

stuff you wish they taught in seminary

UNseminary 

WELCOME HOME

CREATING SPACE FOR PEOPLE WHO
DON'T ATTEND YOUR CHURCH ... YET



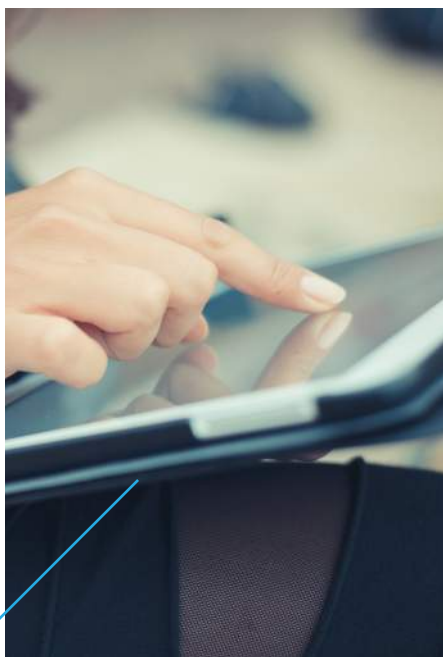
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WELCOME HOME

Rich Birch
UnSeminary

Welcome Home! The church is the only organization in the world that exists for people who aren't a part of it. **Our goal is to create safe places for people regardless of their spiritual background.** As church leaders we need to lead the way in helping our people see their role in the "welcoming".

But how? **What actions do church leaders need to take to create this safe space?**

Partially it's building a mindset in our people to be ready to welcome people ... but it's also executing thousands of small details to ensure that when guests arrive they can experience the welcome.

This issue of unSeminary Magazine is full of articles to help your church think through how to create spaces for people who aren't into church. **My hope is that it spurs conversation with your leaders about what your church can do differently to welcome people home.** It's your responsibility to take the conversation and then move it action!

I love the group of church leaders gathering around unSeminary because it's a collection of people who want to make a difference in their communities. **I'd be honored for you to receive our weekly emails or subscribe to our podcasts.** Or if you're super keen ... join unSeminary Premium our membership site full practical training for church leaders like you!

Thanks for everything you do at your church ... big or small to welcome people home!.



8 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO FOLLOW UP WITH GUESTS AT YOUR CHURCH

You spend a lot of energy attempting to get people to attend your church. You craft great experiences with fantastic music and engaging teaching. You advertise your church through a number of ways so people in your community know you exist. You've trained your volunteer teams to do a great job to serve guests as they arrive. **But what do you do when guests actually arrive to follow up with them after they visit?** Here are some simple ways to start following with your guests...

● **Acknowledge Their Presence** // Make sure to take time during the service to publicly acknowledge that there are guests in the service! Pointing out to your guests that you know that they are with you in the start of effective follow up.

● **Invite to Action** // Beyond just acknowledging that guests are with you make sure you have a clear "call to action" during the service for people new to your church. Have something specific that you ask them to do... *that doesn't embarrass them!* For us we ask them to fill out a "New Here" card that's in our program and drop it off at the "New Here Kiosk" in the foyer where they can get a free t-shirt. Do this call to action during every service ... don't miss it.

● **Free Gift** // Give your guests a free gift as a thank you for coming to visit your church. Choose your gift wisely ... pick something that your guests would actually like. For us we switched from a "chocolate bar and some flyers" to a t-shirt and saw a 400% increase in the number of guests willing to self identify themselves.

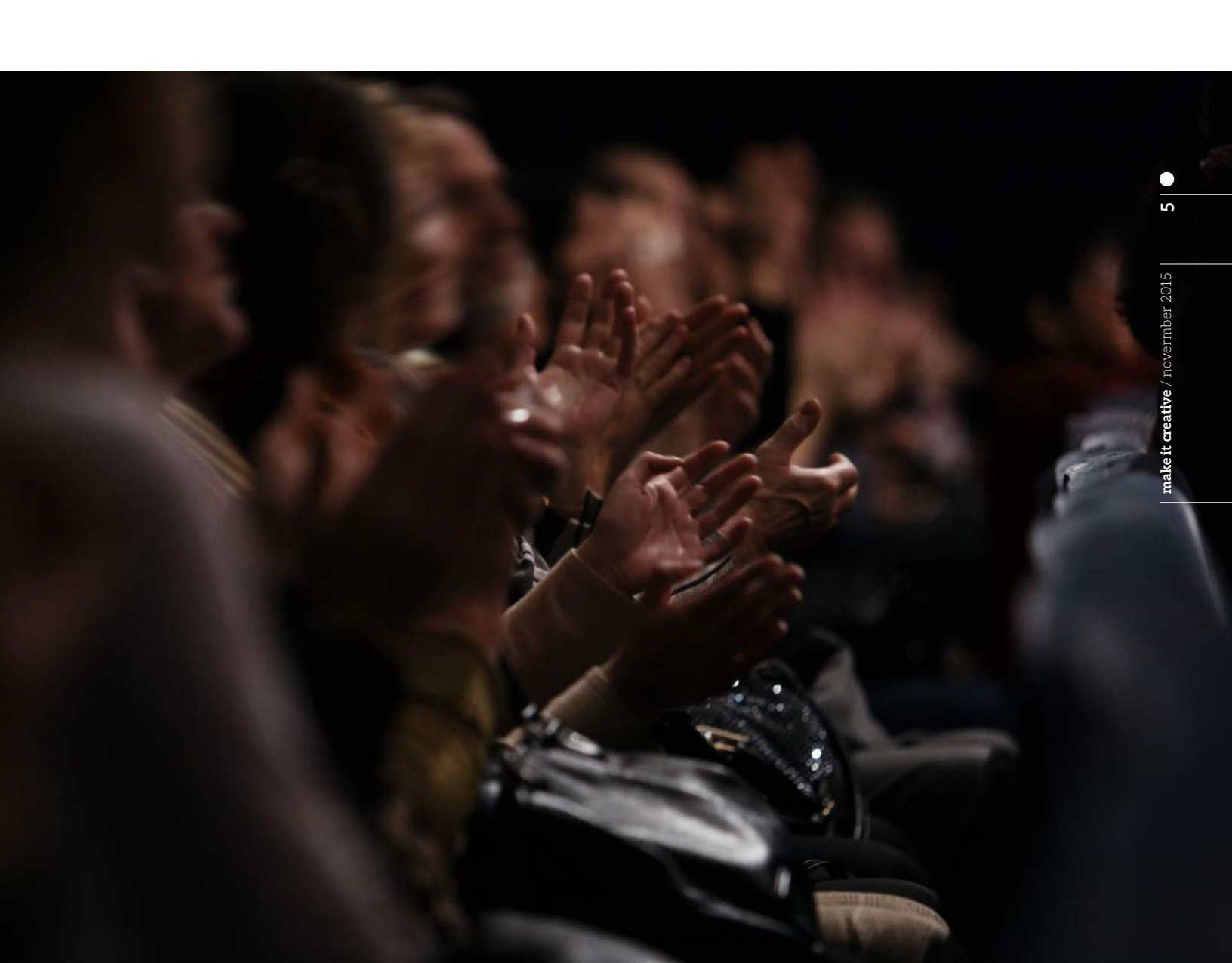
● **Postcards Ready to Go!** // Have some postcards with stamps already to send to new people. If a new kid checks into your program ... have a small group leader write out a quick note on that postcard, get the address off the

"new here" information card and then drop it in the mail on the way home. Have your guest services people working the "New Here" area write notes to the people they talked with ... and then drop them in the mail right away!

● **Delayed Emails** // After you enter the data from the "New Here" information card into your database set up an email (or two) to send out to your guests to invite them to come back. You can do this with systems like Boomerang for Gmail, Constant Contact or Mail Chimp. The goal of these emails is to welcome them to your church, invite them to come back the next weekend and get to know your church a little more.

● **Engage Your Regulars** // Make sure that you design your follow up system so there are flags for your regular people to engage in the process. One of the ways we do that is that we package the t-shirts we give away in white bags ... so they stick out in the crowd after we give them to guests. We then train our "insiders" to be on the look out for those white bags ... and ask them to get to know these first time guests!

● **Regular "New Here" Reception** // Host a regular (monthly ... bi-weekly?) reception for your guests. This gives you something to be talking to them about in all of your other communications and provides a great next step for guests.



The Harvest Bible Church Planting movement encourages their plants to host regular “Party with the Pastor” events to help connect with new comers ... Northpoint’s NEXT environment would be another choice to look at if you are looking for examples of what to do at these events.

● **Snail Mail Them** // We’ve been experimenting with a quarterly “recall” mailing to all of our first time guests. This piece arrives at the beginning of a season and tells our guests about what the expect in a bunch of different areas of our church. The big idea is that helps to remind our guests that we’re still here and that we’d love to have them join us.

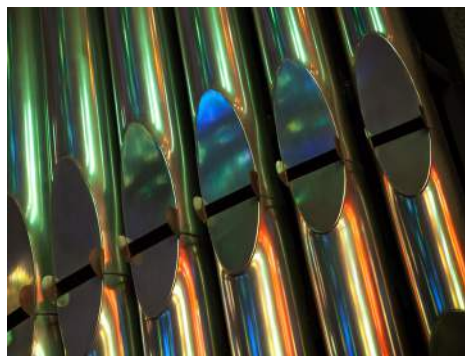
Creating clear and deliberate next steps for your guests is important. When people are first checking out your church for the first time it needs to be obvious what they are suppose to

do next. Make sure to design whatever you do with your guests in mind ... what do they need when they first arrive with your church?

BONUS IDEA: WE STOPPED USING THE LANGUAGE OF “FIRST TIME GUEST” AT OUR CHURCH AND SWITCHED TO “NEW HERE”.

This was a simple switch but it helped us reach more of who wanted to reach. People are unlikely to identify on their first time time with you ... but when they come back a second or third time we want to them to be able to “opt-in” to our follow up process.

IS IT TIME FOR A NEW WORSHIP WAR?



The first church I served at was in the middle of a worship war when I started there. It was like a cold war with a lot of passive-aggressive leadership on both sides of the debate. The **“Hymns & Organ Crowd”** declared that their music was rich with theological significance, whereas the **“Praise Chorus Crowd”** was fervently committed to introducing new songs with more current sounds that connected with people personally.

It all seems so long ago. In fact, it seems like ancient history. I've invested the majority of my ministry career in churches with attractional music environments that are targeted at connecting with the next generation. I'm honored to serve with some of the best musicians out there. **They are passionate about creative musical experiences that engage with people and move them closer to God.** The “new norms” of this approach to musical worship are:

- **Electric-guitar driven** // The leaders are typically behind a guitar and the sound is based around that instrument.
- **Bands** // We have a group of 5 to 8 people on stage: lead vocal, background vocal, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, keyboard and drummer.
- **Video-augmented experiences** // There are screens in all of our environments that display not just the lyrics but also other visuals that support the message of the song.



● **It's loud** // We aim for 95 dBa ... loud enough to make the room feel full. (Also loud enough to get regular complaints about the volume and the need for our guest services team to have ear plugs on hand.)

We should always remain “open-handed” in our methods while being “closed-handed” on the message. I wonder if it's time to reinvent a “new norm” of musical worship. **Have we wedded our method too closely to our message?** Do we need to dream a new dream in musical worship?





Or maybe ... is it time to wage a new worship war? For the sake of the next generation, do we need to ask fundamental questions about our approach to ensure that we're connecting with them? Is today's "Modern Worship Crowd" holding onto its approach in the same way the "Hymns & Organ Crowd" did so many years ago ... looking down their noses at what was coming next? Here are some signs that convince me we need to be looking ahead to what's next:

● **The electric guitar is dead** // Seriously ... listen to music that people actually stream or buy and you'll find that the electric guitar isn't featured in any significant way. Certainty not as much as when I started in ministry so many years ago ... people actually used to love U2, rather than just complaining when their music is forced onto our iPhones.

● **People aren't singing** // Over the last few months I've had the chance to participate in worship services at a number of "name brand" churches. Two of them are globally known for their worship experiences. One of the curious realities even in these churches is that the vast majority of the people in the service don't sing. Once you get beyond the first few rows, most people are just watching what's happening and not really participating. Musical worship is a way for the gathered community to unify around what it means to follow Jesus. Is it



really "worship" if the community isn't participating?

● **It doesn't sound contemporary** // Listen to the top 10 songs that are played in churches today ... and then listen to the top 10 songs on the Billboard chart. Strip away the lyrical content and just listen to the music itself. I'm struck by the fact that the church music all sounds a lot more similar than the Billboard songs sound. It seems like church music has settled into a common sound, while "contemporary pop music" has a much broader variety.

● **I like our music too much** // I'm a 40-something leader. I'm in that dangerous zone when it comes to leading the church. I'm not a young leader trying to prove myself but I'm also not a seasoned leader who has moved beyond holding on too tightly to stuff I've made. I really like our music and that's a problem. Somewhere in the next few years I need to not like it anymore. It needs to get under my skin and bug me while it effectively engages the next generation. If leaders in my generation aren't careful, we'll just do what we've always done and our effectiveness will slowly erode under us. We need to push ourselves to be ready for "what's next" while "what's now" is still working

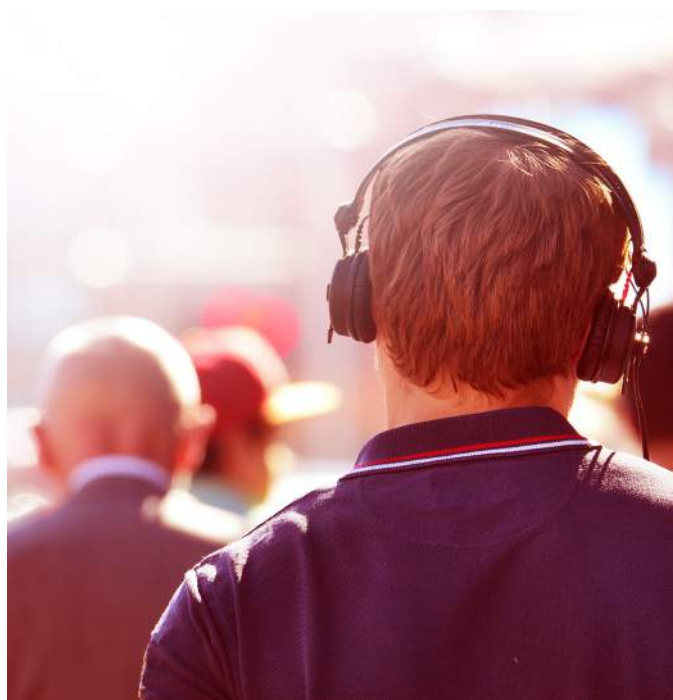




WHAT COULD SOME ELEMENTS OF THE COMING WORSHIP WAR LOOK LIKE?

- **DJ-led worship** // DJs have the same “audience leadership” appeal that the lead guitar player once had. When are we going to see worship led entirely by a DJ?
- **Beatbox instead of drums** // Beatbox is a mainstream vocal accompanist form. Even at my kids’ school I see them teaching it in the choral groups. Why isn’t it happening in our churches?
- **More variety** // How will the church respond to ever-expanding musical tastes? What does “contemporary music” mean in a streaming music world where people can build music channels around their own particular tastes?

Let me state again... I am a fan of the current “contemporary musical worship” approach. My point is that we should also think ahead and embrace music that works for the next generation. We need to start letting go of what is in order to grasp hold of what will be. Now, don’t get me wrong ... I’m still a fan of social media. I think a well-executed plan on these networks can help your church push its mission forward. But you need to start with a robust email strategy first. I’d love to hear your thoughts!



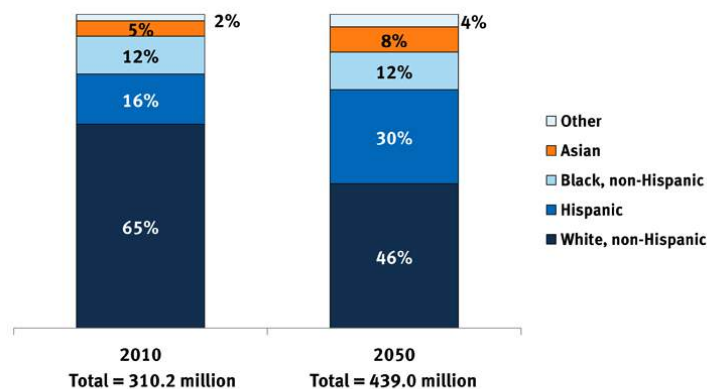
8 CHARTS THAT EXPLAIN HOW OUR CULTURE IS CHANGING

(& 24 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT ON YOUR CHURCH)

One of our roles as church leaders is to have our pulse on the shifting cultural around us so we can serve our community better. **We need understand the times so we can have clarity on what actions we should be taking as a church.** Below are some “signs of the times” and some quick thoughts on what impact I believe these will have on us in the coming years. I’d love to hear your thoughts in the comments section!

YOUR COMMUNITY IS MORE CULTURALLY DIVERSE THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN.

Distribution of U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010 and 2050



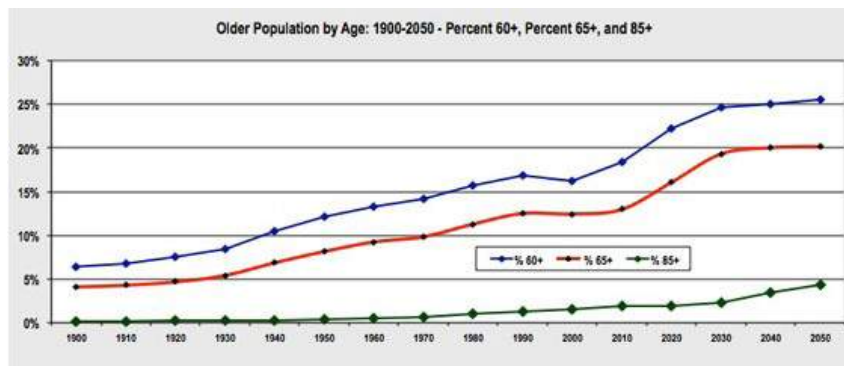
NOTES: All racial groups non-Hispanic. Other includes Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans/Alaska Natives, and individuals with two or more races. Data do not include residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or the Northern Mariana Islands.
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2050. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/downloadablefiles.html>.



There are more people who don't “look like you” than ever before. Our churches need to learn how to move beyond trying to reach one monolithic stereotype cultural group and figure out how to ensure our ministries can reach a wide variety of cultures. Still doubt this reality? **“Minority babies” are now “majority” in our culture.** Some impacts of this shifting reality in your church might be:

- **Spanish Translation** // What are you doing to make your services available in spanish?
- **Leadership Makeup** // When was the last time you asked why your staff doesn't reflect the community you are trying to reach?
- **Music & Parties** // There isn't one type of musical expression or celebration that is enjoyed in your community anymore ... what does that mean for your services?

PEOPLE ARE GETTING OLDER.



The Baby Boomers have defined so many cultural trends of the last 100 years and they are just starting to define “retirement” and “the older

years”. Life expectancy is set to continue to rise for the next 20-30 years to point where a larger percentage of the population will be living past

80 years of age than ever before. Some potential impacts of this trend might be ...

- **Boomer Pastors** // All those boomer pastors that now in their 60s ... might very well be serving well into their 70s. What impact will that have on passing leadership to the next generation?
- **Half Time** // People will be looking at the “second half” of their lives and wondering how they can move from success to significance. How can the church provide a place for these leaders looking to invest their abilities into reaching the next generation?
- **Senior Targeted Churches?** // When is someone going to come out and launch a church targeted at people over 60 and their families?

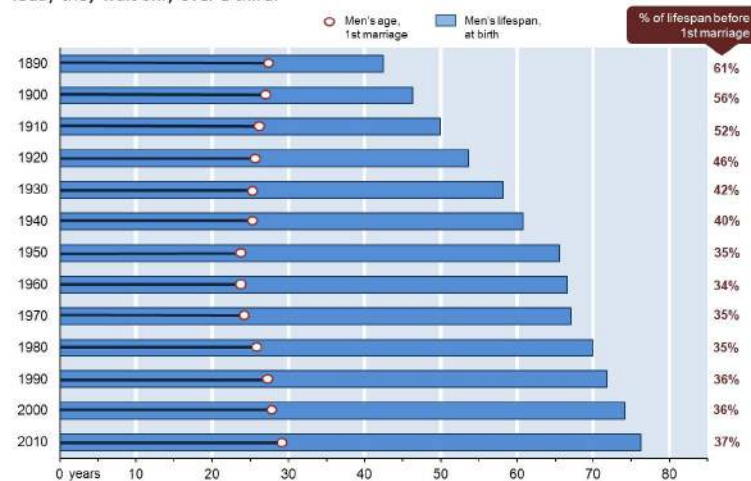
If you have been involved in helping people get married you’ve noticed that median age of people getting married has risen over time. This is somewhat true ... In reality the trend was that in the 50s & 60s people were getting married at a younger age than was typical. Even more intriguing to me is that as life expectancy has grown longer and longer the percentage of their lives that they are married has grown significantly. Almost 3x what it was 100 years ago! [Click here to see the female version of the above chart.] Some impacts of this trend might be ...

What are young adults? // Some ministries go pretty negative on the “non-married” young people attending their church ... labeling this period between the end of college and marriage as a “second adolescence”. Our churches need to embrace this reality and not alienate this group from our church!

Release This People! // Paul was pretty clear in 1 Corinthians 7 that there are some distinct advantages for the gospel to not

MARRYING OLDER, BUT SOONER?

In 1890 men waited over half of their lifespan before marrying. Today they wait only over a third.



Source: For median age at first marriage, U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses, 1890–1940, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1950–2010; for life expectancy at birth, National Center for Health Statistics, 1890–2010.

being married. How can we cast vision for this group to leverage this unique time for the mission of Jesus?

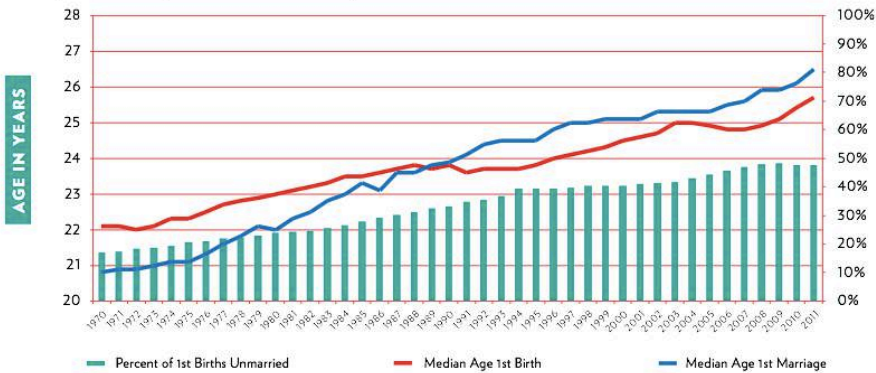
New Pressures? // People are married for a long time ... “until death do us part” means 3x as long as it did for people 100 years ago. What pressures does this place on marriages that didn’t exist back then?



WE'RE NOT DELAYING HAVING KIDS

FIGURE 1. **THE GREAT CROSSOVER**

Median Age at First Marriage and First Birth and the Proportion of First Births to Unmarried Women, 1970-2011



In the late 1980s a new cultural trend took hold that has continued until today ... as a culture we started having babies before we were married.

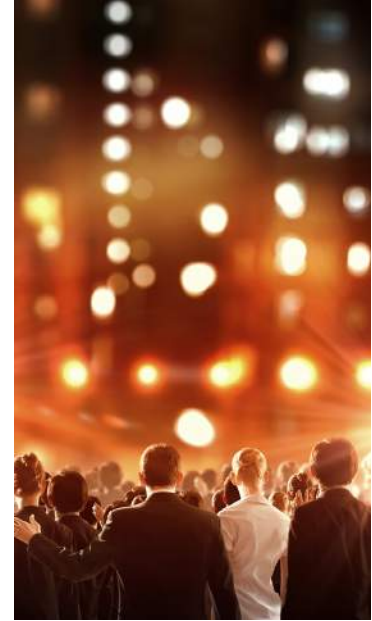
Today, almost half of all babies are born to unmarried mothers, and the median first birth happens around one year earlier in a woman's life than her median age of first marriage. Some questions this trend has generated in me are:

Where are the single moms? // Why aren't there more single moms in my church? What does that say about our ability to reach the

community?

What is "Family Ministry"? // Parenthood has changed. Have our assumptions to what "family ministry" is changed?

How can we support? // We know that kids born into a strong social network have a better shot at life. Marriage provides one of those social networks ... since that is a fraying institution how does the church need to step in and support these families?



Okay ... before you jump all over me to fusing politics and church life ... I believe that politics is just one way to get a sense of what is happening in the broader culture. I'm not making a values judgement on this divide ... but the reality is that there is a growing gulf between the "left" and the "right" in our communities. As an example ... Tony Campolo hasn't changed his political views but in the last few years he's caught flack from the "Christian right" on a regular basis. (I remember as a young person our church showing a Tony Campolo film at our evening service ... I'm not sure that same church would do that today.) For my Canadian friends ... Would former Baptist Pastor, Tommy Douglas be welcomed in your church today? Some questions on this polarization for church leaders:

Withdraw to the Mountains? //

"When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself." – John 6:15

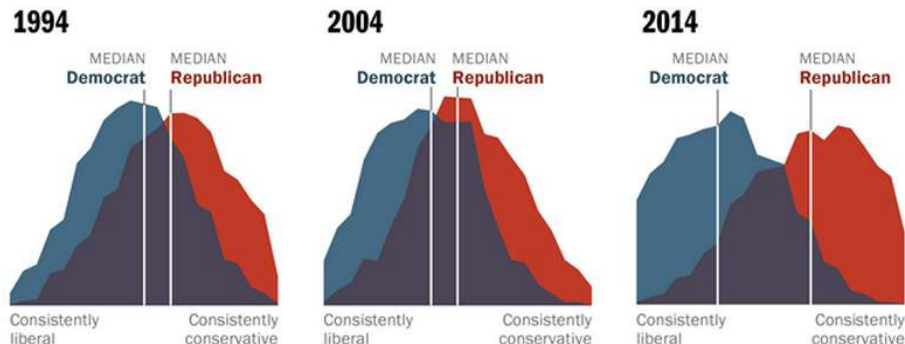
A Faith of Our Own // One of the clearest thinkers on this topic I've run into is Jonathan Merritt. Read his book ... or watch this video of him at our church a few years ago. What do you think about what he's saying?

Fox News Faith? // We all have political leanings as church leaders. Admit it. How do your political views shape your leadership and view of the world around you? Lead from a self aware point of view. Jesus rejected political answers to conditions of the heart ... so should we.

OUR COMMUNITY IS MORE POLITICALLY DIVIDED

Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public

Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

WELCOME TO THE AGE OF THE NONES

It's official ... the fastest growing religious group in our culture are people who identify their religious affiliation as "none". The acceleration rate of people identifying themselves in this category is breath taking. In the coming years you will increasingly bump into people who don't identify themselves as having any "faith tradition" at all. Some potential issues for church leaders to think about on this are ...

Cool Alternatives Aren't Enough

// Offering a church service that is "better" than what people experienced when they were kids (and last attended church) isn't enough to reach "nones". Put it this way ... if you've never been (and aren't interested in) horseback riding the fact that there is a really cool stable in your town means nothing to you ... you're never going to check it out. We have to start our conversation with people in a totally different

manner.

Huge Opportunity // I see this as a massive evangelism and discipleship opportunity. The idea of not having to "unprogram" people negative past approaches to faith is exciting.

Learn From Others // We need to stop looking to the south to learn

from churches reaching people in communities with less "nones" than in the rest of the country. We should be looking to Canada, Europe and other cultures to find churches reaching those communities with the message of Jesus despite this cultural reality.

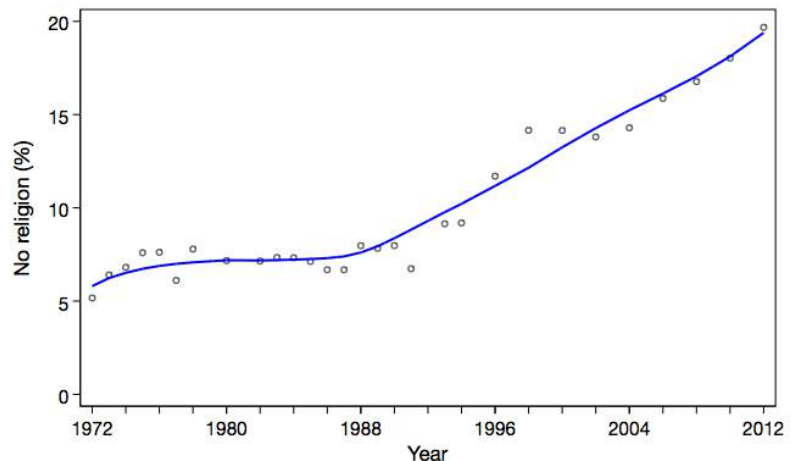


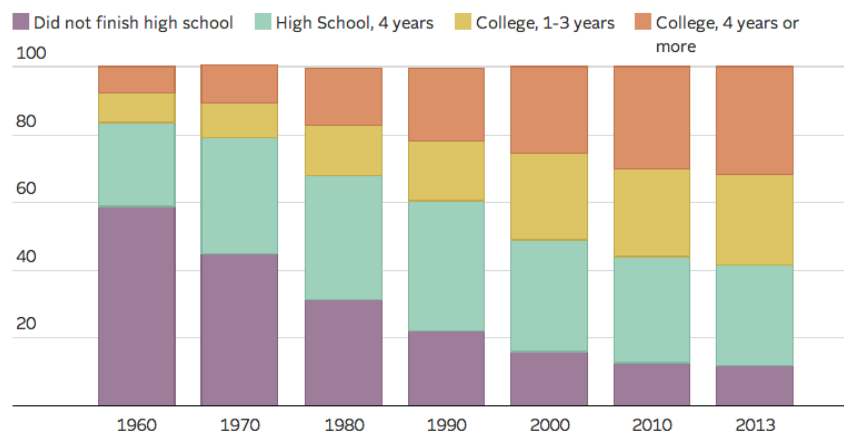
Figure 1. Percentage Preferring No Religion by Year, 1972-2012

Note: Data smoothed using locally estimated regression (loess); trend line shown in blue. Circles show raw data.

Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2012.

The US's ever-growing educational attainment

Share of adults age 25+ at given educational attainment levels



Source: US Census Bureau

PEOPLE ARE MORE EDUCATED

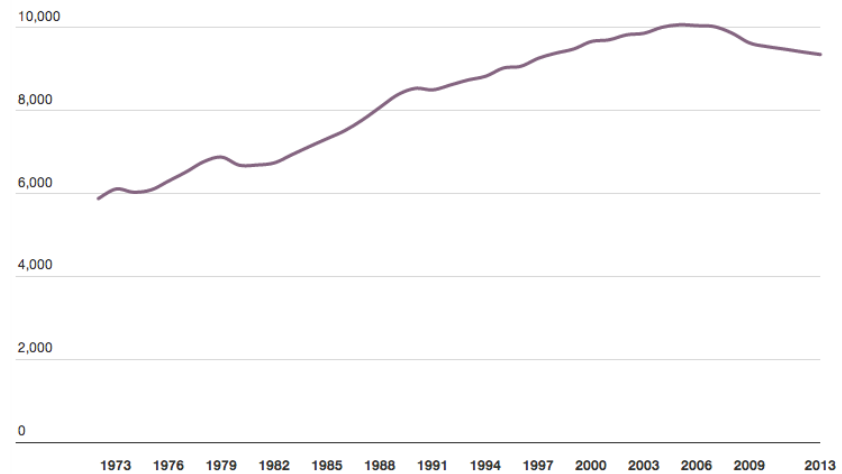
People have more formal post-secondary education than ever before. On top of this people have wide spread access to information at their finger tips really for the first time in history. At one point in history church leaders were amongst the most educated people in a community but that just isn't the case anymore. [As a side note ... females are far more educated than males in our culture. What does that do to your cultural understanding of 1 Timothy 2?] Here are some impacts this trend might have on your church:

3 Points & Joke Doesn't Work

Any more // You can't just wing your messages on the weekend. Sermons need to be rigorously prepared and

PEOPLE DRIVE LESS

U.S. vehicle-miles traveled per person, 1970-2013



Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis



assume people have a level of education that whoever taught you about preaching didn't assume.

Work With the Internet // In a world where people have access to unlimited knowledge we need wisdom even more! Help people learn how to learn not just what they need to know.

Present Different Points of View // The Kingdom of God is a rich and diverse community with people that have very different theological points of view. Be okay with that. Educated people know that not everyone shares the same point of view as them ... and they are okay with that. Don't be so dogmatic with your gray area theological intricacies. It turns educated people off.

Stay with me for this last one ... as a kid who grew up with a dad who worked in the automotive industry I've seen the impact that the car has had on our culture. In some ways ... the history of the last one hundred years can be seen as a story that the car has had on our culture. Something has shifted in the last few years where people are driving less than they used to. (Gas prices, home offices, cocooning, etc.) This is bound to have an impact on our churches ...

Average Drive Time // The "church growth movement" was largely driven by "destination churches" where people would drive past their local parish and drive to a church that met their needs more. People are going to be less likely

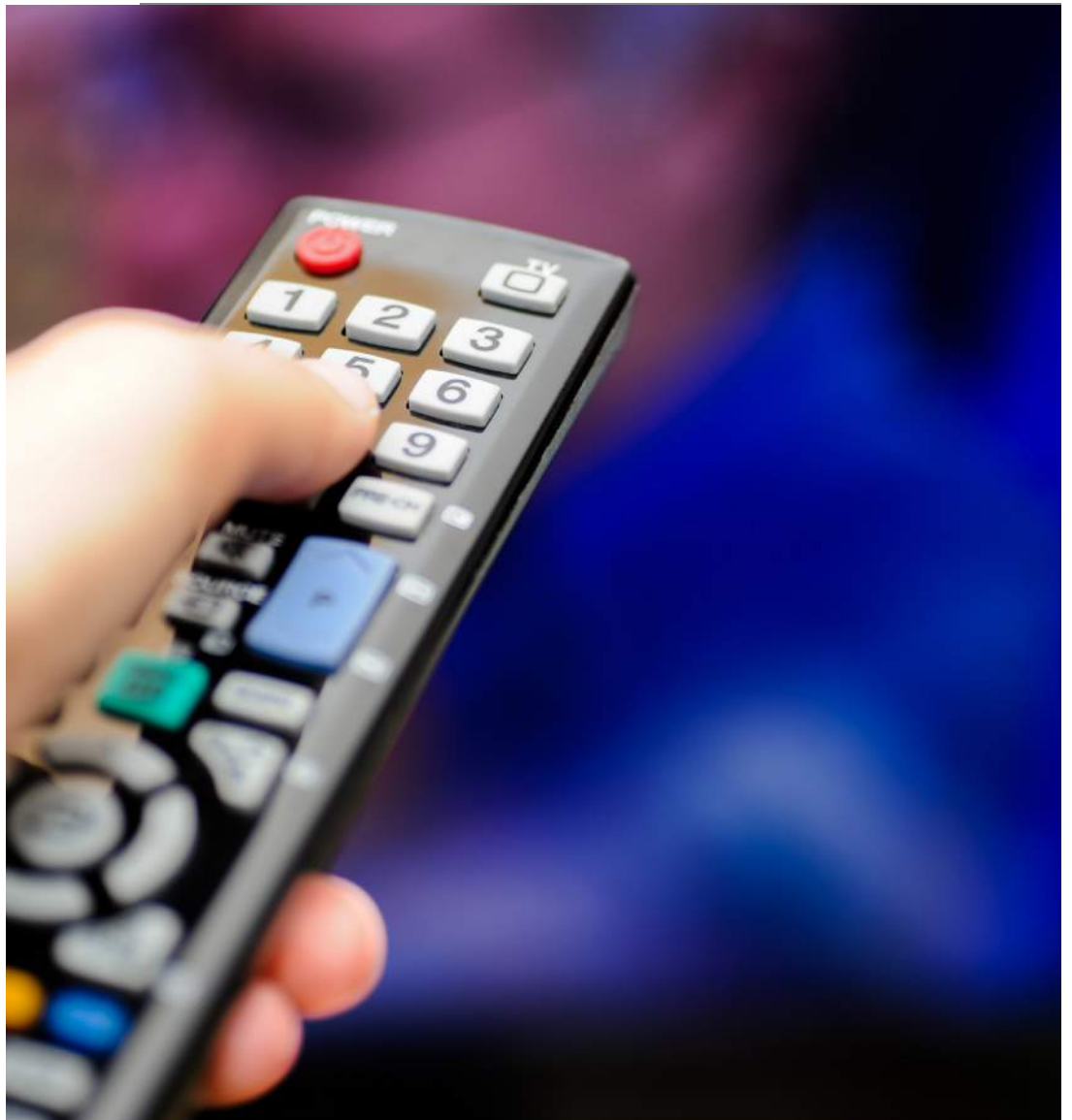
to drive long distances to come to your church. This reality is driving the growth of the multisite church movement today.

Your Actual Neighbors // How are we reaching people who are within a reasonable walking (or biking?) distance of our church buildings? Do we need to double down on that? Maybe the parish wasn't such a bad idea after all ...

House Churches // This reality will drive the growth of people meeting in homes to have a fully functional "church" experience ... rather than driving to some religious building. How is your church leveraging that opportunity?



6 NETFLIX FACTS THAT CHURCH LEADERS NEED TO CONSIDER





1/3 of all "prime time" internet traffic is from Netflix.

We can't ignore the popularity of Netflix.

It's a mixture of clever marketing, excellent deployment and being in the right place at the right time. In a move similar to what iTunes did in the music industry 10 years ago, Netflix has found a model that encourages people to pay for online content that some were accessing through bootleg means. It's wildly popular and we need to understand what's driving its attraction.

Netflix attracted a total of 4.88 million new customers in the first three months of the year, more than any other three-month period since the service's debut eight years ago

Momentum is pushed forward one small win at a time.

To some people, Netflix might seem like an overnight success. In reality, they've been working toward this growth for years. The same is true in our churches. It takes years to build momentum to the point where the fly-wheel spins fast enough that it seems like there are more returns than the effort being put in. What small wins can you plan for this week or month that can repeat themselves over time to build momentum in your church?

Its expansion abroad was driven by "strong" growth in the more than 50 countries it serves. Growth is accelerated by multiplication.

When your church is gaining ground in your community, it's a sign that it's time to multiply. In the past, growth meant constructing a bigger building or moving to a larger location. But today's leading churches think about going multisite at this point. By going into a "new market" in a nearby community, many churches see their growth accelerating. If a church has the opportunity to open many new locations, the growth can accelerate even more. Note that growth comes before multiplication. Simply going multisite in an attempt to grow won't work. You need to nail it before you scale it.

Netflix's subscribers, on average, are streaming nearly two hours of video per day.

The idea of "binge watching" is now mainstream. I was talking with a young leader who spent 13 hours last weekend watching all the episodes of a recently released series on Netflix. I've found myself just rolling from one episode to another on the service as well. Long-form storytelling is here to stay. Many of these series are actually very long movies released as episodes. In a culture where our attention





spans seem to be shrinking, Netflix shows us that viewers will follow a good story and great characters over an extended period of time. If people get bored with what we're talking about after just a few weekends at our church ... what is that saying? Should we be producing additional content around our messages that allow people to dive deeper?

Netflix's big quarter coincided with the return of House of Cards, an Emmy-winning political drama starring Kevin Spacey as a conniving U.S. president

Original ideas win. The development of original shows is core to Netflix's expansion efforts. They are investing significantly on bold projects that make them unique in the streaming landscape. What is your church doing that is uniquely you? What is your core message and how are you proclaiming it in a way that gets people's attention and is different from anyone else? What's unique to you? (I mean ... you ... as a leader.) How can your ministry leverage and accentuate that?

Netflix is investing in its recommendation system to pinpoint the content that subscribers are more likely to enjoy and that are unavailable on other services.

Narrowcasting is the future. There was a moment in history when it seemed like we'd all have massive large-screen TVs in our living rooms to watch the latest shows. Netflix is transforming our culture so that we watch our own selections on small screens. It's personal-

ized content rather than a community experience. Two people lying in bed watching their own shows on their own laptops has solved the problem of fighting over the remote. Churches are built on a "broadcast medium" approach. How can we customize our discipleship experiences so they start with the needs and wants of our people instead of aiming for the middle of the audience?

BONUS: THE FIRST "CONTENT" LOADED ON THE NETFLIX PLATFORM WAS CALLED EXAMPLE SHOW ... AND IT IS STILL AVAILABLE. HOW WEIRD IS THAT? IT'S DUMMY CONTENT ... VIDEO, DESCRIPTION, RATING AND ALL!



5 REASONS YOUR CHURCH SHOULD OFFER NAME TAGS EVERY SUNDAY

When you arrive at our church on Sunday's you are greeted by some fantastic members of our team who offer you a name tag. You can opt out of this experience ... but our hope is that the majority of our people at our services will decide to get a name tag.

I put providing name tags in category of "some times people don't know what's best for them." I lead a church in New Jersey ... not exactly known for it's sunny personality. We have a fair number of people that opt out this experience but we continue to offer it because we think it's important for our people to know names! In John 10:3, Jesus describes the Good Shepherd as one that "...calls his own sheep by name..." That's not a random fact ... names are important for identifying the story of how God is at work in your life. How can we minister to people if we don't know their names? It's critically important that we help our people with this first step of getting to know each other. Here are five other reasons it's important to encourage name tags in your church ...

● **Guest Oriented** // People want to be known. I know that there is a school of thought that says that people want to be totally anonymous when they arrive at church. The dangerous application of this belief is that we go out of way to make it hard for people to connect. We want to give people space to control their experience with our church but we want to meet them when they are ready to connect. The first step to getting connected is by allowing a nice member of our team to make up a name tag.

It's an Invitation to Talk // The implicated in the name tag is an invitation to talk with other people. Our hope is that when people come to church that they connect with the community ... the goal is to get people talking to each other! People love to hear their own name ... it's the sweetest word they hear all day. By offering name tags we are multiplying out lots of great conversations in church. What a positive emotion to associate with our church!

● **Creates Service Opportunities** // In order to make name tags for large crowds you need a lot of people ready to make them up. This creates more service opportunities ... more service opportunities means more people connected to the church!

● **Helpful for Your Team** // Let's be honest ... you can remember maybe 200 people's names when you see their faces but you can probably remember stuff about 1,500 people when given their face and name. (Think about Facebook ... the fact that you see people's names and faces boosts your recall about the details of other people's lives big time!) The name tag helps your team remember a little bit more about your people by just giving them a little bit of information about your guests.

● **It's Not About You ...** // Name tags by definition are about the other people around us not ourselves. It's a declaration that I'm not the center of this universe ... that I acknowledge that everyone doesn't know me ... that I'm not that big of a deal. When we put on a name tag we are serving other people who might feel uncomfortable coming up to me.



6 REASONS WHY EMAIL BEATS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

I've heard too many people say that "email is dead." They celebrate the early results of every hot up-and-coming social network. People get taken in by the vanity numbers of these networks and lose focus on their most important digital communication tool. **Email continues to outperform social media because of its ability to connect and engage with people.** Here are just a handful of reasons why email beats social media for church communications:





EMAIL CONTINUES TO OUTPERFORM SOCIAL MEDIA BECAUSE OF ITS ABILITY TO CONNECT AND ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE. HERE ARE JUST A HANDFUL OF REASONS WHY EMAIL BEATS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS:

Numbers Don't Lie // There are 3 times as many active email accounts in the world than Facebook and Twitter accounts combined. In fact, all the messages on Facebook and Twitter make up just 0.2% of the number of emails sent each day (and that's not including spam messages!). People are more likely to have an email account and send/receive way more messages through email than social media.

More Personal // When was the last time you were on a social network and said, "Email me about this"? Why did you do that? When you want to move the conversation to a deeper level, you do it via email. If you were going to reach out to a lawyer or a banker electronically about an issue, what would you reflexively use: Email or social media? You want to be where people are having their most personal conversations ... their email inboxes, not their private messages on Facebook!

More Responsive // There are a number of studies that show customer acquisition is growing by leaps and bounds via email. I read a study that shows it has quadrupled in the last 2 years! Businesses are finding email an increasingly effective channel to motivate customers. As church leaders, we need to watch these trends and apply them to what we're doing. Email is what businesses use when they want to move potential clients to loyal customers. We need to use it to move people to action in our ministries.

It's the Digital Hub // Even the most "social" of the social networks tie their strategies to emails. When someone posts something on your Facebook wall, you get an email. When someone "favorites" a post on Twitter, you get an email. When someone comments on your YouTube video, you get an email. Why is that? Because social networks know regular contact with people via email is what drives long-term engagement.

You Own Your Email List // Friendster died: How valuable was the list of people on there? MySpace went away: Does it matter how many fans you had on it now? Facebook made changes and the value of your list went way down. Instead of investing in building your "fans and followers" on those networks, invest in building your email list. You will always be able to send email to these people. There's no guarantee that you'll be able to connect with the people on those social networks, as they change or become defunct in the future.

Extended Conversations // Even the most "social" of the social networks tie their strategies to emails. When someone posts something on your Facebook wall, you get an email. When someone "favorites" a post on Twitter, you get an email. When someone comments on your YouTube video, you get an email. Why is that? Because social networks know regular contact with people via email is what drives long-term engagement.

Now, don't get me wrong ... I'm still a fan of social media. I think a well-executed plan on these networks can help your church push its mission forward. But you need to start with a robust email strategy first. I'd love to hear your thoughts!



14 FAST FACTS ABOUT EMAIL AS A COMMUNICATIONS TOOL

- 44% of email recipients made at least 1 purchase last year because of a promotional email. ([Convince & Convert](#))
- 33% of email recipients open email based on the subject line alone. ([Convince & Convert](#))
- Subject lines fewer than 10 characters long had an open rate of 58%. ([Adestra](#))
- Personalized subject lines are 22.2% more likely to be opened. ([Adestra](#))
- 64% of people say they open an email because of the subject line. ([Chadwick Martin Bailey](#))
- 7 in 10 people say they made use of a coupon or discount from a marketing email in the previous week. ([Blue Kangaroo](#))
- 56% of businesses say they plan to increase their use of email marketing in the next year. ([The Small and Midsize Business Email Marketing Survey 2013](#))
- 27% of consumers were more likely to say their favorite companies should invest in more email. ([ExactTarget](#))
- 1 in 2 marketers use animated gifs in their email campaigns. ([Experian](#))
- 40% of business-to-business marketers rated the leads generated by email marketing as high quality. ([Software Advice](#))
- For every \$1 spent, \$44.25 is the average return on email marketing investment. ([Experian](#))
- 82% of consumers open emails from companies. ([Litmus](#))
- 64% of decision-makers read their email via mobile devices. ([TopRank](#))
- By 2016, 4.3 billion people will have an email address. ([The Radicati Group](#))





DO SATURDAY EMAILS INCREASE SUNDAY CHURCH ATTENDANCE?

Recently in the unSeminary Premium private Facebook group, a conversation started about whether email is a predictable driver of attendance at churches. We decided to do a small study on this question last weekend. 81 churches sent emails on Saturday and then

measured to see if doing so made any difference in attendance. Below is an infographic that outlines what we learned. Here are a few highlights:

- **57% of the churches that sent emails saw a week-over-week increase in attendance.**
- The average attendance increase in those churches was 13%.
- Saturday is typically the “lowest volume” day for incoming emails ... but it also has the highest “open rates” as well. **Seems like a great opportunity for churches!**
- Sending the occasional Saturday email on a well-timed weekend can indeed boost Sunday attendance.
- The increase in attendance amongst all the churches was over 1,000 people ... imagine that ... **over 1,000 more people went to church** because (at least in part) they were emailed and asked to attend.

① **Email marketing continues to be an incredible tool for churches.** How are you leveraging this channel to connect more people to your community?



HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE EMAILS THAT CHURCHES SENT:

Connexus Church...

celebrating the launch of a community-service program

Calvary Church...

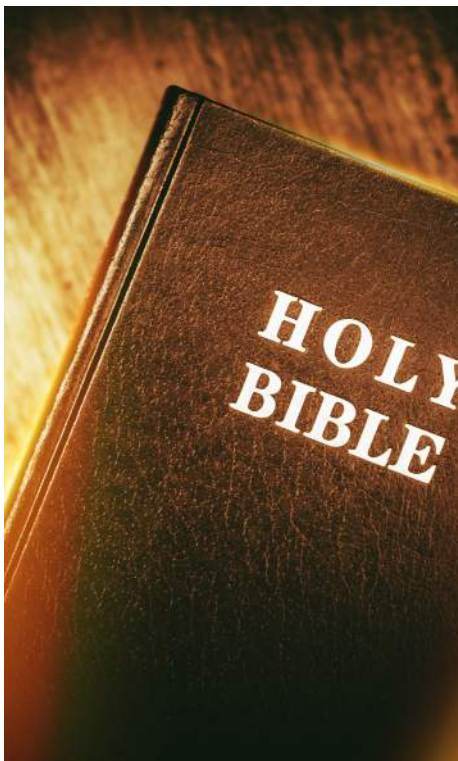
a Canadian church speaking about peace in the midst of the Parliament shootings last week

Liquid Morristown...

I love Tom's passion for his community bubbling through in this email!

SugarHill Church ...

fun to see links to the songs they did on Sunday in this email





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