

The Billy Graham School

COMPASS

Navigating Ministry & Missions

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December 2007

Multiplying Congregations

Dear church leader,

God is the God of new beginnings—and each new year reminds us of that truth. Now, at the dawn of a new year, is a proper time to renew our commitments to God. Consider making these New Year's commitments:

1. I will pray every day with my spouse and family.

Pastors and staff who really pray begin by praying with those that matter the most—their family. Commit yourself to model family prayer in your home this year.

2. I will read through the Bible this year.

What seems so basic a Christian discipline is often one of the most difficult goals to achieve in a single year. Start this new year right by following a workable annual Bible reading plan, perhaps one found under "Bible Study Tools" at www.crosswalk.com.

3. I will memorize one scripture verse each week. Only the best armed pastors and staff are ready for that spiritual battle that ministry involves. Memorize the Word, and have that weapon ready when the enemy seeks to discourage and defeat you.

4. I will honestly evaluate my church's



"Honestly evaluate your church's growth throughout the year."

growth throughout the year. This year, be willing to lead your church to ask the hard question, "Is God using our church to reach non-believers?" If he is not, pray that the Word of the Lord would spread rapidly through the ministry of your church (2 Thess. 3:1).

5. I will speak about God to someone each day.

Most of us will be better witnesses for God if we simply speak about him more often to anyone—including other believers. Simply talk of his righteousness all day long (Psa. 71:24), and witnessing to non-believers will come much more naturally.

6. I will seek opportunities to share my faith weekly.

Pastors of evangelistically growing churches intentionally plan personal evangelism into their schedules. If you want your church

to grow in the new year, share the gospel at least once a week.

7. I will personally disciple at least four believers this year.

Effective discipling begins with pastors and staff members who intentionally mentor other believers. Commit in this new year to mentor at least four believers, perhaps working with two for six months at a time.

Am I suggesting anything new in these New Year's commitments for church growth pastors and staff in this new year? I doubt it—but that's precisely the point. In many ways, church growth in this new year is about doing the old things well.

Our prayer is that this edition of the Compass will give you some practical ways to lead your church in the new year. May God help you to commit to be such a leader.

Chuck Lawless
Dean, The Billy Graham School of
Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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FOR THE TRUTH. FOR THE CHURCH. FOR THE WORLD. FOR THE GLORY OF GOD



Recommended Resources

Topic of the Month:
Church Health



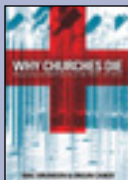
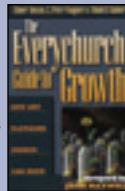
Gary McIntoch,
*Thriving Churches
in the Twenty-First
Century*

Thom Rainer and
Eric Geiger, *Simple
Church: Returning
to God's Process for
Making Disciples*



Ed Stetzer,
*Comeback
Churches: How 300
Churches Turned
Around and Yours
Can, Too*

Towns, Elmer, et al,
*The Everychurch
Guide to Growth:
How Any Plateaued
Church Can Grow*



Mac Brunson and
Ergun Caner, *Why
Churches Die*

Mark
Dever, *Nine Marks
of a Healthy Church*



Next Edition:
Cross-Cultural Communication

Books can be found at:
Lifeway.com or Amazon.com

Reaching the Unchurched

Thom Rainer

It is my desire that the number of churches that are healthy, growing and reaching the unchurched continues to rise. Out of our study of the formerly unchurched came fifteen characteristics (ten listed here) that were common among all of the churches that were reaching the unchurched. Let these characteristics be used as a tool to evaluate your church, and use them to encourage and give fresh ideas to your ministry.

1. Major on majors

The experience of listening to the formerly unchurched and of studying churches that reach the unchurched was a joy, because these churches tend to major on majors. Other issues, like music style and sermon length, are treated, as they should be, as minor. Churches that reach the unchurched keep their priorities in order and their goals in clear view.

2. Be biblical, conservative and convictional

It must be said without hesitation that churches that reach the unchurched are theologically conservative. They have a high view of Scripture. And their convictions about their beliefs are obvious. A church can attempt many good contextual efforts to reach the unchurched, but if it does not have the foundations of a high view of Scripture, the efforts are either futile or transient.

3. Give evangelism priority and passion

I have visited many vibrant

churches. Though they all agree on the key doctrines of the Christian faith, they do have theological differences. Their worship styles range from traditional to blended to contemporary. Their common bonds, however, include a conviction of the authority of God's Word and a passion for evangelism.

4. Develop an effective and comprehensive small-group ministry

The formerly unchurched told us they were attracted to small groups for two reasons: they desired further biblical teaching and training, and they sought to develop relationships with other Christians. Small groups dramatically impact the effectiveness of a church's outreach and assimilation.

5. Cultivate a user-friendly greeter ministry

The formerly unchurched appreciated the presence of greeters. They need to be trained and clearly identifiable. Provide a welcome center with good and updated information on the church. Make certain the greeter ministry includes taking people to their ultimate destination in the church. Do not merely give them directions; give them an escort.

6. Keep the friendliness issue before the church

Every church I have ever visited or consulted thinks it is friendly. These false perceptions are based on how members treat each

other in the church. They need to be reminded each week to be friendly, especially to outsiders. Nearly four out of five formerly unchurched told us that the friendliness of the church was a factor in their becoming Christians and joining a particular church.

7. Seek excellence

The formerly unchurched were completely turned off by poor music, unkempt facilities, poorly prepared sermons, and ill-equipped Sunday school teachers. The typical American unchurched person has come to expect excellence in the business world, in the marketplace and in the entertainment industry. Often we heard the formerly unchurched voice surprise that God's church would accept anything that did not approach excellence.

8. Provide an inquirers and new members class

The formerly unchurched, for the most part, gladly attended an inquirers' class prior to their becoming Christians. By the time they were courageous enough to visit a church, they were eager to learn more about the church.

9. Foster ministry involvement

The formerly unchurched told us in many ways and many times, "We don't want to sit on the sidelines." These new Christians are incredibly eager to get involved, and their enthusiasm

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is contagious. Unfortunately, some churches do a fair job of reaching the unchurched only to see them leave within a few months.

10. Never forget the power of prayer

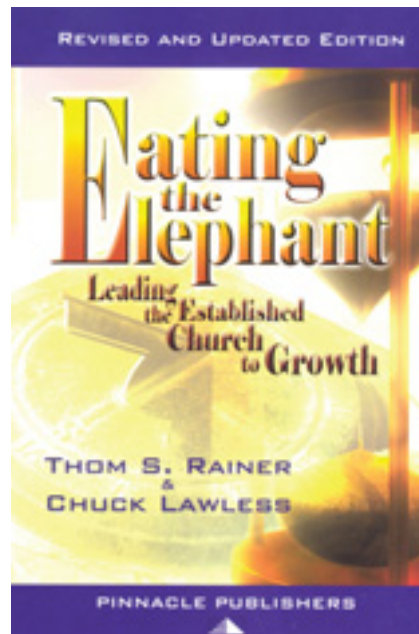
I do not put prayer near the end of this article as a postscript or an addendum to more pressing matters. But I say now without hesitation or reservation that prayer is key to reaching the unchurched. I rarely heard from an effective church that did not have a strong emphasis on prayer.

Adapted from Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them. (Zondervan, 2001).

*By: Dr. Thom Rainer
President and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, Tennessee*

Eating the Elephant

How does an established church grow? Many church leaders have attempted the “latest” approach to growing a church, only to find the methodology is ineffective and the church members are divided. Sometimes the method-



Book Review

ology is wrong. Sometimes the methodology is right but the pace and the timing are wrong. Recognized authorities Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless have written *Eating the Elephant* to show that a church can change and grow if you move at a pace that fits the church’s situation, or if you eat the elephant one bite at a time.

“Unfortunately,” the authors write, “many ‘traditional’ churches have been divided and demoralized by attempts to move the church too quickly toward relevancy. Is there a way to implement change without destroying the church in the process? We believe there is.” For most of America’s church leaders, that’s an invitation to tie on your napkin and pull up a chair.

Rainer, Thom, and Chuck Lawless. *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*. Louisville, KY: Pinnacle Publishers, 2003.



CHURCH HEALTH 101

Winter is Upon Us.

Part of growing a healthy church is taking care of the facilities in which the church meets. Winter is upon us. Is your building ready for it if you live in cold-weather climate? Here are some guidelines to follow to get your church facilities ready for the harshest part of winter:

- Make sure the heating system is ready for use and working properly.
- Keep the building above 55 degrees so that pipes won’t freeze.
- Inspect the building’s roof to make sure it is ready for snow and ice.
- Clean gutters now that most of the leaves have fallen.
- Have a plan for snow and ice removal.
- Make sure to have shovels and salt ready before they are needed.
- Provide mats or rugs for cleaning snow-covered shoes.
- Place caution signs on wet floors.
- Have a plan to inform the congregation about weather-related cancellations.

PURPOSE SIX

Prayer at the Holidays

Use the following ideas to lead your church to pray evangelistically during the holiday season and get them jumpstarted into a lifestyle of prayer:

- Use the preparation for your Christmas musical or special to have a 24hr concert of prayer.
- Include prayer walking in your caroling events.
- Have prayer cards available as people make New Year’s resolutions.
- Provide “spouse prayer covenants” during a service on preparing for the New Year.

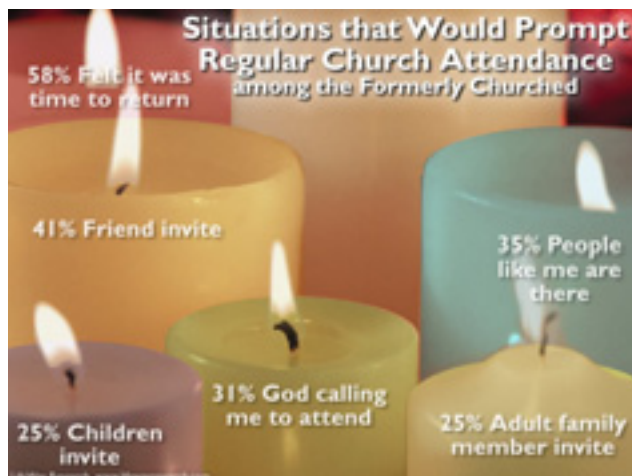
Spouse Prayer Commitment

We, _____ and _____, recognize that God has brought us together and that our marriage is to be a testimony to His love for us. We hereby commit to:

- Talk openly together about our prayer concerns and needs.
- Pray *for* each other daily during our individual times with God.
- Pray *with* each other daily at a set time.
- Hold each other accountable to this commitment.
- Enlist another couple who will also hold us accountable to this commitment.

Signed: _____

RESEARCH SHOWS



BGS HELPS



Biblical Church Growth: The Blog and Writings of Dr. Chuck Lawless

Blog, Articles, Books, MP3s, Recommended Resources, Book Reviews, Links
<http://www.biblicalchurchgrowth.com>

Need a good evangelistic tract?

<http://www.sbts.edu/pdf/GRACE.pdf>

Know others who might be interested in receiving this e-newsletter?

Send their contact information to bgsinfo@sbts.edu.

Know college students who might want to receive a new Graham School collegiate newsletter that is now available?

Send their contact information to bgsinfo@sbts.edu, or invite them to join the Facebook group, "Students for Global Impact."

Contact Us:

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