

Study: Most Churchgoers Fail to Share Faith

When it comes to **discipleship**, churchgoers struggle most with sharing Christ with non-Christians according to a recent study of church-going American Protestants.

The study conducted by LifeWay Research found 80 percent of those who attend church one or more times a month, believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, but 61 percent have not told another person about how to become a Christian in the previous six months.

These distressing results came from an extensive discipleship research project focused on measuring **spiritual maturity** in individuals. Overall, LifeWay Research found eight biblical attributes consistently evident in the lives of maturing believers. Of those eight, "Sharing Christ" has the lowest average score among Protestant church attendees.

Three-quarters of churchgoers say they feel comfortable in their ability to effectively communicate the **gospel**, while 12 percent say they don't feel comfortable telling others about their faith.

Despite a vast majority believing it's their duty to share their faith and having the confidence to do so, 25 percent say they have shared their faith once or twice, and 14 percent have shared three or more times over the last six months.

The survey also asked how many times they have personally "invited an unchurched person to attend a church service or some other program at your church?" Nearly half (48 percent) of church attendees responded, "zero." Thirty-three percent of people say they've personally invited someone one or two times, and 19 percent say they've done so on three or more occasions in the last six months.

“Many times we’ve been told new Christians are most active in sharing their faith,” said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research.

“In reality people who have been a Christian longer have higher responses for Sharing Christ than newer Christians. While new Christians may find it natural to share their new experience, mature Christians do it intentionally,” said Stetzer.

According to Stetzer, “**praying** more frequently for the status of people who are not professing Christians is the best indicator of more **spiritual maturity** in the entire Sharing Christ factor.”

In the study, 21 percent of churchgoers say that outside of church **worship** services they pray every day for people they know who are not professing Christians. Twenty-six percent say they **pray** a few times a week. One-fifth (20 percent) say they rarely or never pray for the spiritual status of others.

“If you are going to be intentional about sharing your faith, praying for others is a great way to start. We often acknowledge the importance of **prayer** in people coming to faith in Christ, but we also found it has an impact on the person praying,” he said.

These findings are part of the largest discipleship study of its kind. Results from each of the eight attributes of spiritual maturity will continue to be released over the coming months.