be countered with the gospel.

Conversation Remix

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh analyzed the 279 most popular songs of 2005 based on Billboard charts and found that 77 percent of the rap songs contained a reference to drugs or alcohol. Musical messages that contradict Scripture bombard teenagers, who listen to an average of 16 hours a week.

Music is an especially powerful medium when conveying a message.

"Go ahead, try to say your ABCs without singing the little song that goes with it," challenged Erin Davis, author and teen girl ministry expert.

"When we memorize information, thoughts or ideas it's hard for it to stick in our brains," she said. "But put an idea to music, give it a beat and



Trip Lee

PHOTO FROM REACH RECORDS

some notes that tug our emotions and things tend to stick.”

With that being said, those seeking to positively influence students can become bogged down in responding to every unbiblical entertainment choice and miss the bigger issue, according to Ben Trueblood, director of student ministry for LifeWay.

“Don’t make music your ‘hill to die on,” he said. “Make the Word of God that hill and approach the issue from what God calls us to rather than merely attacking the music.”

For Davis and Trueblood, the most important thing parents and student leaders can do is turn the focus to God and His gospel, which will help a teen-

ager develop a biblical, gospel-centered worldview that enables them to reject false theology.

“Pop culture is always going to churn out junk,” said Davis. “But kids who know who God is will lose their appetite for what’s being flung at them because they know the alternative is better.”

According to Trueblood, real truth and real community will come from God.

“Show teenagers that the Bible really does speak to the issues of everyday life,” he said. “Show them the most real community they could ever experience comes from the unity brought by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.”

While Kanye calling himself “a god”

may be new lyrical ground, the assertion is as old as the Garden of Eden, and as such the solution remains the same.

“The gospel is what changes minds, changes hearts and corrects wrong thinking,” said Trueblood.

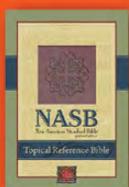
Or as Lecrae says in “Tell the World”:
*So I-I’m read’ to go, and I’mma tell
the world what they need to know
A slave to myself, but You let me go,
I tried getting high but it left me low
You did what they could never do
You cleaned up my soul and gave me
new life – I’m so brand new. ■*

Aaron Earls is online editor of *Facts & Trends*.

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NAVIGATING CHANGE

Guiding your church through transition A Q&A with pastor Carey Nieuwhof

by Bob Smietana

The first churches Carey Nieuwhof pastored were so small, he says, they couldn't afford a real minister. So they hired him instead.

In 1995, Nieuwhof, a former lawyer turned pastor in training, moved to the small community of Oro, Ontario, to serve three small Presbyterian congregations. Total Sunday attendance was 50 people. One church drew only six on Sundays.

"When my wife and young son and I showed up, we grew their attendance by 50 percent overnight," he said.

Eventually those three churches merged and grew to a congregation of more than 600, with a lot of changes along the way.

Six years ago, Nieuwhof started over, as founding pastor of Connexus Community Church, a multi-site church of about 900 people, with campuses in Barrie and Orillia.

He's also the author of *Leading Change without Losing It: Five strategies that can revolutionize the way you lead change when facing opposition*.

He spoke to *Facts & Trends*.

As a pastor, how do you discern whether or not to make a change?

The first test would be to see if a change is consistent or inconsistent with Scripture. If it is inconsistent, don't do it.

The second thing is to realize that most of the debate in the church is about method, not mission. Almost everybody agrees on mission, but where



we tend to have the most vehement disagreements is on the issue of methods. In every generation—within certain reasons—method is up for grabs.

The third thing I would say is that when you change methods make sure you are aligning along a consistent strategy—a strategy that shows some promise; a strategy that has a track record behind it.

Every once in a while, you have to go out on a limb. But for the most part the changes you are embracing should be affirmed among some wise counsel.

I always look to our elders, staff and key volunteers. Usually you will discover most of them are in fairly wide agreement with the change. If you have that kind of affirmation, I think you have the green light for change.

Most change in a church brings some level of conflict. What's the best way for a pastor to defuse conflict and move forward?

You are going to get angry emails. You are going to have people fly off the handle at a congregational meeting or maybe on Sunday after a service. That's happened to me—it's happened to every leader who has navigated change.

If you can wait even 24 hours, you almost always are better off.

Another helpful practice is one I call, "Reply relationally." It is easiest to have conflict using impersonal media. I always say nothing good ever happens over email.

You cannot resolve conflict over email. If somebody sends an angry email, I will

call him or her. If someone calls and leaves me a voicemail, I will say, why don't we meet for coffee?

Nine times out of 10, if you can establish voice-to-voice—or better yet, face-to-face—contact with people, the conflict de-escalates.

Tell us about a change that worked well for your church and one that didn't work so well.

We made a lot of changes that worked early on. One of those included a six-month process where we studied the locations of the church's three original buildings.

When the churches were built in the 19th Century, they were about half an hour apart by horseback. Then the car was invented and all of a sudden 30 minutes became five minutes.

As we started to grow, we began to consider consolidating our resources.

Prayerfully we led a study team through that six-month period and shared our recommendations to some key influencers in the church.

When we brought it to the congregation, 75 percent voted in favor of selling our buildings and starting a new church, with a new name, in a new location.

A change that went badly?

When I went from being a solo pastor to leading a multi-staff church, I definitely made some mistakes in hiring.

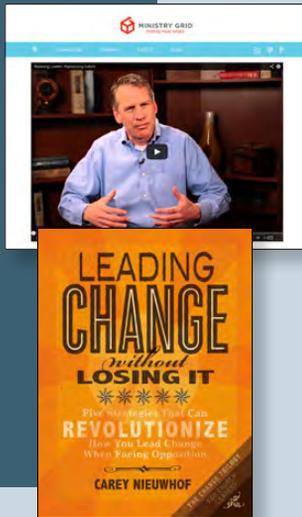
I remember a church member who asked me, "Do you need any advice in terms of bringing on new staff.

"We don't think about strategy nearly as much as we need to. Strategy plays a big part in whether a church is effective in accomplishing its mission."

— Carey Nieuwhof

Dig Deeper

- *MinistryGrid.com*
Thousands of videos with leadership advice from pastors and church leaders.
- *Leading Change Without Losing It* by Carey Nieuwhof (reThink group)



Stupidly, I said, “No. I’ve got this all covered.”

That was a really dumb decision.

How do you know when it’s the right time to make a change?

I try to think of it in terms of short-term goals (what we can accomplish in a year); medium-term goals (what we can accomplish in two to three years, understanding those are some of the more long-term, wholesale changes); and then long-term goals (what we can accomplish in five years)

The mistake a lot of leaders make is overestimating what you can do in one year and underestimating what you can do in five years. You can have a long-term plan developed in a few months, but to implement all that change at once is usually disastrous.

How do you best communicate change in a church?

In his book, *The Advantage*, Patrick Lencioni talks about cascading communication. And I think that is key.

One of the mistakes we make in the church world is taking an idea from the boardroom to the congregational meeting and bypassing everybody in between.

The crowd is almost always the most resistant to change. Sharing the vision with some senior leadership, staff, key volunteers and key influencers is crucial. Letting them know here is this idea we are chewing on and asking them what they think.

If we are able to share information in cascading circles, usually by the time we share it with the congregation, there are fans of the change in place already.

Where do pastors go wrong when it comes to change?

We don’t think about strategy nearly as much as we need to. Strategy plays a big part in whether a church is effective in accomplishing its mission.

Most church leaders have the same mission and vision as the guy down the street.

We love Jesus. We love God. We believe we have a message for the world, and we believe we need to grow in our faith.

At the end of the day, it’s my responsibly to develop a cohesive strategy for accomplishing that mission. ■

Bob Smietana is senior writer and content editor for Facts & Trends.

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52

IDEAS FOR YOUR CHURCH

by Diana Davis

How will God use your church in 2014?

Here are 52 easy ideas to inspire you:

- 1 The 52 Challenge.** Members commit to personally invite one person—friend or stranger—to church every week this year, and write the names on their personal calendar.
- 2 Snow Day.** Build dozens of snowmen on the church lawn. Decorate snow-families with creative props and signs inviting folks to church.
- 3 Plan a baby shower** for a local pregnancy center on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 19.





4 Sunday Brunch. Deliver invitations to homes located near the church building inviting them to worship services and to a Sunday brunch beforehand with their neighbors (and some friendly church members).

5 Pray for Leaders. Invite local government leaders to your worship service. Recognize those who are able to attend and pray for them.

6 Community-Wide Blood Drive. Support your local blood bank.

7 Date Night. Provide complimentary childcare for unchurched couples on Valentine's Day.

8 NearlyWed Seminar. Invite engaged couples to an 8-week seminar before church or during the week. Each session is a topical Bible study about marriage, with homework and handouts. At completion, couples get a certificate and promote to newlywed class.

9 Mission Trip Mania. Plan several mission trips for the year—local, national, international—and challenge members to either participate personally or help sponsor another participant.

10 Interactive Missions Fair. Educate the entire church about how your church does missions both locally and globally. Invite missionaries your church supports and local ministries you partner with to set up booths.

11 Biggest Workday Ever.

Plan dozens of projects, involving all age groups.

Challenge members and regular attenders to commit at least two hours for planting, painting, cleaning and other DIY projects.

12 Host a kite-flying day. Encourage kids, teens and adults to participate and invite friends. Give awards for highest, longest in flight, most creative kite.



13 Community Easter Egg Hunt. Provide kids' music, candy-filled eggs, snacks and a puppet show about the meaning of Easter. Distribute bookmarks or refrigerator magnets that list weekly and special events for kids. Don't forget to invite everyone to Easter worship.

14 1-2-3 Serve! Each small group in the church plans a servant evangelism project on the same Saturday, blitzing the entire community with good works in Jesus' name.



15 Friend Day. Encourage every member to bring an unchurched friend to worship.

16 Car-Care Clinic. Enlist the help of some men in your church to set up a free oil and lube change and general car maintenance operation at your church for the single moms and widows in your community.



17 Stop & Pray Day. On May 1, National Day of Prayer, use an outside banner to invite the community to come inside and pray. Play background music, light some candles and provide a simple prayer guide, sign-in-book and printed invitation to worship.

18 Mother's Day is perfect for a baby dedication and to promote the launch of a small group for new parents.

19 School's Out Celebrations. Host three last-day-of-school parties. Elementary kids' ice cream party, middle school pizza party and treasure hunt; high school sand volleyball tournament and Christian concert. Provide a summer calendar of church events for each age group.

20 Welcome Wagon. Deliver welcome baskets to people who move into your community. Include baked goods or pantry items, information about your church, as well as coupons to local businesses.



The Chamber of Commerce can provide you with the names and addresses of people who recently have relocated to your area.

21 Be Festive. As a church, participate in the town's annual fair or festival. Wear church T-shirts and have fun. Make a parade float, host a diaper changing station or offer to be the cleanup crew.

22 Neighborhood Cookout. Encourage church members or small groups to host a neighborhood cookout one Saturday and invite their neighbors to church.

23 Cool Comfort. Open your facility to those in the community who may not have air conditioning. Provide play areas for moms with young kids. Set up a workspace for college students with free Wi-Fi access. The summer heat is especially dangerous for seniors. Providing a cool place for them to spend their days may even save a life. You may need to arrange transportation to and from their homes.

24 Student Camp Sendoff. Members of an adult Bible class select a camper, prepare a snack bag for the trip, and pray for them that week.

25 Outdoor Concert. Invite the entire community to a free outdoor concert on the church lawn.

26 Thank Local Heroes. Invite fire fighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel and others for a special recognition service and lunch at your church.





27 All-church picnic. Plan a fun-filled day of food, games and fellowship.

28 VBS. Vacation Bible School is an enormous outreach. Visit LifeWay.com/vbs for ideas.

29 Middle School Summit. Incoming middle school students and their parents rotate through 10-minute topical classes taught by church youth leaders and Christians who teach or work in local middle schools. Afterward, kids have a party and parents eat out together.

30 Back-to-School Backpacks. Partner with a local school or shelter and donate backpacks filled with school supplies to school-age children whose families need financial assistance.

31 Move It. Recruit volunteers to wear church T-shirts and help with move-in day at your local college. Invite students to Sunday worship and a homemade lunch in their honor.

32 Snacks for Teacher Workday. Bible study classes or small groups select a local school, prepare and deliver baskets of snacks with a note of thanks and a prayer for the upcoming school year.

33 First Day, Moms Pray. Host a tea for moms just after they drop their kids off for the first day of school. Seat them by school or child's grade level for fellowship. Pray for the moms and the children. Provide a list of church activities and worship times.

34 Explosion Sunday. Kick-off new small groups and invite guests and

unconnected members to join one.

35 Adopt an International Student. A majority of international students who come to the U.S. to study are never invited into an American home. Work with your local university to host an international student throughout the year. Pick them up at the airport when they arrive. Invite them to dinner once a month and spend time with them during the holidays.

36 "Meet the Teacher" Sunday. Kids invite their schoolteacher, principal, cafeteria worker, etc., and sit by them in worship. Pray for them during church and honor them with a brief milk and cookies fellowship afterward.

37 Singles Dream Team. About one-third of adults in your town are single. Form a top-notch team to pray and plan multiple small groups, events and ministries for singles. Kick off with a single adult retreat.

38 New Members Fellowship. Host a bi-annual or quarterly event for new church members to help them feel welcome and make friends.

39 Minister Appreciation Week. Ask members and attenders to send a note of appreciation to the pastor(s) during the first week of October.



40 Stock the Pantry. Ask members to donate non-perishables to your church's food pantry or a local food bank.

41 Pumpkinpalooza. Display an invitation banner and gobs of pumpkins outside. Kids under 12 pick a pumpkin, decorate it and take it home. Take family photos and invite guests to pick them up on Sunday.

42 Senior Adult Revival. Plan a week-long daytime evangelistic revival for senior adults. Serve lunch. Encourage members to bring friends who may not know Christ.

43 Citywide Thanksgiving Art Exhibit. In early fall, begin to solicit entries from church members, friends, local artists, art clubs and classes. Using any medium, artists illustrate a Thanksgiving theme. Deadline is end of October, and art is displayed in the church lobby throughout November.

44 Fall Daylight Savings. Plan ahead so early arrivers (who forgot to change their clock) can enjoy their error. Signs at doors can offer doughnuts and coffee in the foyer, library time, or an invitation to watch the praise team rehearse.



45 Election Day. Before voting day, each Bible study class selects one elected position such as Sheriff or City Commissioner. The group purchases a Bible, highlights favorite Scriptures, and delivers it immediately after the election with a note

promising prayer for that leader.

46 Baptism Sunday. Invite people who want to become a Christian, and believers who have never been baptized to sign up for a big baptism Sunday. Provide printed and e-invitations for their family and friends.

47 Missions Parade. Emphasize international missions with a simple international parade during worship. Have children march around the worship center during a mission-themed song carrying miniature flags of the nations.

48 Digital Thanks. Members submit one photo and a two-word description of something for which they're thankful. Show a media presentation of the photos before and after the service.

49 Holiday Food Baskets. Organize, prepare and deliver holiday food baskets to families and individuals in need.

50 Wrap It Up. Provide free gift-wrapping for mall shoppers. Promote upcoming Christmas events at your church.

51 Christmas Caroling. Teams blanket the community with caroling then meet later for hot cocoa.

52 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Keep it brief and family friendly. Plan ahead for quality music and friendly greeters. Invite the entire community.



Diana Davis is an author, columnist and speaker. For more ministry ideas, visit dianadavis.org.



Wedding under the bridge

Couple shares special day with homeless friends

By Grace Evans

Plastic wrappers and other pieces of litter rolled like tumbleweed across the empty space under the Jefferson Street Bridge.

Two hours later, enough chairs were set up to seat several hundred of Nashville's homeless, and enough chicken and baked beans had been prepared to feed them all.

While many were still eating, a cloth was rolled down the aisle, and my friend Amanda walked through a crowd of her homeless friends to meet her fiancé at the altar under the overpass.

She's not homeless. Never has been. Neither has Heath, her fiancé.

They just have tasted the grace of God and now see people through the eyes of Christ.

"Husbands are called to be the model of Christ in their marriage and, as a result, communicate to the world who Christ is," Heath says.

And Christ is a servant to all—especially the outcast, he says. Getting married among the homeless and outcast was a step in communicating Christ's love.

When people ask Amanda why they chose a wedding in such an unusual setting, she shrugs and smiles.

“It doesn’t really feel like we’re doing something out of the ordinary,” she said. “People get married at their favorite place, and our favorite place is under the bridge. We feel closest to God here.”

Those of us who weren’t regulars to their normal Tuesday night gathering of friends run by The Bridge ministry in Nashville, Tenn., didn’t quite know what to do when we first arrived, except we knew one thing. The homeless were to be the guests of honor.

Over and over we had the privilege of escorting guests as they walked to their seats, or talking with them and serving them plates of chicken and beans as they settled in for the wedding.

“You look beautiful,” one lady stopped and told the bride with a gap-toothed smile as she walked to her seat.

Amanda beamed. She had carefully thought this through, and it was just what she wanted.

She had normal bride jitters, but she kept trying to remind herself that she and Heath were doing their favorite thing, they were just wearing different clothes—a fancy gown she had bought intentionally to wear in the dust and gravel under the bridge.

“I knew it would be dragged through the dirt, but I felt like God was saying to be the bride of Christ,” she said. “I felt like He was telling me I shouldn’t choose not to be beautiful just because I was going to be with the homeless, but

to give them that gift.”

As a train whistle echoed under the overpass and Tuesday evening rush hour traffic shook the concrete, Amanda smiled out at a sea of familiar faces as the band played and sang ...

“There are no strangers

There are no outcasts

There are no orphans of God

So many fallen, but hallelujah

There are no orphans of God.”

And then the couple pledged to love each other for a lifetime as they love the “outcast” together.

As they walked back down the aisle as husband and wife, Amanda reached out and grabbed the hands of several of the homeless men. “That was special to me,” she said.

She loves them personally. As Amanda puts it, she “looks the homeless in the eyes” every day on her way to work downtown.

And she and Heath love them both spontaneously and intentionally—once, they spent a date night passing out cupcakes to their friends in a local park.

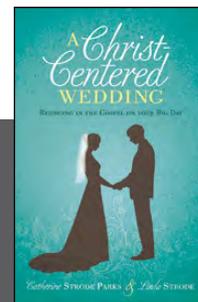
Their wedding feast was an extension of their everyday, missional lives—a celebration with the least of these on His behalf.

Amanda simply explained, “We want God to be glorified.” ■

Grace Evans (pseudonym) is an overseas worker who blogs at gracefortheroad.com, a travelogue-style blog that deals with everyday life issues, spiritual matters and the spread of the gospel around the world.

“On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

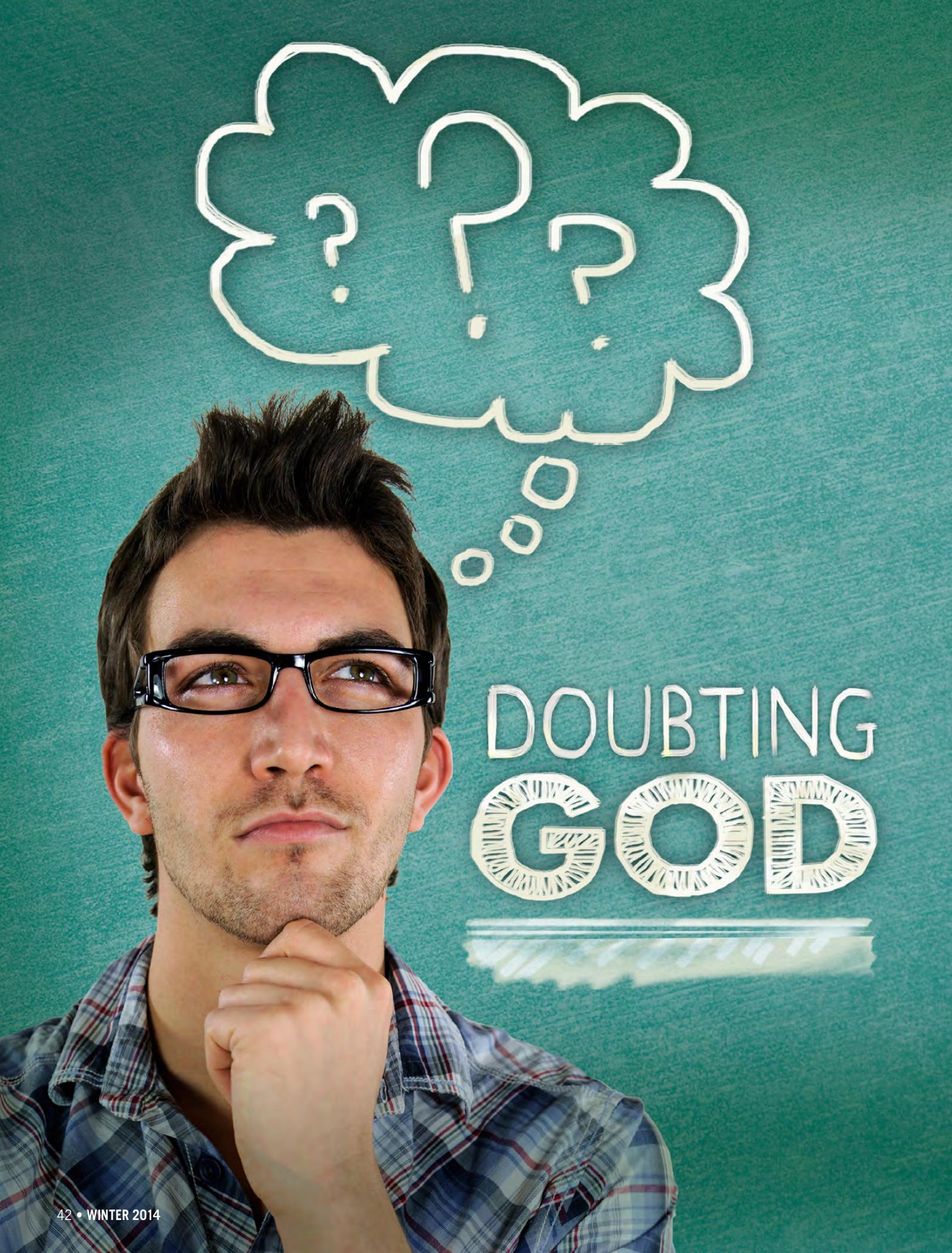
(Luke 14:13-14)



Dig Deeper

- *A Christ-Centered Wedding* by Catherine Strode Parks and Linda Strode (B&H Publishers)

Available at LifeWay stores and LifeWay.com.



DOUBTING
GOD

Real questions people ask

by Mary Jo Sharp

In today's marketplace of ideas, Christians often feel overwhelmed by the frenzy of questions coming at them.

Many of us want to have meaningful conversations about faith with people who hold a different view of God. But we often feel ill-equipped and worry about saying the wrong things

As an apologetist—someone who explains the Christian faith for a living—I've had a lot of practice discussing faith with nonbelievers.

Here are the common questions I am most often asked by nonbelievers and how I answer them.

If God is good, why is there suffering?

This is one of the most important questions about our faith. It's also a difficult question since all of us experience pain and suffering in this life.

To view suffering as something that is evil implies that good and evil have recognizable standards.

Christians say God's nature is good, and so we can look to who God is to figure out what is good and what is evil. We can say that His original creation, which was perfectly good, was

not intended for suffering. Suffering and death are corruptions of God's good gift of life. They weren't originally part of this world and are only temporary.

In a universe void of God as the standard of good—a standard that does not change with human preferences or culture—we end up with no objective good or evil. Things that happen are just the way they are.

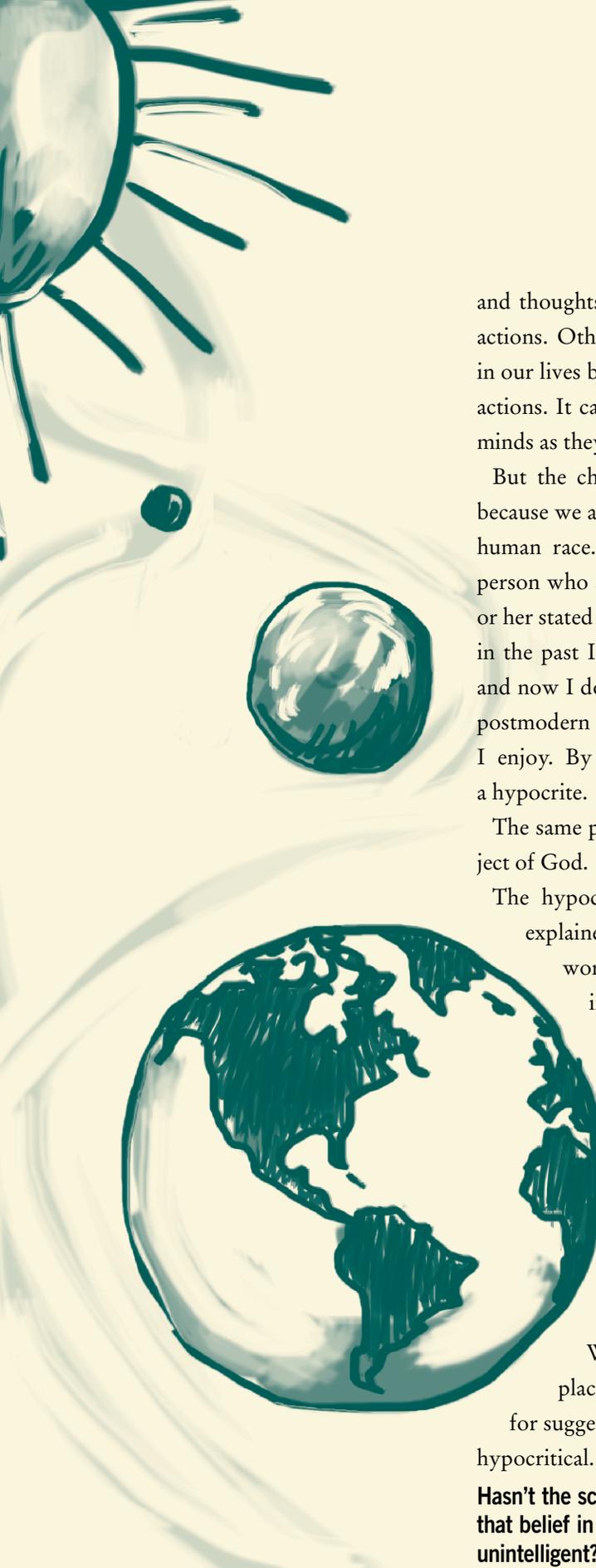
What if there is no God? Without an objective standard of good, we have no reason to think that these things that happen are good or bad.

If the Church has the truth, why is it full of hypocrites?

This question is near and dear to my heart. I began to doubt my belief in God because of the disconnect I noticed between the people who professed the Bible as the Word of God and how those people behaved.

Some of my most hurtful experiences in life came by the mouths of professing believers in God, those saved by the abundant grace and mercy of the Lord.

You will live out what you truly believe. Jesus discussed this in the Sermon on the Mount. The inner life



and thoughts work their way into our actions. Others notice the discrepancy in our lives between our beliefs and our actions. It can provide fodder for their minds as they turn from God.

But the church is full of hypocrites because we are all hypocrites: the entire human race. A hypocrite can be any person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings. I've said in the past I would never drink coffee and now I do. I have stated I don't like postmodern art, but there are works I enjoy. By Webster's definition, I'm a hypocrite.

The same principles apply to the subject of God.

The hypocrisy of humanity can be explained within the Christian worldview ("the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak").

But the idea that hypocrisy exists is based on the belief that there is a standard for how humans should behave.

There can be no hypocrisy when every individual decides for themselves what is good.

Without a standard in place, we would have no rule for suggesting the person is being hypocritical.

Hasn't the scientific endeavor shown that belief in God is unnecessary and unintelligent?

When a person assumes the only knowledge we have is what we have

discovered through science (the scientific endeavor), they fail to realize that this belief itself is not discovered by any method of science.

Rather, the belief that science discovers knowledge about the universe, is a philosophical statement. There's no lab experiment we can do to discover if the knowledge we gain about the universe is accurate.

If the Christian God is real, then as the perfectly good Creator of the universe, He has gifted us with the ability to actually know things about our universe. He has not created a grand delusion in which to trick humans into thinking this universe is real, when in fact it is not real. Rather, He has given us an actual universe to learn about and discover. As we learn about the universe, we also learn about its Creator. So there's a reason for the knowledge we gain about the creation to be true and not a delusion: to help us know the Creator.

Do you have to choose to trust in either science or faith? Can you trust both?

Here we have a misunderstanding of both the realm of science and the definition of faith. What we call science is the study of the natural realm.

Faith is not a study of the natural realm. Faith is a trust in God. You can trust in God and study the natural realm. You can even believe that your faith in God is what provides a foundation for your study of the natural realm. As Francis Bacon noted in *The New Organon*, it is because God brought all of creation into existence that makes all

of creation worthy of our investigation.

It is also belief in God as Creator that gives us a foundation for understanding the physical universe as actually existing. If God is real, and He is responsible for creation, then we can reason His creation is real as well. Faith and science are not only compatible, but complementary.

As we seek to provide arguments for our beliefs to share with the world, we must not forget that everyone has a worldview. We can minister to others by not only being ready to answer questions asked of us, but by asking more questions. As part of loving other people, we need to help them discover or uncover the truth about why they believe in a certain view of the world.

By asking questions, we will find points of communication in which we can discuss and discover truth together. Don't worry if you are not an expert communicator or conversationalist; just start talking.

Yes, you'll make some mistakes and maybe even feel you failed from time to time. However, you'll learn from those mistakes and know how to better handle a similar situation the next time around. Remember, it is a privilege, not a burden, to discuss the big questions in life as part of loving and caring for the people God places in our lives. ■

A former atheist from the Pacific northwest who thought religion was for the weak-minded, Mary Jo Sharp is now a Christian author and director of Confident Christianity Apologetics Ministry.

Talking About Your Faith

Opening up and discussing your beliefs with someone can be nerve-racking.

But it doesn't have to be. Here are four ways to make sharing your faith a little easier.

1. "I don't know" is a good answer.

Only God has all the answers. So if someone asks a question that stumps you, try a little humility. By saying, "I don't know" you're being honest while taking truth seriously.

2. It's okay to make mistakes.

We all struggle with this one. I've heard great orators err in a presentation with which they should be comfortable. This happens to everyone. Give yourself room to learn from your mistakes.

3. There are no perfect times to share your faith.

Don't wait around for everything to be just right. There are no perfect situations this side of eternity in which to discuss God. There are only opportunities.

4. Have a bit of faith.

Don't be alarmed as you begin to talk with folks. It will take some time and practice to alleviate that wandering-in-the-dark feeling during a conversation. Just be open to the moments and people God brings into your life.

—Mary Jo Sharp

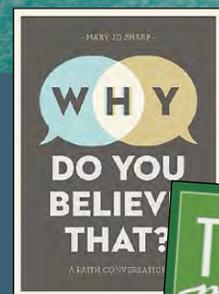
Dig Deeper

• *Why Do You Believe That? A Faith Conversation*

This practical seven-session study will help Christians gain understanding and skill to share Jesus effectively with others, and better understand their own faith.

• Truth Matters (B&H Publishers, March 2014)

Available at LifeWay stores and LifeWay.com.

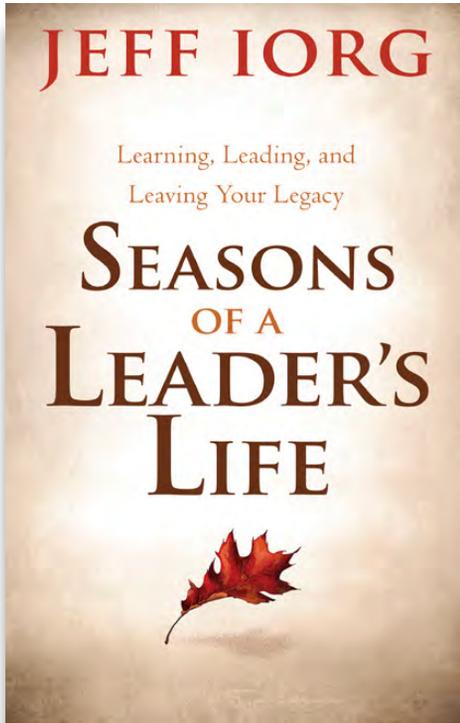




A look inside

Seasons of a Leader's Life

by Jeff Iorg



Life has seasons. For leaders, those seasons could also be called phases or stages of leadership. Younger leaders start out full of passion, idealistic, and excited about the future. Most of them are aware of how little they know about leadership and are zealous to learn all they can. They work hard to earn degrees, seek out mentors, attend conferences, read books, and so on.

These emerging leaders recognize that their early years are primarily learning years—a time to gain information, solidify convictions, test theories, and practice skills. They discover the possibilities of their abilities and gain key insights about their future usefulness. This can be both an exciting and a trying time. While learning is the primary goal, many are also already leading (some with very significant responsibilities).

While good leaders are always learning, at some point the primacy of the learning phase gives way to the reality of the leading phase. Leading replaces learning as the main goal. This new season of life finds leaders engaged in their role, using their training to make a difference while still learning on the job. Leaders lead. They employ key practices to advance the mission of their organization. For Christian leaders, that means advancing the mission of God's kingdom as expressed uniquely through the commission of their church or ministry.

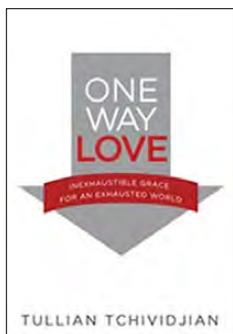
Leaders who paid attention during the learning phase now have resources to draw from to know what to do. This longer season—sometimes decades long—is the prime of a leader's life when their most significant contributions are made.

But time marches on. Eventually, leaders recognize their time to lead is passing. Some make the mistake of holding on too long, dismantling what they have built by clinging to their leadership role long after their effectiveness has waned. Most leaders, however, are fully aware that the person in the mirror keeps getting older. For most of us, the loss of stamina alone forces us to face the reality that the final stage—the time to leave our legacy—is dawning. The final phase of a leader's life, the final contribution, is formalizing a leadership legacy.

Learning, leading, and leaving your legacy. These are the phases of a leader's life. Which season are you in right now? What should you be learning? How can you improve what you are doing? What will you leave for future generations? ■

Excerpt from Seasons of a Leader's Life (B&H) by Jeff Iorg.

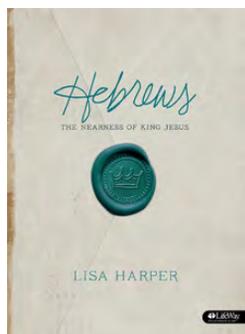
Books



One Way Love

By Tullian Tchividjian,
David C. Cook, 2013

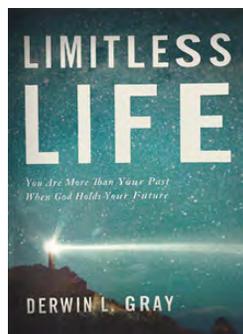
Real life is long on law and short on grace. We are all in need of some relief. Sadly, Christianity is perceived as being merely a vehicle for good behavior and clean living—and the judgments that result from not reaching them—rather than the only recourse for those who have failed over and over again. Tchividjian calls on us to abandon our play-it-safe religion and get drunk on grace. It's shocking and scary, unnatural and undomesticated ... but it is the only thing that can set us free and light the church—and the world—on fire.



Hebrews

By Lisa Harper
LifeWay

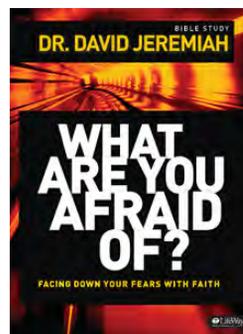
The Book of Hebrews is a rich, dense section of Scripture that can intimidate the most scholarly biblical student. But Lisa Harper makes digging into Hebrews fun and doable, without losing an ounce of depth. Hebrews was a sermon for a specific people and culture in the midst of martyrdom and persecution, but is also relevant for us today, reminding us to continue walking toward Jesus regardless of our culture or our circumstances.



Limitless Life

By Derwin Gray,
Thomas Nelson

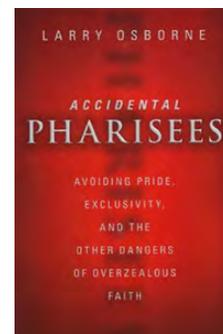
As a former NFL player, Derwin Gray has seen what many would call a life without limits. But in his new book, *Limitless Life*, the pastor of Transformation Church explains that the only way to truly experience a full life is through Christ. Gray intersperses real stories from his own life and those of his congregation with biblical truths about where we find our identity, our value, our life.



What Are You Afraid Of?

By David Jeremiah, LifeWay

This six-session study is a companion to Jeremiah's *What Are You Afraid Of?: Facing Down Your Fears with Faith* (Zondervan). In the study Dr. Jeremiah explores six of the top 10 fears holding many of us back, and he shares the secrets to facing those fears with faith. For many people worry, anxiety, and fear are constant companions. And too often those fears are crippling, keeping us from the life God has called us to live. The challenge is to look to God when you are afraid, and to find a biblical response to your fears.



Accidental Pharisees

By Larry Osborne,
Zondervan

In *Accidental Pharisees*, Osborne warns believers against developing a dangerous elitist or exclusive mindset and urges people to become more loving, humble, compassionate and caring when calling others to Christlikeness. He writes, "Make no mistake, my warnings about the dangers of overzealous faith are not meant as a defense of soft and easy Christianity, they are simply a plea that we remain true to the heart of the gospel, offering rest, hope and salvation to the weary and heavy laden."

For more new releases visit LifeWay.com.



Conferences & Events



SIGHT UNSEEN
2 CORINTHIANS 4:18
SO WE FIX OUR EYES NOT ON WHAT IS SEEN, BUT ON WHAT IS UNSEEN, SINCE WHAT IS SEEN IS TEMPORARY, BUT WHAT IS UNSEEN IS ETERNAL.

Student Life Conference
January 24-25, Birmingham, Alabama; January 31-February 1, Orlando, Florida; February 7-8, Houston, Texas; February 21-22, Memphis, Tennessee; February 28-March 1, DFW Metro Area, Texas; March 7-8, Louisville, Kentucky; March 14-15, Atlanta, Georgia
Speakers: David Nassar, Courtney Clark, Wade Morris, A.C. Sandford, Brent Crowe

Your students will have a gospel-centered experience that powerfully proclaims that life in Christ is far more than what can be seen with physical eyes. God is calling His children to see the eternal value and impact of everything they do in daily life. That focus will fuel the heart of the entire weekend: corporate worship, prayer and other thought-provoking elements.

Studentlife.com



Priscilla Shirer Live

April 5, New Orleans, Louisiana; July 18-19, Lexington, Kentucky; August 22-23, Warner Robins, Georgia

Speakers: Priscilla Shirer; Musical guest: Anthony Evans

Ever feel like you're in a rut? Whether you need inspiration or a challenge, Priscilla Shirer Live will snap you out of routine faith. Shirer's ministry to women around the world focuses on teaching of the Word of God. She desires to see women come to a full understanding of who they are in Christ by hearing the uncompromising truth of Scripture. Can't make it to one of the live events? Join the Priscilla Shirer Live Simulcast on April 5, and allow

the women of your small group, church or community to participate as well.

LifeWay.com/PriscillaShirerLive



Velocity

February 17-18, 2014, Cumming, Georgia
Speakers: Mark Batterson, Rick Bezet, Dave Ferguson, Pete Hise, Shawn Lovejoy and others

Velocity is designed to encourage and equip church planters who lead at an exhilarating pace. Pastors and leaders of churches who want to multiply their churches will also benefit from the wide range of topics discussed at the conference. Breakout sessions cover everything from children and student ministries, to worship production and

media, to financial health. There's also a track for pastors' wives.

ChurchPlanters.com



The Uprising

May 1, 2014, Lexington, Kentucky

Speakers: Pete Hise (Quest Community Church), Bill Hybels (Willow Creek Community Church), Clayton King (Teaching Pastor, Newspring Church) and presenter Pete Wilson (Crosspoint Church)

For the past four years, The Uprising has been dedicated to re-awakening the revolutionary spirit that God has placed in the hearts of church leaders.

This one-day experience re-ignites church teams with fresh vision and practical ministry ideas. The Uprising features main sessions and worship as well as labs and workshops led by guest speakers and the Quest Community Church staff.

TheUprising.org



The Main Event

August 1-2, 2014, Nashville, Tennessee

Speakers: Michael W. Smith, Jeff Struecker, Derwin Gray, Thom Rainer, Darrell Waltrip, and more

Get together with other men to be encouraged, equipped and inspired. This year's event will honor the men who sacrificed to give us freedom on earth and will honor the Man who sacrificed to give us freedom forever!

LifeWay.com/MainEvent

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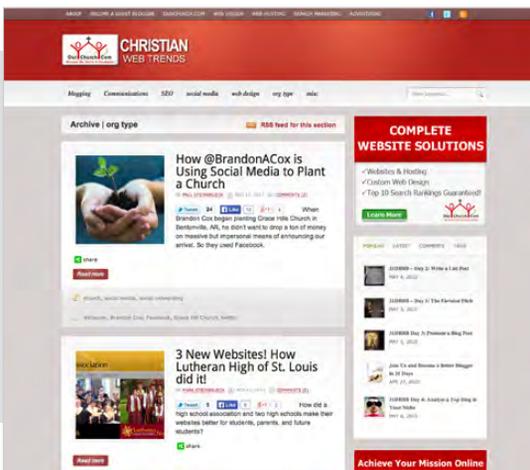
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WORDsearchBible.com



Christian Web Trends

Hosted by Paul Steinbrueck, this site discusses news and trends in communications technology and how that impacts Christian individuals and organizations. Here you'll find tools, resources and ideas into all things technology and social media.

blog.ourchurch.com



3 Tips for leading as an extrovert

I know this may come as a shock, but I am an extrovert—a really extroverted extrovert.

Both extroverts and introverts have tendencies that can become weakness. The best way to combat this is through intentionality. You have to be aware of who you are and whom you have on your team. I've found these three tips helpful in leading as an extrovert in ministry and beyond.

Be a catcher, not a pitcher. This might be the only sports analogy you'll ever get from me, but it holds true. Ask questions and gather feedback instead of always speaking and making assumptions.

As an extrovert, the natural inclination is to speak first and speak often. That's how we process information. However, if you're not careful, you'll create a passive environment from those around you. They will assume you'll give the first, last and only word. They won't feel the need to come to meetings ready to share ideas or give input.

That doesn't mean you become passive yourself. Sometimes the leader must be willing to say what others are too afraid to say. When you point out the emperor has no clothes, some people may cheer, but the emperor is usually not too happy about it.

In dealing with others, work hard to treat them fairly and seek out their input.

You cannot control others' feelings, but you can assure them you've understood their point of view—even if you disagree with them.

Deal with mistakes seriously, but graciously. Some people will not want to accept responsibility for mistakes they made, while others are too hard on themselves. As an extrovert, you can help make sure everyone grows from mistakes, including you.

I want people around me who are passionate about what they do, but who will stand up and admit when they messed up. For those who are reluctant to acknowledge their

own shortcomings, you can point it out to them if needed. For those who recognize the mistake and are eager to learn from it, you can show grace and build them up. This is where the extrovert can be a good teacher to his or her team. The goal should be for the individual to gain wisdom and for the team to be better as a result.

When you have developed an environment where your team feels free to speak, they can help you see your mistakes as well. You should seek to work with people who see what you can't see. They can cover your blind spots and remind you

that you have room to grow as well.

Take what you give. Us extroverts are often blunt in how we deliver news—sometimes too blunt. We should be prepared for and even encourage bluntness in those on our team and in our life.

When you have created the right environment and handled mistakes properly, people will feel the freedom to be completely honest with you. If they think an idea is horrible, they'll tell you. But if they think something coming up can make a huge impact, they'll let you know and get involved with it.

Don't get upset and angry every time others challenge ideas. Eventually, the decision has to be made, but hearing from different perspectives can help make the final project that much stronger. Train your team to know when it's time to raise concerns and when it's time for the leader to make the call and the team follows.

Extroverts have many traits that are associated with leadership, but don't assume your personality makes you a leader. Be intentional about improving. Believing you're the perfect leader doesn't mean you're an extrovert. It means you're a jerk. ■

Ed Stetzer is president of LifeWay Research.

“As an extrovert, you can help make sure everyone grows from mistakes, including yourself.”

Ed Stetzer

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