



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Trust me: you really can't make this stuff up. Today, is my 56th birthday - yes, I know, it's hard to imagine that a guy my age can seem so youthful! - but I continue to experience childlike amazement at the things that await my discovery in the morning paper.

A few weeks ago, USA Today ran these words about 10 column inches under the headline: ***Southern Baptists urge their members to evangelize more.*** I have some really good friends who are really good Baptists, and they - Southern Baptists, as a group - are responsible for tons of really good things done in the name of the Christian faith. I use them as a punch line occasionally, but they're so jovial and jocular that they laugh along with the folks who are laughing about them. But, bless their hearts (*they are, after all, Southern Baptists*), they are getting right down to the mission-critical material with this "new" emphasis...

LifeWay Research is a Christian research firm that recently completed a study with 15,000+ Americans, exploring their openness to "receive information" about Jesus. A radical approach - don't you think? - to evangelism: *Interview your prospect pool before you develop your marketing strategies to find out what might work, and what probably won't!*



What did they discover? Their news: past approaches won't produce current conversions. *Print advertising? Notes left on the door? Billboards? Radio? Television? High-tech, on-line programs?* Forget about it. Save your shekels. Those "lost people" aren't interested; kind of like the kids in the neighborhood replacing their lemonade stand with a coffin kiosk. *Nobody's hoping to do that kind of shopping in that kind of medium.* Do some exit-interviews with the people who, as adults, are coming out of the baptismal. How did they crossover from where-they-were to I-know-now-where-I'm-going?

Two ways most people say that they're reachable, today: 1) a personal conversation with a family member (63%); and, 2) a friend or neighbor from the church (56%). And, while they were at it, they asked those "from the church" prospects which of the "brands" would be most credible. The Auto Industry has

the "Big Three;" so, apparently, does the Christian institutional world. The top three sources of "an invitation I'd consider:"

1) a non-denominational church (20%);
2) the Catholic Church (15%); and,
3) a Southern Baptist church (11%). Seems that a family member could be a deacon at a Presbymethbeterian Assembly Tabernacle of Hope in Jesus the Messiah, Oklahoma Synod... and it wouldn't matter...

So, our Southern Baptist friends are challenging their folks to make it personal. Problem? According to Ed Stetzer, "Baptists like to talk more about evangelism than to actually do it." News flash for Mr. Stetzer: *that's just as true for those regular attendees at the non-denominational churches and the Catholic Churches!*

Why, do you suppose, is that? Maybe we've been "sold a bill of goods," and the Deceiver (*Satan, not Madoff*) has convinced us that our family and friends are happy in their hopelessness, satisfied with the consequences of their unbiblical behavior, comfortable with their irresolvable conflicts... and delighted to be desperate when they get news about life and death they can't handle.

I wonder: do we remember how grateful we were - and, are - for the person who finally convinced us that God really did care, and that Jesus really was there, and that we could win the only prize that will matter a million years from now if we'd only be willing to confess, repent and believe?

Don't know about you, but I think our Baptist friends are onto something...

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