

Summary of  
***SUPRISING INSIGHTS FROM THE UNCHURCHED***  
**Dr. Thom Rainer**

May 31, 2002 @ FBC, Biloxi, MS

Study of 804 persons with over 5000 hours of interviews. These persons were from many evangelical denominations and non-denominational.

353 "Formerly unchurched" – little or no prior church life  
350 "Transfer church" – moved their letter (control group)  
101 "Effective Evangelistic Church" Pastors ( church has 26+ baptisms per year AND 20:1 resident members per baptism ratio). Only 4% of churches meet these criteria.

Dr. Rainer's research differs from Barna in one major area. Barna tends to ask the unchurched "What would it take to get you to church?" Rainer asks the newly saved "What did it take to get you to church?"

Rainer reports that the unchurched will show up at church. 92% of Americans will attend a worship service at least once over a two year period. The question is "How do we get them to attend MY church?"

**Top Ten Issues for Reaching the Unchurched.**

1. **Doctrine is important.** We must be clear in what we believe and committed to it. We MUST live it. Some cults are doing well because they say what they believe and do it. The unchurched is looking for "meaty" teaching and preaching, not watered down messages. They are looking for high expectations for and of the membership.

2. **A Crisis will bring them to church.** The crisis can be either positive or negative. Birth, death, marriage, relocation, etc. are some of these. To reach them we must have:

- a. Intentionality. We must work at reaching them during this crisis.
- b. Accountability. We must share our faith with them during this crisis.

3. **Relationships are important.** People still come to church because they are asked by a friend. The percent is still around 80%.

4. **The Family Issue.** Someone in their family (father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, first cousin) was the primary reason why they started attending church. Which members were most effective?

- a. Wives reaching husbands. Power of Prayer is important here. Rainer suggests having a SS class just for women whose husbands do not attend.
- b. Children reaching parents. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE MINISTERING TO YOUTH AND CHILDREN. 82% who accept Christ do so before age 20.

Generations

Builders (born before 1946) 65% are saved  
Boomers (born 1946-1964) 35% are saved  
Busters (born 1965-1976) 15% are saved  
Bridgers (born 1977-1994) 4% are saved

5. **The Forgotten Role of Personal Evangelism.** 75% say that someone from the church they joined is the one who told them about Jesus.

**6. The Role of Pastors and Preaching.** The pastor's role is not to do all ministry. He is to devote himself to the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6: 1-7). The unchurched overwhelmingly said they could go into a church and immediately tell if the pastor had spent time in the Word. Pastors who are reaching the unchurched spend about 20 hours per week in preparation.

**7. The Importance of First Impressions.** Excellence in buildings is very important to the unchurched. Pay particular attention to bathrooms, preschool, and children's areas. Rainer recommends ***When God Builds A Church*** by Bob Russell.

**8. The Surprise of the Greeter Ministry.** Copy WalMart. The unchurched say that greeters must be identified. They must also have an attitude of joy. They must know where things are. This may mean we must replace our current greeters. One way to get new members involved quickly is to have them greet. They are usually the ones who show the most joy.

**9. The Unchurched have Different Stages of Faith.** 5% are waiting for someone to tell them about Jesus. 5% are highly resistant to the gospel. This second group will only be reached by a relationship with a Christian. The main thing is to DO SOMETHING to reach the unchurched.

**10. The Attitude of Expectancy and Outward Focus.** The unchurched expect church members to act like they serve a God of Power. He can and will do miracles. They do not go to churches where the members do not expect God to act with power. They also like churches that have high expectations for their members AND their visitors. They don't mind having the church expect something from them. "People have no desire to be a part of something that makes no difference, that expects little. And frankly, many churches have dumbed down church membership to the point that it has no meaning at all."

### **Questions and Answers between attendees and Dr. Rainer**

1. Q. What difference does worship style make in reaching the unchurched?

A. NONE. The unchurched cares about the **quality** of the worship. It doesn't matter which worship style is used if it is poorly done. It doesn't matter which worship style is used if it is well done.

2. Q. Do the unchurched have a preference for worship style?

A. Not really. 56% indicated a preference for a "Contemporary" worship. "However, when asked to define contemporary, the answers were so divergent that it could not be defined. For example, several people defined contemporary as a church singing Kum Bah Yah, twice a month."

3. Q. Was denomination a factor in determining what church the unchurched attended?

A. It was not a huge factor. However, the doctrine of the church was a huge factor.

4. Q. What difference does the name of the church make?

A. None. However, the name of the denomination within the church name did help the unchurched know what the doctrine of the church was. But a name such as First Community Church with SBC on the sign works just as well.