

The Unchurched: More Receptive than we Realize

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Methodology

- A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing American adults
- The study was sponsored by the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College
- The survey was conducted May 23 - June 1, 2016
- Slight weights were used to balance gender, age, ethnicity, income, region, and religion
- The sample was screened to only include those who have not attended a religious service in the past six months except for a holiday or special event such as a wedding or funeral
- The completed sample is 2,000 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the online panel does not exceed $\pm 2.7\%$ (This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting)
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups



Our Problem:

We have a false narrative of the unchurched that deactivates witness.



Manifestations:

- Our narrative of the unchurched is deficient, defeatist, and demotivating.
- We've stopped sharing our faith, inviting people & expecting God to renew the church in our time.



But 10% of churches are growing through conversion growth.



Why?

They have a different narrative.



Unchurched people, including millennials are more receptive than we realize.



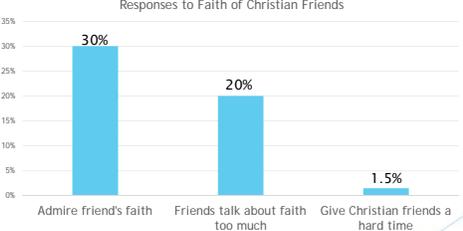
How do unchurched view the church?

- ▶ Some say that unchurched people think the church is harmful to society.
- ▶ The reality is that 40% of the unchurched think the church is beneficial to society.
- ▶ Only 6% think the church is harmful to society. The vocal minority has convinced us that the opposition is much stronger than it is!



There is a 1.5% persecution factor in our relational sharing!

Responses to Faith of Christian Friends

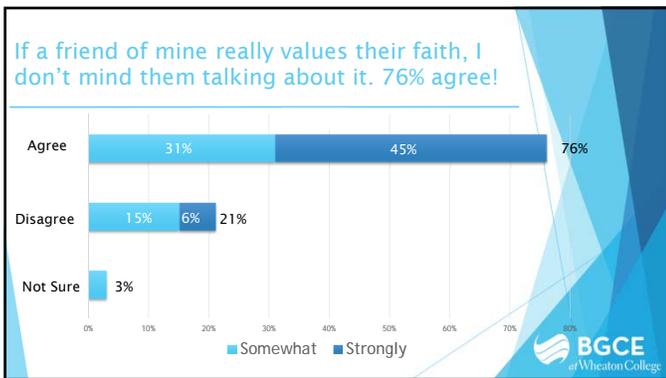


Response	Percentage
Admire friend's faith	30%
Friends talk about faith too much	20%
Give Christian friends a hard time	1.5%



Unchurched people are receptive to spiritual conversations and invitations to church.







Unchurched people welcome diverse approaches from the Church.



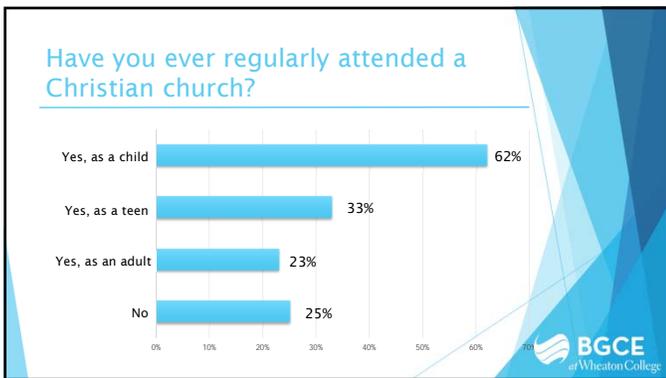




▶ One characteristic of the unchurched is that many have some significant background with the church, but are not interested in returning.

▶ We had them once and now we have lost them.





Many unchurched have a church background that engendered distrust. The top three reasons they stopped attending:

▶ They lost trust, especially through experiences with a church or a Christian: 35%

▶ They lost interest: 30%.

▶ Their life circumstances changed: 25%.



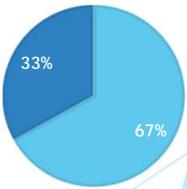
Unchurched people
EXPECT to return to
church in high numbers!



How likely are you to attend church
regularly sometime in the future?

33% or 50 million think
they **WILL!** These are the
50 million Receptive!

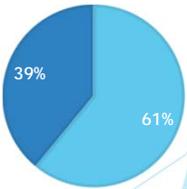
- Likely
- Unlikely



What about millennials?

39% of millennials say
they will likely return
to church!!

- Likely
- Unlikely



Let's adopt a new narrative and actively engage in bolder, more intentional, and more expectant witness.



We need an evangelism revolution based on an accurate view of how receptive the unchurched are to us, the gospel, and the church!



The greatest challenge we face to the advance of the gospel is not the culture but US- the church!