

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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What PERSON Brought You to Christ?

Family and Friends

In 1980 church growth researcher, Win Arn, conducted one of the largest studies of how people come to faith in Christ and to the church in the United States and Canada. Arn's Institute for American Church Growth surveyed over 17,000 persons asking, "What or who was responsible for your coming to Christ and to your church?" Arn published his findings in *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, and church leaders were astounded. He reported that

people gave eight responses as follows.

- Special Need 1-2%
- Walk-in 2-3%
- Pastor 5-6%
- Visitation 1-2%
- Sunday School 4-5%
- Crusade 0.25-0.50%
- Church Program 2-3%
- Friend/Relative 75-90%

Echoes of Arn's study have reverberated among churches for over three decades. His findings continue to be quoted in lectures, cited in publications, and promoted by church leaders.

In the early 2000s, I started noticing that people's comments no longer matched Arn's statistics as closely as they once did. Thus, between 2005 and 2010, I engaged in a study to discover how people are coming to faith in Christ and into responsible church involvement. My study eventually involved surveys of over one thousand people in forty-three states.

So, what did I find? How are people finding Christ today?

Family and friends are still the main link for bringing others to faith in Christ, although it is not as high a percentage as it once was. In answer to the question, "What person was it that led you to come to faith in Christ?" 43.2% named a family member and 15.7% a friend, for a combined total of 58.9%. The total results were as follows:

Family Member	43.2%
Staff Member	17.3%
Friend	15.7%
Other	10.9%
Lay Teacher	8.3%
Neighbor	2.9%
Work Colleague	1.8%

The surprise was the increased impact of pastoral staff, which was a 150% increase over Arn's study.

Fifty-nine percent of new converts are won to Christ by family members and friends.

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

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Staff members account for 17.3% of converts.

Who led you to faith in Christ?

Lay teachers account for 8.3% of conversions to Christ. This category includes Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, small group leaders, VBS teachers, Awana leaders, missionaries, camp speakers, Child Evangelism Fellowship instructors, Christian school teachers, basically any number of positions that involve some aspect of teaching.

Among new converts (those coming to Christ within the last two years), family was noted most often (31.8%), while friends and staff received equal mention (22.7% each). Together, nearly 77% of those who made a commitment to Christ in the two years prior to completing the survey were won by a family member, a personal friend, or a staff pastor.

Those saying *Other*, noted a diverse number of people who brought them to faith. A sampling of people mentioned included evangelists and television preachers like Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Charles Stanley, a member of the Gideons, and college/high school campus leaders. None, however, were mentioned enough times to be significant to this study. Several responders could not identify any person as a direct influence on their becoming a Christian. They pointed to an inner conviction from God, the Holy Spirit, reading the Bible, or personal experience whereby they accepted Christ in a private manner.

Putting Insights to Work

Putting the insights found in this short article to use will dramatically increase your church's evangelism effectiveness. The following includes some ideas to start putting into action right away.

1. To empower the friendship networks of

your people for evangelism, encourage people in your church to focus on reaching members of their own family for Christ .

2. Include evangelism as a major ingredient of pastoral care.

3. Inspire teachers in all church-related ministries to share the Gospel of salvation and call for decisions.

4. Help your people write out their own testimonies. You may wish to use Acts 26 as a model. When individuals are prepared to share their own story, it is amazing to see how God opens doors for them to do so.

5. Have one or two individuals each month share their testimonies during a worship service. This will encourage both the ones who share as well as those who hear.

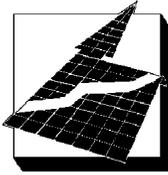
6. Equip your people to share the Gospel by offering regular training.

What person led you to faith in Christ? How about others in your network of friends and family? Why not explore this question with others this week, and see what you discover?



Gary L. McIntosh is editor of *Growth Points* and speaks at several leadership events each year.

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Here Today, There Tomorrow

Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

P.O. Box 892589 Temecula, CA 92589-2589
www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

Here Today, There Tomorrow

Church leaders are frustrated! Larger churches are bogged down by the weight of their own organizations, and smaller churches struggle with an inability to "get things moving." Medium-sized churches tend to get tangled up in their programming. Pastors and church leaders across the country are in the same plight. As a result, their churches stagnate.

Veteran leadership expert Gary L. McIntosh provides help to leaders of churches, regardless of size, who struggle to create workable plans to move their congregations forward. This book identifies the "best practices" on how to assess the unique identity of a church and design a plan for its future. This book is a primer for church leaders who desire to lead their churches in practical planning that does not become so complicated nothing gets done.

Loaded with case studies, resources, and chapter-by-chapter action plans, this practical resource contains everything a pastor needs to understand the planning process; identify a church's mission, values, and goals; and put it all together in a plan that works in that local setting.

What Others Are Saying

"This is one of the finest books I have read on the subject of developing a master plan for a local church. Each chapter contains outstanding ideas and practical ways to develop and implement strategies to make your church meet the challenge of our constantly changing culture. This is a book that I believe will be

widely used through churches that desire to grow and expand to the glory of God."

— Stephen Babby, District Superintendent

"If you are a pastor or lay leader, then Gary's book will help direct your church to a new future. It is very practical and easy to understand."

— Dr. Doug Talley, Executive Pastor

HERE TODAY,
THERE
TOMORROW



Gary L. McIntosh

"Gary L. McIntosh has written a book to help local churches plan for the future. Anyone dealing with the future of the local church must read this book and plan accordingly."

— Dr. Elmer Towns

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