

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Converts Who Stay

Pastors and church leaders have experienced the frustration of seeing someone make a personal decision for Christ and then quickly disconnect from church. Why is it that people connect with Christ but not a local church? How can local churches be more effective in keeping new believers?

A number of years ago, Dr. Flavil Yeakley conducted a study of this very problem for his Ph.D. degree. His findings are still instructive.

“In most cases it takes at least six hearings of the gospel before a person makes a commitment to Christ.”

The following is a profile of a new convert who stays in a local church.

First, a new convert who stays has been exposed to a variety of evangelistic influences throughout the church.

Research gathered from several sources concludes that growing churches average nine ways to share the gospel of salvation with people. Plateaued churches average seven ways, while declining churches average only three ways.

Further, the more times a nonbeliever is exposed to the gospel the greater the chance they will come to faith in Christ. In most cases it takes at least six hearings of the gospel before a person makes a commitment to Christ. In contrast people who make a decision for Christ after only, say, two hearings of the gospel, usually drop out of a church within six months of attendance.

The bottom line is that the more ways a local church has to engage nonbelievers with the gospel, the better.

Second, a new convert who stays views his or her conversion as being non-manipulative.

The research of Flavil Yeakley discovered that of people who believed in Christ, joined a church, and were still active six months following their conversion, 71% viewed their conversion as non-manipulative. On the other hand, people who believed in Christ, joined a church, and then dropped out of the church within six months, 85% felt their conversion was manipulated.

The bottom line is the more new converts view the person who brings them to Christ as a friend, the better. If new converts see the person who leads them to Christ as a salesman, they are less likely to stay in a church.

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

New website address:

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People must match the church culturally.

Encourage your members to make friends outside the church.

Third, a new convert who stays has developed friendships with people in the church prior to his or her conversion.

While there is no exact number to aim for, research shows that the more friends a person develops in a church *before* his or her conversion, the more likely they are to remain in the church after conversion.

The bottom line is the more a church can encourage worshipers to develop friends outside of the church, the better.

Fourth, a new convert who stays has established friendships in a church *following* conversion.

Once again, the research of Flavil Yeakley shows that it is crucial for new converts to make friends in a church after their faith experience. In his study converts who remained active in a church longer than six months developed an average of seven friends in their church, but converts who dropped out before six months only developed two friends.

The bottom line is that a church that focuses on helping new converts make friends within the church will be more likely to grow.

Fifth, a new convert who stays has recently experienced a high degree of change in his or her life.

It has long been known that events and circumstances in the life of an individual often provide a open door for the gospel. However, it is also a fact that people who are winnable today may not be tomorrow.

The bottom line is a church that focuses its evangelistic outreach on life change issues

will be more effective than those that do not.

Sixth, a new convert who stays has been integrated into a group and has found a meaningful role in the church.

There are three keys to keep new converts in a church: (1) help them make friends, (2) help them find a place to belong, and (3) help them find a task to accomplish.

The bottom line is that a church needs to get new converts involved quickly, usually within six months, or risk seeing them drop out.

Seventh, a new convert who stays fits culturally in the church.

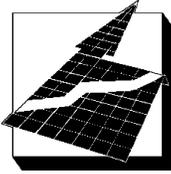
While it is not popular to discuss, the truth is the more a new convert matches the general age of a congregation, as well as the socioeconomic and educational makeup, the more likely it is he or she will stay in a church.

The bottom line is that the more a church matches the people in its local community, the more new converts are likely to remain in the church.



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President of the Church Growth Network
For information about training workshops,
seminars, and church consultations
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Finding Them, Keeping Them

Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

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

Finding Them, Keeping Them

Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin have distilled the complex formulae of church growth and retention theory into concepts that are comprehensible to non-experts with a view toward recruiting the church at large in the work of evangelism and discipling.

The authors share principles for finding and keeping new Christians in a local church that have proven to be effective and well-received.

Includes worksheets to evaluate and plan for greater effectiveness in your own situation along with practical steps to implement in order to attain your goals.

"Finding Them, Keeping Them is an excellent step to help laypeople understand the science of church growth and apply it to their local church. McIntosh and Martin have taken the traditional converts of church growth and written them so the average layperson can understand them.

For many years church growth has been in the hands of scholars and pastors. This book attempts to help laypeople and church leaders understand the terms and apply them to their church."

—Elmer Towns, Liberty University

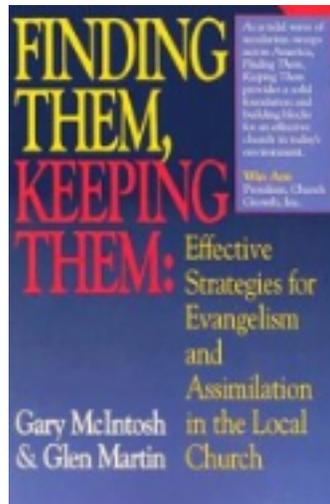
Finding Them, Keeping Them analyses the way in which a church enfolds people into a church and takes them from first contact through the steps of salvation, membership, discipleship, and service. The book is highly recommended for church leaders who want to understand the problems and solutions for attracting and keeping people in a local church.

Using the model of a funnel, McIntosh and Martin provide an easy and visible way for pastors and other church leaders to evaluate the outreach and assimilation ministry of a local church.

The book provides practical and useable ideas that church leaders may put to use immediately to make a difference in church ministry. A great read for boards, evangelism committees, and those working in the greeter or newcomer ministry of a church.

Order *Finding Them, Keeping Them* today for \$10.00 plus shipping and handling. Call for special discount on ten or more copies to the same address.

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