

# Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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## What METHOD is Bringing People to Christ?

As is well known, people most often come to faith in Christ due to relationships with family members and friends. However, a key question churches should ask of new believers is "What method influenced you to come to faith in Jesus Christ?"

People are the bridge over which others walk to find Christ, but the exact methodology varies. In 1980 church growth researcher Win Arn listed the following

Fifty-five percent of new believers come to Christ through spiritual conversation.

five major methods that influenced people to come to faith: Sunday School (4-5%), cold calls (1-2%), evangelistic crusades (0.25-0.50%), general church programs (2-3%), and special programs related to meeting needs (2-3%). In contrast the study I conducted between 2005 and 2010 found eleven methods, which are listed below in the order most mentioned by new believers.

Conversation with Family	38.6%
Other	15.5%
Conversation with Friend	14.9%
Evangelistic Event	12.5%
Home Visit	5.5%
Teaching Ministry	3.8%
Special Need	3.7%
Worship Service	2.4%
Conversation with Colleague	2.1%
Small Group	1.0%
Private Conviction	1.0%

### Conversation is King

Not surprisingly, survey responders selected conversation with a family member (38.6%) as the main method that brought them to faith in Christ. This corresponds well with other

findings that family connections are most responsible for bringing people to faith. Leaving out the category of *Other* for the moment, the second highest rated method was conversation with a friend (14.9%). And, while not registering quite as high a percentage of responses, conversation with a work colleague was chosen 2.1% of the time. Together, these three comprise just over fifty-five percent of the total responses (55.6%). Evidently, the best method for leading others to faith in Christ is to simply enter into spiritual conversations with them.

Surprisingly, evangelistic crusades, revivals, and special events were chosen by 12.5% of the participants, which is much higher than Arn found (0.5%). The difference may

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# New converts come to Christ in various ways.

## Train people to be conversationalists.

be that my study combined evangelistic crusades with special events. Whatever the reason for the increase, evangelistic events appear significantly more fruitful today.

Teaching Ministry was acknowledged 3.8% of the time, which is essentially the same as Arn's earlier finding of 4-5%. Special needs programming was selected twice as often as it was thirty years ago (3.7% to 2%). Another method that has become more effective for evangelism is a visit by someone from the church. However, the Arn study was testing *cold calling*, while this study tested *home visits* after a person came as a guest to the church. Thus, the two are not identical.

### Additional Methods

A large number of respondents selected *Other* as their choice of method. While none of the methods combined in this category were large enough by themselves to show up independently on the overall survey, they do demonstrate that God employs numerous methods to bring people to faith. The power of a Christian family was recorded as a method for leading children to Christ. Of particular emphasis was regular attendance at church, family devotions, and Bible reading at home. When these are combined with the modeling of a godly life by parents, it is a powerful draw to Christ. Other methods that influenced people for faith were listening to years of consistent sermons from the pastor, personal Bible reading, church camps, Bible studies, and Vacation Bible School. Twenty-nine other methods were mentioned, such as, TV/radio, campus ministry, a Christmas program, reading Christian books, etc., but none were noted enough times to be of significance in the overall study.

### Down-to-Earth Ideas

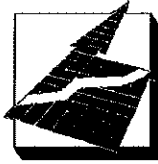
The average worshiper in our churches does not seem to know how to enter into spiritual conversations with friends, family, colleagues, and yes, strangers. To train people in your church to be better conversationalists, try some of the following.

1. Encourage worshipers to make a list of the people in their networks of family, friends, and colleagues, and begin praying for their salvation.
2. Offer listening skills training to people in your church.
3. Plan church events where your people will feel comfortable bringing their friends, family members, and colleagues.
4. Organize open space in your church building to facilitate conversation.
5. Move the meet and greet time from the beginning of your worship service to the end of the service. Conversations that are started while people shake hands are interrupted at the beginning of the worship time as people return to singing. However, when conversations are beginning after the worship service, they are often carried on through the lobby, into the parking lot, and sometimes even into restaurants and homes.



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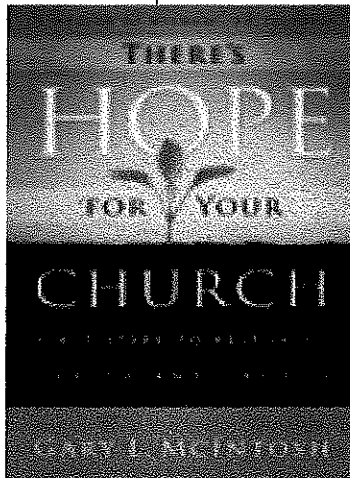
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