

C A M P A I G N G U I D E

BACK TO
CHURCH
SUNDAY™



Back to Church Sunday™

Church Campaign Guide

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Plan your Back to Church event in **4** easy steps:

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Introduction

“50% of the current US population would be candidates for a Back to Church Campaign”

—Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

How many people do you know that “used to go” to church but just don’t anymore? If you are like most American’s, you know quite a few. According to the book *American Church in Crisis* by David T. Olson, “Most Americans have been to church, and yet only 20 percent are regular attendees.” Dr. Gary L. McIntosh from the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University estimates “more than 76 million people have attended church at least once in their lifetime.” Clearly, most people who do not attend church regularly attended at one time in their lives. Many of these people, current research shows, are willing to try church again, given the right opportunity.

Back to Church Sunday is designed to be that opportunity—a Sunday service dedicated to the people who do not attend church in your community. The program specifically and intentionally reaches out to those who have left the church—and encourages them to return.

An event like this can provide a catalyst for those looking to attend or return to church. Some may want to re-connect with fellow believers, re-connect with God, or just to return to what was once an important part of their lives. Whatever their reason, this campaign gives your church the chance to reach out and welcome them back.

This outreach event can also be a powerful motivator for your current members. It enables them to reach out to people they know who previously attended church but then left. Resistance to sharing their faith is a common issue among believers, but inviting an existing believer back seems easier, especially when you give members the tools and the opportunity with **Back to Church Sunday**.

Back to Church Sunday can be implemented year-round, but many choose to participate on National **Back to Church Sunday**. National **Back to Church Sunday** is held in the fall of each year to coincide with the normal return to school and work routines after summer. Thorough preparation will ensure a successful campaign and planning should begin during the summer months.

This Campaign Planning Guide is designed to help your leadership team effectively plan, prepare and implement this annual event, and join hundreds of other churches around the U.S. who will do the same on National **Back to Church Sunday**.

CHURCHES THAT PARTNER TOGETHER SUCCEED IN:

- Breaking down territorial and denominational barriers.
- Modeling Christ’s call of unity within the Church.
- Portraying a unified purpose among believing churches in the community.
- Exposing the community to available churches near them, helping people find a church home.
- Developing church partnerships that can support and strengthen one another all year.

THE GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Leadership guidelines & information
- Campaign preparation and planning tips
- Training tools for your church teams
- Access to other resources to encourage a successful event

“Perhaps one of the most underestimated reasons people return to the church is that someone simply invited them back. 41% of the formerly churched said they would return to the local church if a friend or acquaintance invited them.”

—Thom Rainer/Sam Rainer Outreach magazine, Jan 2007

Leadership Information

Before you decide to participate in **Back to Church Sunday**, your leadership team should understand why people leave church in the first place, and what will help them decide to return. It will help you make their return a positive experience and avoid the “revolving-door syndrome,” i.e. welcoming them back just to have them leave again.

Review this section of the Campaign Guide with your leadership team, and carefully think through any specific preparations essential to a good experience.

The desired end-result of your **Back to Church Sunday** event is not necessarily a large number of visitors on that specific day—it is providing your members a goal and ongoing ministry of relationship-building with people who are not attending church for a variety of reasons.

Why People Leave

The American Church is in a general state of decline, with fewer than 20% regularly attending church. This suggests that 7.9 million people may be leaving churches annually. That’s 150,000 each week!¹

According to research conducted by LifeWay,² the top two life-situations that prompt adults to stop attending church include being “too busy” (19%) and the burden of “family/home responsibilities” (17%). The next most common category of reasons involves disenchantment with pastor/church; this accounts for 37% of the formerly churched.

The three most specific reasons for this disenchantment are important to note:

“Church members seemed hypocritical.” – 17%

“Church members were judgmental of others.” – 17%

“The church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement.” – 12%

The church today is challenged to warmly welcome everyone who chooses to attend and to give them the opportunity to connect. Your church cannot take responsibility for all the criticism, but you can work to provide a loving place for every attendee to discover—or re-discover—God’s love and truth. Perhaps they will notice that things have changed since they last attended, or maybe even they themselves have changed. The outcome of a return visit is in God’s hands. Even so, the Church must do everything possible to provide a non-threatening and loving entry into the family of God.

Bringing People Back³

THE POWER OF THE INVITATION

Perhaps one of the most underestimated reasons people return to the Church is that someone simply invited them back. Overall, 41% of the formerly churched said that they would return to the local church if a friend or acquaintance invited them. Younger adults are even more influenced by the power of the invitation. Approximately 60% of those ages 18–35 would consider attending or returning to church if someone they knew asked them to come back. A simple, yet powerful invitation is all it may take to prompt a homecoming. Is your church equipping people to invite others?

“More than 80% of the formerly churched do not have a strong belief in God, explaining why work and family are a higher priority than church. But would they be ‘too busy’ to attend if they felt more welcome at church?”¹

“I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

Almost a third of the formerly churchd mentioned that if they were to return to church, they would want to be part of a local body where they could make a difference. By and large, people within the church feel more fulfilled in their lives when they sense that God is using them. And churches with high expectations of their members are actually more likely to draw people back into the fold. People want to serve and know that they are contributing to something significant. Making new members aware that the bar is set high for their contribution does not deter them, but rather motivates them to be a part of the local church.

THE TOP THREE MOTIVATING FACTORS

While simply inviting a friend or letting him/her know they can personally make a difference are practical ways to bring people to the Church, two of the top three motivating factors for attending or returning to church are spiritual in nature. First, almost half of those who are considering attending Church said that they would do so because they feel it will bring them closer to God. Second, not only do people return to the Church because God is working in their hearts, but also because they sense a void in their lives. Over a third said that they would return to fill the emotional and spiritual gaps they've felt since leaving the Church the first time.

The third motivating factor for those returning to Church is to be around those who hold similar values. Almost one-third said they'd want to attend a church in which people held the same moral standards as them—something to think about if your church is wrestling with how it will stand on moral issues. A church that compromises in this area can deter those who are looking to the Church for both high standards and people with similar values.

Campaign Preparation & Planning

The three elements of any successful campaign or event are:

PRAY

Changing a person's heart and encouraging them to respond to an invitation to church can only happen as a result of PRAYER. Pray over each element of your campaign plan, and encourage your leadership team and the church at large to begin praying for their non church attending friends and family.

PLAN

Planning takes work—and a fully committed team. Any successful campaign must be carefully planned out among all the ministries and teams who will contribute to its success. People will commit to an activity when they believe in its vision, so start your planning process by casting the vision and sharing your reasons for doing the campaign with your core leadership team. If leaders are excited about it and involved in the planning, they will help ensure the plan's overall success. Be sure to read and consider all the tips and guidelines given in this guide, and don't forget those issues that are unique to your church.

PROMOTE

Communicating information and making tools available to campaign participants are critical aspects of your campaign's success. A campaign should include every person who calls the church home. No matter how large or how small each person's contribution, give everyone the same vision and the same tools to share. Consult the Resources section of this guide for ideas and tools for your church members and the surrounding community.

“The most common motivation of those who would consider returning comes straight from the soul: ‘to bring me closer to God’ (46%) Not surprisingly, this desire for an improved relationship with God is expressed primarily by those who still consider themselves Christian.”

– Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research

Key Elements of the Campaign

PREPARATION:

- Facilities Getting the building ready for guests
- People Equipping your members for outreach
- Equipping your greeters, assimilation team, discipleship leaders
- Sermons Deciding on topics and content for the day and/or weekends before and after the event date
- Worship Designing the worship and program for the day

DELIVERY:

- Tips for Greeters How to welcome new and returning church-goers
- Tips for Assimilation Following-up and fostering connections
- Follow-Through Ensuring people stay connected to the life of the church

Project Timelines

A solid project plan is essential for a successful campaign. The timeline below is a suggested guide for an effective **Back to Church Sunday**. Be sure to develop a specific project plan with names, deadlines and activities clearly stated.

TIME BEFORE EVENT	ACTIVITY
6 weeks	Meet with leadership team & share vision.
5 weeks	Share the vision with the congregation and kick-off a prayer initiative for non-attending friends and family. (Add reminders and ongoing messages on the campaign to your church's website, newsletters, weekly announcements, etc.)
4 weeks	Review the facilities. Make necessary improvements and/or preparations for the event.
	Plan out the preaching and teaching schedule. Meet with the worship/program team and outline the event's program.
	Order resources and tools for the campaign.
3 weeks	Provide invitation tools to your congregation. Include teaching or training on invitation and outreach where possible. (Small groups, Sunday School, etc.)
2 weeks	Meet with leadership team to review the action plan.
1 week	Meet with your assimilation and hospitality teams. Review tips, verify their understanding and gain commitment to follow-through activities.

"Prompting the formerly churchd to visit a church with an eye toward attending regularly requires some work. ... Not surprisingly, the work of the Holy Spirit along with the efforts of church members, friends and family members is needed."

– Brad Waggoner, LifeWay Research [Emphasis added.]

Preparation

Facility

Use the following checklist to assess all areas of the church building and visitor areas.

What improvements/changes are needed?

Checklist:

- SIGNAGE** – Can the church be found easily?
- PARKING** – Are there enough new visitor spaces? Are they marked?
- DIRECTION SIGNS** – (Outside and inside) Are they easy to follow?
- BRANDING, CHURCH LOGO & SIGNAGE** – Are they clean and in good repair?
- INFORMATION CENTER** – Is it clean and up to date?
- RESTROOMS** – Are they clean, attractive and fully functional?
- HOSPITALITY AREA** – Are our refreshment stations clean and well-stocked?

These critical items of housekeeping are part of the first five minutes of a newcomer's arrival. They contribute to first impressions that will affect their decision to return a second time—or not at all! Never underestimate the importance of simple cleanliness and the outward appearance of your facility.

People

The success of this campaign depends on the commitment and involvement of everybody in the church. Below are some guidelines in preparing various core groups:

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Once the vision has been shared and the leadership understands the purpose of this campaign, divide among them the action steps involved in a successful **Back to Church Sunday**. Meet with them in the proceeding weeks and continue to encourage them to pray for their non-attending family and friends.

HOSPITALITY/GREETER TEAM

This “front-line team” on **Back to Church Sunday** needs to be prepared and equipped for the increased guest potential. There are specific tips and guidelines for these teams in the “Delivery” section of this guide. Make sure the leaders of these teams schedule at least one separate equipping meeting for his/her team.

ASSIMILATION TEAM

One of the most critical elements of a successful campaign is your follow-through and connection with those who choose to attend or return to church. The leader in charge of Assimilation should work through the section of this guide on “Tips of Assimilation” and discuss specific action items with their ministry team.

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Small groups are ideal settings for preparation and prayer during a campaign. Suggest to your small group leaders that their groups pray for the non-attending friends and families connected with them. When they commit to pray for people by name during the weeks before **Back to Church Sunday**, it further strengthens the preparation and overall commitment from the church at large. Schedule a vision-casting meeting with the small group leaders, and ask them to suggest other ways their groups can contribute to the campaign.

CHURCH MEMBERS

As mentioned earlier, the sooner every person starts praying, the quicker the campaign will take root. Ask your congregation to commit to praying for specific friends and family members they would like to see come to church. Most importantly, EQUIP your members with the VISION, the training on HOW to invite, and the TOOLS to help them invite.

Sermons

For best results, the pastor should present sermons on **Back to Church Sunday** topics beginning a couple of weeks before the event date, and they should continue for a couple of weeks afterward. A series of four to six sermons is ideal. Sermon ideas, illustrations, PowerPoint backgrounds and downloadable videos on relative topics can be found at <http://www.sermoncentral.com/articleb.asp?article=Outreach-Back-to-Church-Campaign>.

It may be tempting to “lighten up” your sermon content when you know people are new or returning to church; however, we encourage you to offer sound biblical teachings and relevant concept illustrations.

“Application of biblical teaching is important to those who return to the Church. Many within the de-churched camp affirmed that if they were to return, they’d seek a church that offered engaging and realistic dialogue about God and life. So the de-churched aren’t concerned with ancillary items, but rather sound biblical teaching that applies to their lives.”⁴

As mentioned before, new and formerly church people often attend or return to church because they are missing the “God factor” in their lives, and they will seek to meet Him in your church—make sure they can see and hear Him loud and clear.

In addition, ensure that the sermon and worship programming is fairly typical of your usual services. Resist the temptation to make the experience highly program-driven or otherwise atypical of your church’s identity. If a person attends on **Back to Church Sunday** and then returns again afterwards (which is what you want!), they will need to experience the same church personality they saw the first time. Re-building trust with this group is essential, and building trust requires authenticity and consistency. Otherwise, your returning guests may feel that you have tried a “bait and switch”.

Worship

Since this is a special campaign, you will want to carefully review the programming with your worship team. Make sure that your worship connects well with your chosen messages. Keep your song-selection focused on engagement with all attendees, perhaps choosing more recognizable music and avoiding anything too unusual from the norm.

Assess the relevance of your music and your media – could it be time to upgrade something without compromising your core identity? What type of worship will best provide the opportunity for visitors to experience God personally and authentically?

“The most common motivation of those who would consider returning comes straight from the soul: ‘to bring me closer to God’ (46%). Not surprisingly, this desire for an improved relationship with God is expressed primarily by those who still consider themselves Christian.”

– LifeWay Research

Delivery

Tips for Greeters

Based on data from LifeWay Research, when the majority of formerly churched adults return, they will attend a completely new church—entering unfamiliar territory and meeting new people. By thinking through how they must be feeling, you will be more able to welcome them in a warm and friendly way without drawing too much attention to them.

“Only 11% of formerly churched adults would be willing to identify themselves as a visitor when attending a church for the first time. The clear majority, 63%, prefer to wait until at least the second visit to let anyone know they are visiting, and 26% desire to slip in and casually introduce themselves at the service.”⁵

With this in mind, the role of a greeter is to be warm and available, but not pushy! Allow people to come as they are, engage as much as they feel comfortable, and encourage them to blend in. You do not need to flag their presence but simply extend a kind greeting.

Remember, the three most common reasons people leave the church are:

1. Church members seemed hypocritical.
2. Church members were judgmental.
3. Church members tended to move in “cliques,” excluding newcomers.

As the greeter, you are the first person a

DO:

- Smile, say hello, and give them a bulletin.
- Welcome them to your church and direct them to the next logical place—the worship center, hospitality area, children’s ministry, etc.
- SAY NOTHING MORE. Allow them to remain comfortably anonymous, if they choose.

DON’T:

- Ask if this is their first time visiting.
- Say “Thanks for visiting! We’re so glad to see you.” (Unless you say this to everybody!)
- Point out the visitor register or any other form that needs to be completed.
- Immediately introduce them to a regular attendee and point out that they are new.

guest will encounter on the day they decide to return to church. It may seem impossible for you to prevent them from experiencing any uncomfortable feelings, but certain techniques will help them feel comfortable faster. Your role is to help them feel welcome and avoid drawing attention to them as “visitors.”

Tips for Assimilation

Your focus should not be just on the “first-timers.” Focus on the visitor who’s returning for a second or third time. Follow-up and connection with those who return is critical if they are to become regular attendees at your church.

“Seven minutes is all you get to make a positive first impression. In the first seven minutes of contact with your church, your first-time guests will know whether or not they are coming back. That’s before a single worship song is sung and before a single word of the message is uttered.”

- Nelson Searcy, “Fusion”

Here are some assimilation and connection ideas for your **Back to Church Sunday**. Consider integrating these ideas into your existing systems, or make changes where necessary to fit the needs of the new visitors during the campaign.

GATHERING INFORMATION

You will need contact information for effective follow-up, and how you obtain it is critical to the overall experience of a visitor in your church. One of the most common methods is that of a “Connection Card”. This card is only useful if EVERYBODY fills it out. Don’t use it just for visitors, and in so doing draw attention to them as being new to the church. Your Connection Card should include check-boxes for first-, second- and third-time visitors as well as for “regular attenders.” Email and phone numbers are the most critical information to collect, unless you use a follow-up letter, in which case you will need the mailing address. If you have a church website, consider adding a “guest” page where visitors can find out more about the church as well as enter their contact information. Make sure you do not ask for any more information than you will immediately need in order to follow-up; most visitors are uncomfortable with providing too much personal information at first, especially in these days when identity theft is common.

FIRST STEP IN FOLLOWING-UP

The first follow-up should happen as soon as possible, preferably on the Monday after **Back to Church Sunday**. It can happen in the form of an email or phone call. This should be a “thank-you” call and not another invitation. It should not feel like an “interview” of the visitor; in other words, don’t ask too many questions. It’s a simple thank-you and an opening of a door to answer questions or direct them to the website for more information. The person making the calls or receiving email responses should be equipped to answer any questions a person may ask about the church. Provide this church

representative with a list of key answers to common questions, if necessary. Also, provide a list of helpful information and brochures the church can send to the visitor. Many churches also give a small gift to first-time visitors; this gift should be sent immediately. (Avoid telling visitors to pick up a gift on the day of the event—this draws attention to them as visitors.)

SECOND VISIT FOLLOW-UP

Again, follow-up should happen immediately after the second visit. At this point, a visitor is obviously more serious about attending, so a few quick questions are appropriate to ask. For example:

- Do you live close by?
- How did you hear about our church?
- How can we best serve you?
- Do you have children?
- Did your children have a good time in their classes?
- Is there anything we can pray for?

Broad, non-threatening questions can help build a relationship and assess if there are specific ministry needs that could help them connect to the church.

Always end the conversation with sincere thanks for visiting.

THIRD VISIT FOLLOW-UP

At this point, it’s ideal for someone on the team to set up a personal connection with the visitor. You might call the person and ask them out for coffee. Some churches host a welcome dessert or meal to help newcomers know more about the church. You can also invite them to any upcoming church events that would be of interest. Yet another option is to connect them to a small group if they express interest in making friends or deeper Bible study. The critical point is to connect them to the church in a way that allows them to build relationships and find ministries that meet their needs.

10% of first-time visitors become regulars.

25% of second-time visitors become regulars.

45% of third-time visitors become regulars.

Follow-Through

Once a new visitor becomes a regular attendee (after more than three visits), it's essential to ensure their connection to the life of the church.

*"Many members are vulnerable to attrition because of either a nonexistent or immature faith. When individuals begin to seek out membership, they should be guided through a process whereby they are clearly taught the gospel and then following salvation, grounded in strong biblical truth. Far fewer people would drop out of church if their spiritual foundation was deep and strong."*⁶

SOME IDEAS FOR CONNECTION INCLUDE:

- Small groups
- Bible study classes
- Seminars and workshops
- Social events
- Service projects & missions
- Ministry service (to help them discover their gifts and start serving*)

**"Too often churches wait for people to be spiritually mature to engage them in service, when many projects or tasks are ideal entry or re-entry points for people on their faith journey."*⁷

There are many resources⁸ available to help you build a strong discipleship program in your church, and we would encourage you to do so. When people have made the effort to attend or return, it will help make sure they don't leave again.

Sources

- 1 Thom Rainer & Sam Rainer—From *Outreach* magazine, "Features," July/August 2007. Re-printed with permission. See Resources for full article – "Coming Home."
- 2 Brad Waggoner, director of LifeWay Research
- 3 Thom Rainer & Sam Rainer—From *Outreach* magazine, "Features," July/August 2007. Re-printed with permission. See Resources for full article – "Coming Home."
- 4 Thom Rainer & Sam Rainer—From *Outreach* magazine, "Features," July/August 2007. Reprinted with permission. See Resources for full article – "Coming Home."
- 5 Lifeway Research Staff
- 6 Brad Waggoner, LifeWay Research
- 7 Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research
- 8 Refer to Resources for suggested material.

"Responsibility and ownership go hand in hand. When we are given responsibility in the workplace, within our families or in a social environment, we naturally feel a sense of ownership over what we are responsible for...When your regular attenders begin taking on responsibility, they will quickly start to feel a sense of ownership." – Nelson Searcy, *Fusion*

Back to Church as an Outreach Opportunity

EQUIP YOUR MEMBERS TO BE INVITERS

It's one of the key tenets of successful outreach: equipping your congregation to invite others to your church. But many Christians don't take the steps necessary to invite non-attending friends, family members or neighbors. A Back to Church Campaign can provide encouragement as well as easy tools for your congregation to use in extending an invitation to others.

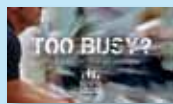
Invite Your Community:



BACK TO CHURCH POSTER

Advertise your Back to Church event with a poster hung in busy walkways or in a local business. These 18" x 24" posters include room at the bottom to write in your event date, time and location.

10 posters for \$24.95



INVITECARDS

Small, business card-sized invitations that can easily be handed to friends and family or even your favorite waitress, grocery clerk or dry cleaner. Available in these designs:

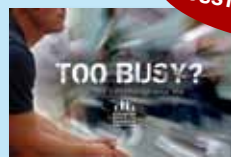
\$19.99/pack of 200



DOORHANGERS

Do-It-Yourself DoorHangers feature full color graphics on the front and are blank on the back, ready for you to personalize and print on your laser printer or copier. Available in these designs:

\$19.99/Pack of 150



IMPACTCARDS

The ImpactCard postcard is the ideal tool for inviting your community to **Back to Church Sunday**. Each oversized 8.5 x 5.5" ImpactCard features eye-catching designs on the front and allows you to choose your ideal option for the reverse side:

Customized – The customized ImpactCard features your logo, and event information and map in full-color. Choose from the 6 Back to Church or Rethink Church designs or let us customize on for your event—FREE! Price based on quantity. *Spanish customization available.*

Do-It-Yourself Impact Cards – The Do-It-Yourself ImpactCard features a blank reverse side, ready for you to add your own text and print on your laser printer or copier.



OUTDOOR BANNERS

Attract visitors to your church and your **Back to Church Sunday** event with eye-catching designs. These photographic-quality, indoor/outdoor banners can be personalized with your church or event information and come ready to hang with grommets. *Spanish customization available.*

Impact Banners are available in five sizes. Starting at \$179/4'x8'

MORE OUTREACH IDEAS:

- Ask your members to pray about those God may want them to reach.
- Provide InviteCards to your members to use as invitations to your Back to Church Sunday event. They make great invitations for family, co-workers, friends, and neighbors. It's easier to extend a winning invitation when the information is right there in your hand!
- Use DoorHangers to invite the community. Members can take 10 DoorHangers each and distribute five to the houses on the left and five on the right of their home. Or, you can organize groups to distribute invitations throughout the neighborhoods around the church.
- Make the ReThink Church book available to your members to use as a gift and outreach tool. Personalize InviteCards with your service times and church information and insert one into each booklet.

To order call **800-991-6011** or visit **BackToChurch.com**

In-Reach Tools:

GREAT COMMUNICATION = GREAT PARTICIPATION!

An effective in-reach campaign can help inspire and engage your whole congregation. Build excitement about the event, and you'll maximize participation from your members. Advertising studies show that people need to be exposed to a message anywhere from three to seven times before they really retain it. Good, consistent communication can help ignite your congregation and will result in more people participating. When your church leadership really communicates a commitment to a program, it demonstrates its importance to your members—and they are more likely to engage

What In-Reach Resources Will You Need?



INDOOR BANNERS

Add XBanner info here too!

Build excitement in your church for the **Back to Church Sunday** event with an Indoor banner. Choose from the 2' x 8' ImageBanner, available in vinyl or fabric. Stand sold separately.

Or the 2.5' x 5' 9" Xbanner and Stand only \$99!



STICKANYWHERE BANNERS

Versatile 3 x 3" StickAnywhere Banners will get the message out over and over. Move them as many times as you want and re-stick them on any smooth clean surface. No stand or hardware required.

\$79



BULLETIN SHELLS

Available in three sizes, these eye-catching designs feature full-color.

Starting at \$9.99 100 pack

MORE IN-REACH IDEAS:

- Show video promotional clips during your services to build interest and participation.
- Send an email to your church list outlining the purpose and plan for the Back to Church Sunday event.
- Distribute the Rethink Church Booklet to your church members for individual study and to help foster interest in inviting others.

Free video download to show your congregation at BackToChurch.com!

Back to Church Website & Social Network

VISIT THE BACK TO CHURCH WEBSITE:

WWW.BACKTOCHURCH.COM

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK:

[HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/BACKTOCHURCH](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/BACKTOCHURCH)

Related Website links

POLLS:

Gallup Poll: Just Why Do Americans Attend Church?

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/27124/Just-Why-Americans-Attend-Church.aspx>

ABC News Poll: Most Americans Say They're Christian:

http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/beliefnet_poll_010718.html

Poll: Why Americans Attend, Skip Church

http://www.christianpost.com/church/Polls_reports/2007/04/poll-why-americans-attend-skip-church-07/index.html

An in-depth look at USA's religious beliefs, practices

http://www.usatoday.com/news/graphics/2008_pew_religion/flash.htm

New Statistics on Church Attendance and Avoidance

<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/18-congregations/45-new-statistics-on-church-attendance-and-avoidance>

ARTICLES AND RESEARCH:

Americans open to invitations to church

<http://www.bpnews.net/BPnews.asp?ID=30161>

Most Americans Open to Church Invitations from Family, Friends

http://www.christianpost.com/church/Polls_reports/2009/03/most-americans-open-to-church-invitations-from-family-friends-26/index.html

The Younger Unchurched:

http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%25253D168984%252526M%25253D200906%2C00.html

76 Million American Adults Never Attend Church

<http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/17065.htm>

Formerly Churched Indicate Openness to Return:

http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%25253D163893%252526M%25253D200903%2C00.html

Unchurched Population Nears 100 Million in the U.S.:

<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/107-unchurched-population-nears-100-million-in-the-us>

Reasons People Stop Going to Church:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/441979/reasons_people_stop_going_to_church.html?cat=34

First-time visitors often judge a church by its kids' programs. How to create an environment:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2005/novdec/2.26.html>

Churches welcome Back Familiar faces:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/churches.welcome.back.familiar.faces.on.back.to.church.sunday/7745.htm>

Can the Church close the back door?:

http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%253D163612%2526M%253D200681%2C00.html

Get Back to Church:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1420579/get_back_to_church.html

Study Examines Choice of Religion

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/27/AR2009042701460.html?referrer=emailarticle>

E-How: How to invite someone to church:

http://www.ehow.com/how_2326150_invite-someone-church.html

How to Choose a Church:

<http://christianity.about.com/od/churchandcommunity/ht/chooseeachurch.htm>

Attributes of a Good Church:

<http://christianity.about.com/od/churchandcommunity/qt/goodchurchattri.htm>

People going BTC because of financial hardship:

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6784/is_2009_Jan_10/ai_n31183078/?tag=content:col1

LifeWay Research finds unchurched 20-somethings more open than older unchurched:

http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%2C1703%2CA%25253D168984%252526M%25253D200906%2C00.html

Church Sees Members Rise:

http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/images/mar_09_anglican.pdf

What Makes Newcomers Stick at It?:

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=70049>

Rise in Church Attendance Down to Economy:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/3659536/Rise-in-church-congregation-attendance-down-to-economy.html>

In God We Trust:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/in-god-we-trust-pews-fill-up-as-the-economy-slows-down-1055690.html>

Turning to God:

http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article5326911.ece

VIDEOS:

Visitor Video:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/1999/mayjun/9v3014.html>

Invite a Friend to Church – Comical:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ci5P7PUGPBE&feature=related>

Top 5 ways NOT to invite someone to church:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HafKRNQLGUU&feature=related>

The UnChurched:

<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/10597/the-unchurched?>

Anytime 82%

<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/16051/anytime-82>

I Wish

<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/16402/i-wish>

The Church:

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/6030/The-Church>

Seeking a Church Home:

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/9291/Seeking-Church-Home>

BLOGS OR DISCUSSIONS:

My first Sunday in Your Church:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/areas/biblestudies/articles/le-2001-003-5.45.html>

Discussion on why people want to go back to church:

<http://www.43things.com/things/view/42116/go-back-to-church>

Top ten reasons why people leave church:

<http://prayconnecticut.blogspot.com/2006/10/top-ten-reasons-people-stop-attending.html>

Why I have run from Churches:

<http://community.adn.com/adn/node/131450>

Invite Someone to Church:

<http://thepoint.breakpoint.org/2008/01/invite-someone.html>

Why I Went Back to Church: God on the Ground:

<http://www.divinecaroline.com/article/22196/46212-church--god-ground>

Recommended Reading

FOR CHURCH LEADERS:

Why Men Hate Going to Church, David Murrow

Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts, Thom Rainer & Sam Rainer

Finding a Church You Can Love and Loving the Church You've Found, Kevin & Sherry Harney

Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully Engaged Members of Your Church, Nelson Searcy

Quitting Church: Why the Faithful are Fleeing and What to Do about It, Julia Duin

Sticky Church, Larry Osborne

The Churched and the De-Churched, Mary Tuomi Hammond

unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity... and Why It Matters, David Kinnaman & Gabe Lyons

Grow Your Church From the Outside In,

Re-Churching The Unchurched CD, George Barna.

Jim & Casper Go To Church, Jim Henderson and Matt Casper.

FOR A PERSON SEEKING TO COME BACK TO CHURCH:

Finding a Church You Can Love, and Loving the One You're In Kevin & Sherry Harney

Ten: Living the Ten Commandments in the 21st Century. JJohn

The Case for Christ. Lee Strobel

Godology. Christian George

Assaulted by Joy: The Redemption of a Cynic. Stephen W. Simpson, Ph.D. (www.assaultedbyjoy.com)

They Like Jesus, Not the Church. Dan Kimball

So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore, Jake Colsen, Wayne Jacobsen, Dave Coleman

The Purpose Driven Life Rick Warren

Knowing God, J.I. Packer

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society Eugene Peterson

Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey Jonathan Murrow

The Pursuit of God A. W. Tozer

Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality Donald Miller

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home Richard Foster

Why Men Hate Going to Church Dave Murrow

Confessions of a Pastor Craig Groeschel

Mere Christianity C. S. Lewis

The God Questions Hal Seed

You Were Made for More Jim Cymbala

The Life: A Portrait of Jesus J. John

Rediscovering Church Bill & Lynne Hybels

Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World Henri J. M. Nouwen

Dangerous Surrender: What Happens When You Say Yes to God Kay Warren

The Normal Christian Life Watchman Nee

A Beautiful Offering: Returing God's Love with Your Life Angela Thomas

Seeking Him: Experiencing the Joy of Personal Revival Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Tim Grissom (Author)

Experiencing the Heart of Jesus: Knowing His Heart, Feeling His Love Max Lucado

6 Surprises About the De-Churched

- **THE DE-CHURCHED ARE NOT MAD AT THE CHURCH.** While many within the Church might view someone's departure as a sign that they're angry, that's not the case. Very few of the formerly churched expressed hostility toward the local body.
- **YOUNG ADULTS RETURN OUT OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD.** Almost half of those aged 18 to 35 cited this reason. Today's younger generation is sometimes viewed as rebellious or shunning God. While rebellion certainly applies to some, a large segment of young adults are returning for spiritual reasons.
- **THE DE-CHURCHED DON'T FEEL AWKWARD ABOUT COMING BACK.** Only 15% mentioned that they would feel awkward. So the Church shouldn't feel awkward about seeking out those who have left and asking them to return.
- **DENOMINATIONAL PREFERENCES DO NOT CHANGE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH.** Fewer than 20% prefer to attend a church of a different denomination. Conversely, 64% of those who have left would prefer to attend a church of the same denomination. Clearly, denominational preference is not the impetus behind those who leave.
- **THE SECOND VISIT IS CRUCIAL AMONG THOSE RETURNING TO THE CHURCH.** Almost two-thirds of the de-churched maintained that they would like to remain anonymous until their second visit if they were to return. While our churches should remain amiable and open to all guests, perhaps we should focus on second and third-time guests as much as first-timers.
- **APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL TEACHING IS IMPORTANT TO THOSE WHO RETURN TO THE CHURCH.** Many within the de-churched camp affirmed that if they were to return, they'd seek a church that offered engaging and realistic dialogue about God and life. So the de-churched aren't concerned with ancillary items, but rather sound biblical teaching that applies to their lives.

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Back to Church Campaign Planning Guide

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