

stuff you wish they taught in seminary

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black smartphone. The hand is positioned in the lower half of the frame, with the thumb and index finger visible. The background is a blurred, out-of-focus image of a person's torso and arm, wearing a blue shirt.

27%

***OF LEADING CHURCHES' WEBSITES TESTED
FAIL IMPORTANT GOOGLE TEST***

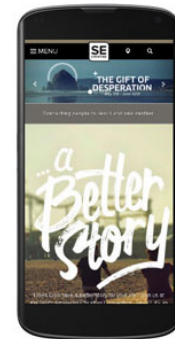
RICH BIRCH

27% OF LEADING CHURCHES' WEBSITES TESTED FAIL IMPORTANT GOOGLE TEST



Your website is more important than the front door of your church. It serves as your ministry's public face to the community you are attempting to reach and serve. Long gone are the days when your website was a "nice to have" frill for your ministry ... it's now a core part of outreach strategies. Consider these stats about church websites:

- 1/3 of people surveyed said their church's website was the first place they learned about their church. [\[ref\]](#)
- In 2012, 46% of church guests said that a church's website was important in picking a church to visit. [\[ref\]](#)
- 94% of people cited poor web design as the reason they mistrusted or rejected a website. [\[ref\]](#)
- Almost half of the people surveyed said a website's design is their number one criteria for determining if they can trust an organization. [\[ref\]](#)



Is your church's website keeping up with changing online trends? How do you ensure that your internet presence is seen by the maximum number of people? **We live in a "mobile first" world where the majority of people who view your site will do it from their phones or tablets, not from a laptop or desktop computer.** In fact, mobile usage of the web overtook desktop usage in 2010 — this is not a new trend! [\[ref\]](#) Your website needs to be mobile enabled to ensure you reach people who want to connect with your church. If it's not mobile ready, you will miss out on people who could be impacted by your ministry.

Google is the online trendsetter for "findability." When people look for your church online, there is a strong possibility they will start with the search giant. Nearly three-quarters of all search engine traffic in the world is generated from Google. [\[ref\]](#) Look closely at the search engine source traffic on your website and it's probably much higher than that.

Google recently declared that mobile-friendly sites will receive a boost in search rankings. [\[ref\]](#) Google keeps the majority of their search algorithm behind a secretive wall. For them to declare that mobility is getting a boost is something every church leader with a website needs to pay attention to.

Don't miss this: If your church website isn't mobile friendly, Google is going to drop it down in the listings. Fewer people will find your church online. It's as if someone moved your church from Main Street in town to a back alley ... and you might not even realize it.

When unSeminary heard about this important shift, we tested a number of leading churches' sites to see how mobile friendly they were. We picked 15 influential churches and were shocked at the results! **Four of the largest and most influential churches in the country failed the test.** These churches all have large communications infrastructures so we were astounded that such a high percentage of these churches failed. As we continued to poke around the web, we found more churches that failed the test. unSeminary is sounding the alarm to our friends in church leadership.

Run the Google Mobile-Friendly Test today

The good people at Google have made it very simple to figure out if your website is mobile friendly. They've created an easy-to-use online tool in which you enter your website address. It will tell you if your site passed or failed. If your website fails, it will also tell you why so you can address the issues.

[Use the Google Mobile-Friendly Test right now to find out if your website passes or fails.](#)

Don't miss how straightforward Google has made this. **Clearly, they have invested time, effort and energy in order to communicate the importance of mobile-friendly websites.** They are indicating strongly that this is the future of the web. It needs to be the future of your internet strategy too. Google wants more people happily using the internet to help drive their business model so they are rewarding sites that are most likely to please people.

What to do if you've failed the test

If your church's website failed the mobile-friendly test, you need to fix it. Here are a few suggestions to move your church forward:

- **Take a deep breath** // This is a declared direction from Google but it's not like your church's website will disappear overnight. Plan a course of action and move to fix it but don't panic.
- **Find an "expert"** // There is probably someone in your church with expertise in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) who would love to talk about this. Grab lunch with them and pick their brain about which way to go. (Side note: If your church has communications staff, show them this article and ask them for possible solutions.)
- **Consider a platform change** // As we looked at a number of "failed" sites, it seemed like they were on older content management systems. This software runs on a server and makes the site work. It might be time to upgrade to something more "modern." I'm a huge [WordPress fan](#) (we're moving our site to it as we speak) but you could also consider a proprietary solution.
- **Set a deadline and then iterate** // Updating a church website can be a huge project. The last two of these I've done at our church have taken a year to complete. You probably need to move faster than that in this case. Rather than attempting to revise the entire website, figure out how you can do it over a few months. Move the most important parts of the site first and then phase in the rest with regular releases over time.
- **Hire a firm to help** // Your best option might be to contact someone to help build your next site. The advantage of working with a professional that deals with this all day long is they will take the time to understand what you want and ensure it's done right. We highly recommend you connect with Dawn Nicole Baldwin at [AspireOne](#). In fact, she set up a handy tool for booking a free consultation call just for our readers ... [click here to book now.](#)

5 articles to educate yourself about mobile-friendly websites

- [Understanding The Full Impact Of Web Design On SEO, Branding, And More //](#) This is a great overview article that will give you a grounding in some of the basics.
- [Statistics on consumer mobile usage and adoption to inform your mobile marketing strategy mobile site design and app development //](#) Here's a treasure trove of data on shifting consumer behaviors and preferences. Be warned that you might get lost in all the charts on this site!
- [Google's mobile-friendly algorithm boost has rolled out //](#) This article is from a site called Search EngineLand, which reports exclusively on issues related to search. Think of it as The New York Times of search engine information.
- [63 Of The Best Church Websites In 2015 //](#) Check out this great source of inspiration if you're considering a redesign.
- [Why Your Church Should Use WordPress Multisite //](#) This article makes a solid case for why this open source (FREE) content management system should be the base of your web strategy.

The data from the tests:

Church	Google's Mobile - Friendly Test Results
Central Church	Pass
Fellowship Church	Pass
Lakewood Church	Fail [pdf]
Life Church	Pass
McLean Bible Church	Pass
New Birth Missionary Baptist Church	Pass
New Hope Church	Fail [pdf]
North Point Community Church	Pass
NorthRidge Church	Pass
Seacoast Church	Pass
Second Baptist Church	Pass
Southeast Christian Church	Pass
Thomas Road Baptist Church	Fail [pdf]
Willow Creek Community Church	Fail [pdf]
Woodlands Church	Pass

Note: Google's test was run on May 18, 2016. The results might change as these churches update their websites. The PDFs show the results at the time of the test.

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