

## Reaching The “Unchurched” (part 2)

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In a book titled *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched and Proven Ways To Reach Them*, the author, Thom S. Rainer, points out some interesting and startling results of a number of surveys that have been taken revealing what attracts people to churches. In this series of articles we have been considering some of his conclusions.

### Our Preaching

Should we tailor our preaching so that visitors or unbelievers are never offended or confused by deep biblical truths? Rainer finds a very different reality in the attitudes and priorities among those who had recently joined churches:

- The surveys presented by Rainer found that the two most important factors contributing to a person's decision to joining a church was the preacher and his subject matter (90%) and the doctrine presented (88%). *“The number one reason given for a choice of a particular church was the theological beliefs and doctrines of that church”* (Rainer, p. 21).
- One person noted, *“You know what frustrated me most when I started visiting churches? What really frustrated me was that I had a deep desire to understand the Bible, to hear in-depth preaching and teaching, but most of the preaching was so watered-down that it was insulting to my intelligence.”*
- Another said, *“We attended a lot of different churches for different reasons before we became Christians. I tell you so many of the preachers spoke with little authority; they hardly ever dealt with tough issues of Scripture, and they soft-sold the other issues”* (Rainer, p. 62).

### The Preacher

Many people put too much stock in a charismatic, magnetic preacher, believing that people of the world will come to church for the spectacle of the sermon. This idea was not supported by the research, however, which revealed that a preacher needs to be humble, express love, and be patient toward those who are listening. Passion and conviction for the truth, not for entertainment, appeals to people. After all, when truth is being preached, it does not matter what kind of package it comes in. Paul described his own preaching in the following ways:

- It was not always “clever”, the way the world likes it. Without human cleverness, though, we are only left with the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:17).
- His preaching was anything but “peddling” (2 Corinthians 2:17). While others peddle the Gospel for money, fame, or recognition, Paul simply preached out of sincerity.
- He was always patient with those who would listen (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
- He was not necessarily the most magnetic, charismatic man. Some saw him as somewhat of a fool and were turned off by him (Acts 26:24, 17:32).

- His speaking ability was described by some as “plain” or “contemptible” and his personal presence “unimpressive” (2 Corinthians 10:10). The research shows that honest, genuine people are more attracted to truth in love than flash and pizzazz without any depth.

### **Friendliness**

Many members think they are friendly, but in fact are quite manufactured in their attitude toward visitors. The unchurched can tell when they are a chore to us, so we need to make extra effort to express genuine interest and concern for the needs or cares of our visitors. Do not merely be friendly because you have to be, but because you are deeply interested in helping them find salvation (Colossians 4:5-6). We need to “*let love be without hypocrisy*” (Romans 12:9), so that our visitors walk away feeling like they have been in the presence of warm, loving, welcoming people.