

# RESEARCH REPORT

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*A Study of Adults Baptized in  
Southern Baptist Churches, 1993*

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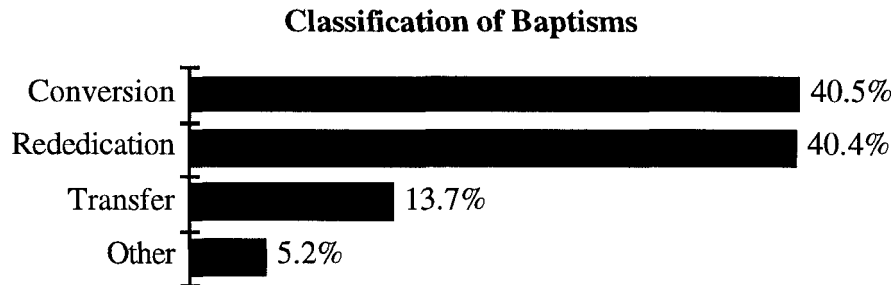
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a study of adults recently baptized in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). It is based on telephone interviews made with more than 1,350 adults during July and August, 1994. These adults were selected to be representative of the 152,681 adults reported as baptized on the 1993 Uniform Church Letter.

### FINDINGS

Six out of 10 respondents were baptized prior to their recent baptism. Of those previously baptized, 1 of 3 were previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church. If all (not just those previously baptized) respondents are considered, then 1 of 5 adult baptisms are rebaptized Southern Baptists.

Interviewers asked respondents to think about their recent baptism and indicate one of four responses which best describes their recent baptism. The following figure shows the self-classification of respondents.



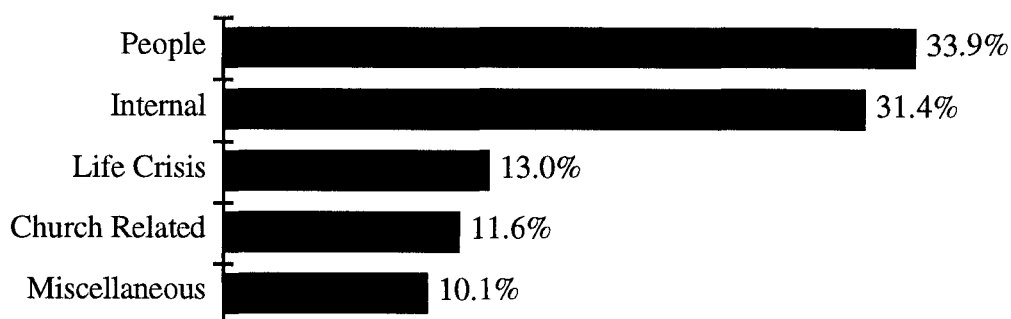
Only 2 of 5 adults baptized in SBC churches identified a first-time commitment to Jesus as the primary reason for being baptized. Projecting to the population, this means that of the approximately 150,000 adults baptized only 60,000 represented conversions of the lost to Christ. An almost equal number were baptized as a result of a rededication of their life to Christ. Thus Southern Baptists may not be reaching as many lost adults as the raw baptism figures indicate and rededication is a major motivation in persons being baptized.

The following open-ended question was asked only of those who indicated that their baptism was the result of accepting Christ as their personal Savior for the first time.

*Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the one, single most important influence that led you to accept Christ as your Savior?*

The following figure shows categories of response that were developed from answers to this question.

### Primary Influence for Conversion



**People influence**—This category includes all those who identified particular people or groups of people as the most important influence. The influence may have come from a spouse, a parent, or another family member; it may have been a friend, a co-worker, or a pastor. That influence may have been a personal witness, an example, or friendship.

**Internal factors**—Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, these influences seemed to have no external source. These persons were motivated primarily by an inner desire, a feeling, a realization. The desires ranged from wanting to go to heaven to wanting to have a positive influence on children and family.

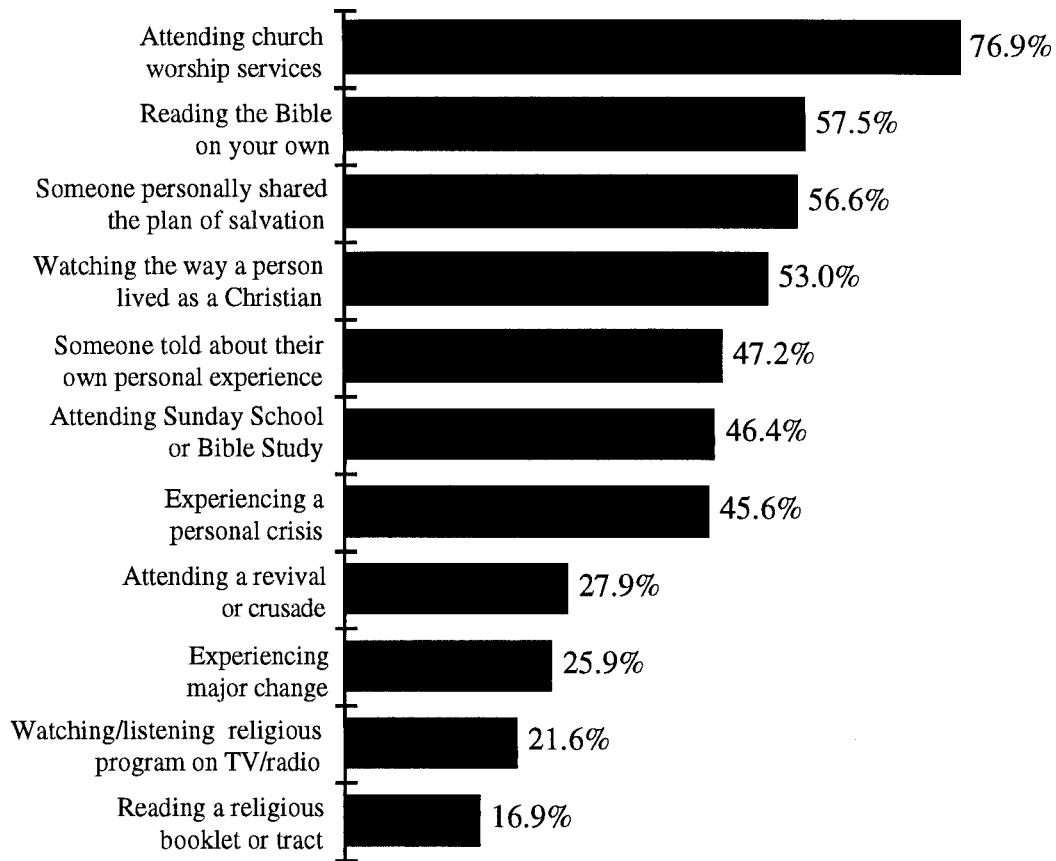
**Life crisis/problems**—Some adults named a life crisis or problem as the most important influence in their decision to accept Christ. These events caused people to open themselves up to the presence of God in their lives. Examples are divorce, sickness, alcoholism, and death.

**Church-related religious activities**—This category of influence includes a wide variety of responses, all related to some church event, program, activity, or some religious practice. For example, preaching, teaching, Bible reading and study, Sunday School, and revivals were grouped in this category.

**Miscellaneous/don't know**—There were a variety of other responses that were difficult to categorize. In addition, a number of persons simply could not name the single most important influence on their decision to accept Christ—they just did it.

Realizing that influences in a person making a decision for Christ are probably many and varied, questions were developed to probe other factors believed to be important in conversion. Respondents were asked about 11 different items thought to be an influence in the lives of people making a decision for Christ. The following chart shows the percentage of new converts who said each item was a major contributing influence in their decision to become a Christian.

### Contributing Influences for Conversion



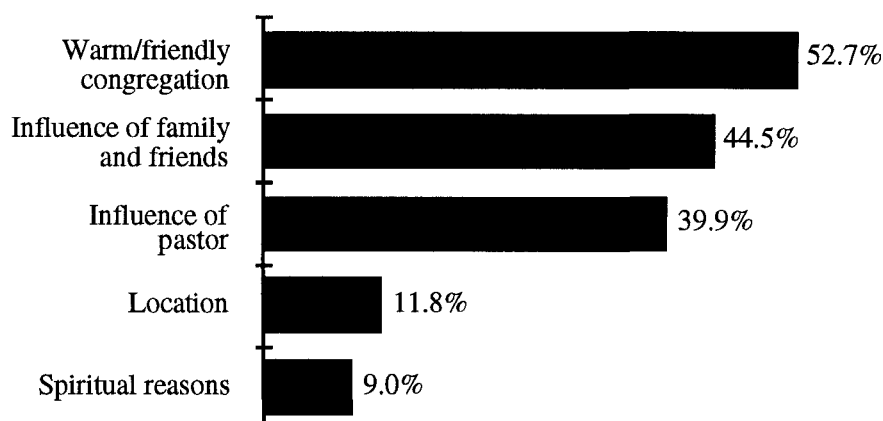
Attending church worship was clearly the most important of the contributing influences indicated by new converts. When combined with those who cited attending Sunday School or Bible study as a major influence and those who cited attending a revival or crusade, then these church-related events, programs, or activities, underscore the effect that a church environment has on the unsaved. Of those people who are new converts, 83.6 percent indicated that at least one of these three items was a major contributing influence in their becoming a Christian. The results lend support to the importance of bringing people into the church as a strategy for effectively evangelizing them.

The second most-cited contributing influence was “reading the Bible on your own.” If this question is combined with attending Sunday School, then 71.5 percent of new respondents indicate that Bible study either personally or corporately is a factor in their conversion.

More than half the adults who were baptized as a result of a first-time commitment to Christ reported that someone personally sharing the plan of salvation was important. Almost half said that someone who told them about their own personal experience with God was a major influence in their decision to accept Christ. More than half indicated that watching the way a person lived as a Christian was a major influence. Combined, 81.3 percent of new converts cited at least one of these personal witnessing items as a major contributing influence in becoming a Christian.

One of the questions in the survey pertained to the issue of church growth. All respondents were asked why they decided to join the particular church in which they were recently baptized. The primary reasons for joining a church are listed below.

### Reasons People Join Churches



The most important reason for selecting a particular church was the warmth and friendliness of the congregation. The influence of family and friends was the second most important category. Third was the pastor—from his preaching and teaching, to his personal relationships, to his personal witness. The major influences for choosing a church are warm and friendly congregation, family and friends, and the pastor. A combined 86.9 percent of respondents listed at least one of these factors as the reason they chose their particular church.

The majority of adults interviewed participated in some form of organized religion prior to baptism in a Southern Baptist church. Only 17.5 percent of respondents said they had little or no prior church experience. In contrast, among new converts 28.6 percent had little or no prior church experience before their baptism. Since new converts comprise 40.5 percent of recently baptized adults, this means that 1 of 9 baptized adults is converted from a non-church background.

One of the findings resulting from gathering names and telephone numbers of recently baptized adults for the study is that churches had already lost contact with a significant portion of the people they recently baptized—possibly a third or more. This causes concern that many newly baptized adults are not being adequately disciplined and cared for.

## INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study is to examine those influences that lead a person to a decision to follow Jesus Christ. It is hoped that the results will assist churches and denominational organizations in developing a more effective evangelism strategy.

While a number of research designs could be developed to address this subject, the one used in this study is to examine influences that have resulted in recent conversions among adults joining Southern Baptist churches. This approach surfaces factors that have proven influential for Southern Baptists, and to some extent provides a relative rating of their impact. The limitation of this approach is while these factors may have been influential among some people, it does not guarantee they will be equally influential among all people—recently converted Southern Baptists may not be representative of the larger lost population. Still, it is better to begin with an understanding of what has worked and then speculate how this information might or might not be applicable to the larger unchurched and unsaved population.

This study focuses on adults, age 18 and older, who have been recently baptized in Southern Baptist churches. For Southern Baptists, baptism is “believer’s baptism” and is prerequisite to membership in a Southern Baptist church. Thus, baptism is strongly encouraged for new Christians and all new Christians joining Southern Baptist churches are baptized.

People baptized in Southern Baptist churches include more than just recent converts. Christians moving their church membership from religious groups or denominations not practicing believer’s baptism or baptism by immersion are almost always required to be rebaptized. Baptism is then the primary way in which Southern Baptists grow as a denomination. Individual churches may grow by transfer growth, but an overwhelming majority of people coming into the Convention are baptized. Thus, a study of baptisms allows not only for a study of evangelistic influences but it addresses broader issues of church growth.

While there is year to year variation in the total reported, baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) have averaged 383,000 a year since 1952. In 1993 Southern Baptists reported 349,073 total baptisms. We have limited the study to these recently baptized people because their experiences should be fresh in their memory and they should be able to articulate accurately the motivations and influences for their baptisms. With minor exceptions, these were people baptized from October 1, 1992 through September 30, 1993.

Typically, half or more of the people baptized in Southern Baptist churches are under 18 years old. In 1993, 55.7 percent were under age 18. It is desirable to get information on children and youth, but, a decision was made early in the study design to conduct telephone interviews. It was felt that churches might be reluctant to release the names and telephone numbers of children (some churches were reluctant to release names and telephone numbers of adults), parents might be apprehensive about strangers calling their children, and some children might not be mature enough to articulate information about their conversion experience with telephone interviewers. For these reasons, people under age 18 are not included in this study. Therefore the 152,681 adults reported as baptized in 1993 by Southern Baptist churches on the Uniform Church Letter (UCL) are the target population for this study. Caution must be exercised in generalizing the results of the study to other populations.

This is an empirical study of recently baptized adults in the Southern Baptist Convention, it is not a theological or theoretical treatise. It begins with the assumption that experiences leading to baptism are valid. The study examines respondents’ prior religious experience, demographic background, the motivating factors in joining a particular church, and the

meaning of the recent baptism. For those people who were baptized as the result of a recent conversion experience, it examines influences leading to conversion. Thus, this study is the compilation, classification, and interpretation of the self-reporting of respondents' experiences resulting in baptism.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a telephone survey. It was anticipated that telephone interviews would encourage higher participation rates and allow for open-ended responses to some of the more subjective questions. Questions were formulated by the Research Division and refined in cooperation with the Evangelism Section of the Home Mission Board. Darden Research Corporation of Atlanta, Georgia, was selected to conduct telephone interviews used as the basis for this study.

Darden Research assisted in further refining and testing of the survey instrument. The final questionnaire included both open- and closed-ended responses. The flow of the questionnaire began with the gathering of factual information regarding a person's recent baptism. Next the questionnaire distinguished whether an individual had been baptized as a result of a recent conversion experience or for other reasons such as the transfer of membership from a non-Southern Baptist church. For those persons having undergone a recent conversion experience, a series of questions was developed to determine the primary influences that led them to accept Christ as their personal Savior. Additional questions were asked of all respondents concerning prior religious participation, motivations for joining the particular church in which they were baptized, and general demographics. (A copy of the questionnaire is included in appendix A.)

During the time the questionnaire was being developed, a list of names and phone numbers of recently baptized adults was compiled. As mentioned above, the target population for the study is the 152,681 adults reported as baptized on the 1993 UCL—an annual questionnaire completed by most Southern Baptist churches. While churches report the number of adult baptisms, a master list of names and phone numbers does not exist. Therefore, a two-stage, stratified random sample design was employed where churches were sampled at the first stage and baptized adults were sampled at the second stage.

On the master list of 38,741 churches on the 1993 UCL, 24,642 churches reported 1 or more adult baptisms. These churches were divided into 12 strata. First, churches were stratified as low, medium, or high baptism churches. Churches with 1 to 4 baptisms were classified as low, 5 to 19 baptisms were classified as medium, and 20 or more baptisms were classified as high. Churches were further divided into metropolitan and non-metropolitan categories, and into groupings East and West of the Mississippi River. Random samples of churches were selected from each of these twelve strata. In all, 840 churches were selected in this first stage. (See appendix B for details on the sampling design.)

A letter was mailed to each sampled church in early April 1994 explaining the purpose of the study and reporting back to the church the number of adults the church reported baptizing on the 1993 UCL. The letter requested their participation by having them provide names and telephone numbers of the adults baptized. A form for reporting names and telephone numbers, and a postage-paid addressed envelope were included.

A follow-up letter was sent to non respondents in mid May with essentially the same information. In mid June, personnel in the Evangelism Section and the Research Division of the Home Mission Board called non responding churches to request their participation in the survey. Churches that could not be reached by phone were sent a flyer that again requested their participation. This flyer included a toll free number where churches could give the names and phone numbers of the baptized adults to customer service representatives. A fax number was also included in the flyer. (Appendix C contains samples of the correspondence sent to churches.)

Each church should have had at least three requests for their participation. Overall, 52.7 percent of the churches sampled responded to requests for information. These churches provided 2,793 usable names and phone numbers of adults recently baptized.

A subsample of 2,450 names and phone numbers were provided to Darden Research Corporation. Darden Research conducted the interviews from mid July through mid August, 1994. Up to 13 telephone calls were attempted for some individuals—typically a respondent was called at least 7 times on various occasions during this time frame if no one answered. Wrong or disconnected numbers were reported to the Home Mission Board. The Research Division re-called the churches where there were wrong and disconnected numbers, and verified and corrected them where possible. Non-English speaking adults surfaced during the survey were interviewed in their native language. The questionnaire was translated and telephone interviews were conducted in Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Overall, interviews were completed with more than 1,350 recently baptized adults—an adjusted response rate of 57.4 percent. The data for those responding have been weighted to reflect the proper proportions of the target population comprised by each of the 12 strata. The sampling error should be within  $\pm 5$  percentage points for most items, given a confidence interval of 95 percent. The remainder of this report is an analysis of the weighted responses of the telephone interviews. (Response rates are discussed in appendix D, weighting procedures in appendix E, and sampling error in appendix F.)

One of the findings resulting from gathering names and telephone numbers of recently baptized adults for the study is that churches have already lost contact with a significant portion of the people they recently baptized. Responding churches should have provided 4,101 names and phone numbers. However, only 2,793 names and usable phone numbers of recently baptized adults were provided—68.1 percent of the total reported. Furthermore, 18 percent of the names and numbers submitted were wrong or disconnected. Some of the people baptized are part of transient or mobile populations such as migrant workers, residents of halfway houses, military personnel, and college students. Others simply move; still others join different churches.

#### *IMPLICATION*

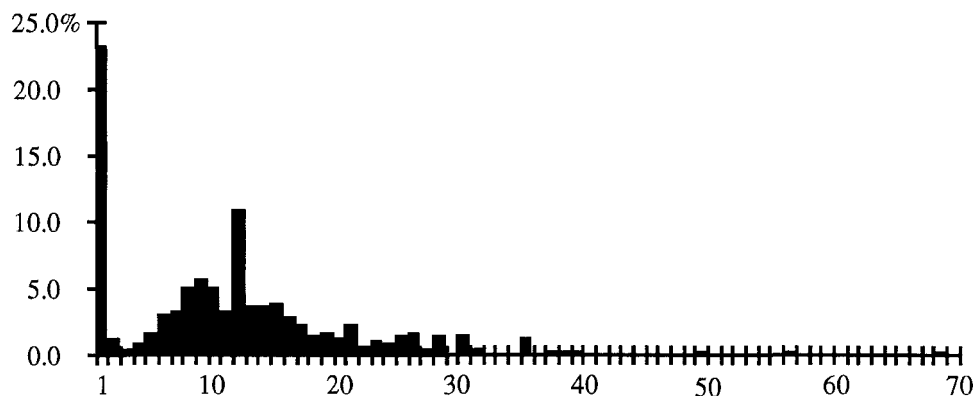
- The inability to get names and phone numbers of recently baptized adults leads to concern that a significant portion of newly baptized adults are not being adequately cared for and disciplined.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### PREVIOUS BAPTISM EXPERIENCE

One of the first questions asked of participants in the study was whether he or she had been baptized prior to their recent baptism.<sup>1</sup> Over half, 61.1 percent, responded “yes” to this question. This was a surprisingly high percentage. A follow-up question revealed that respondents ranged in age from an infant to age 68 at the time of their earlier baptism.<sup>2</sup> One in 5 who had been baptized previously had been baptized as infants. The median age for this earlier baptism was 10 years old.

### Age at First Baptism



A second follow-up question asked whether the earlier baptism had occurred in a Southern Baptist church. Of those having an earlier baptism, 1 of 3 (35.8%) responded affirmatively. If percentages are based on all 1,358 respondents, not just those previously baptized, 21.8 percent were persons who have been previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church.<sup>3</sup> Thus 1 of 5 baptisms reported by Southern Baptists are rebaptized Southern Baptists. Since this study is a cross section of baptisms that took place during a specific year, it cannot be surmised whether rebaptism of Southern Baptists is an increasing or decreasing trend. The median age of persons at the time of their first baptism in a Southern Baptist church was 12 years old.

Approximately 2 of 3 persons previously baptized were first baptized in non-Southern Baptist churches. Follow-up questions revealed the next largest percentage of respondents were previously baptized in the Catholic Church—18.4 percent. The third largest percentage was for those previously baptized in Methodist churches—14.0 percent. Combined, Southern Baptists, Catholics, and Methodists accounted for 68.2 percent of those previously baptized. It was surprising to find Catholics outnumbering Methodists since it is commonly believed that people are more likely to transfer between similar

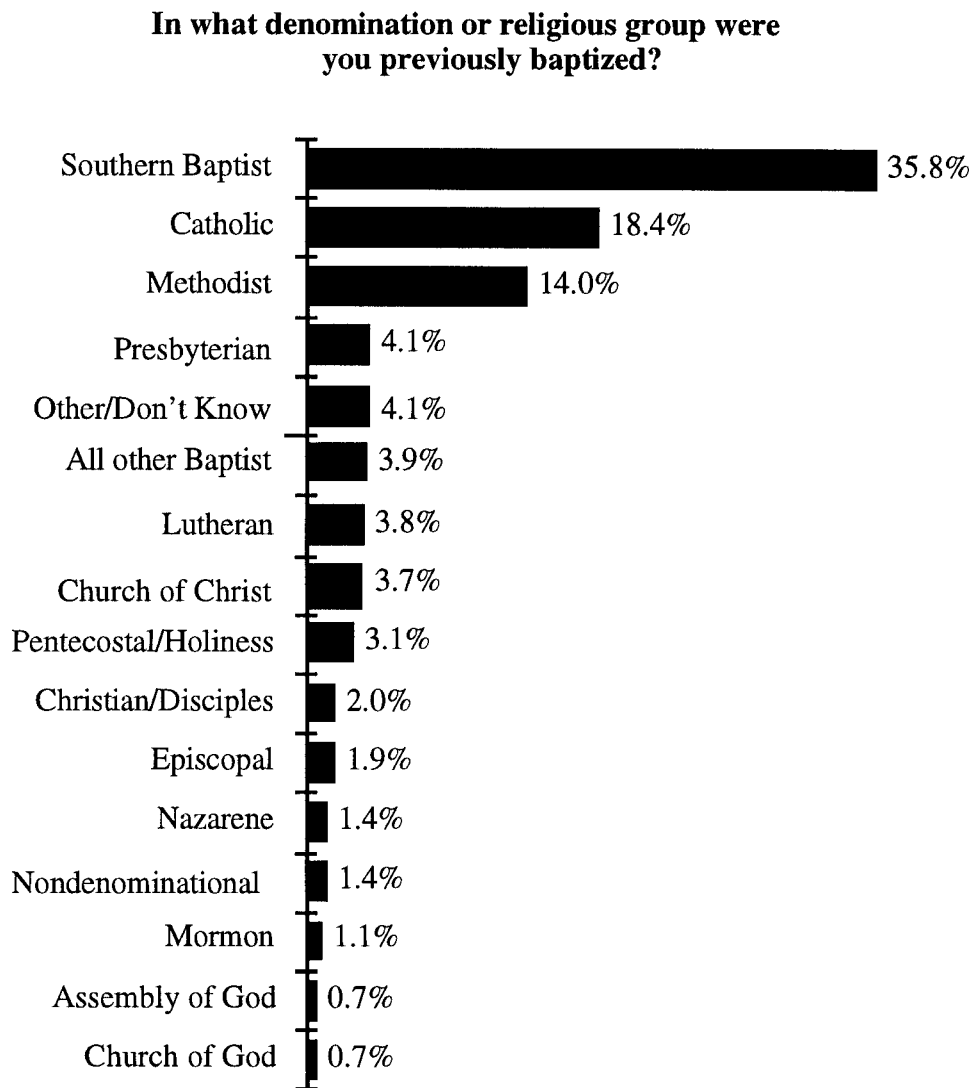
1 Baptism was not defined as either immersion or as believer's baptism for the respondent.

2 For those who had been previously baptized more than once, the interviewer was instructed to record the age of the earliest baptism. Infant baptisms were coded as one-year old.

3 There is a relationship between low, medium, and high baptism churches with rebaptism of Southern Baptists. Higher baptism churches are more likely to rebaptize Southern Baptists. (See appendix K.)

denominations; however, surprise needs to be tempered by the fact that Catholics are the largest religious group in the United States and outnumber Methodists by 4 to 5 times.<sup>4</sup>

The following figure shows the percentages of previously baptized adults by the denomination or religious group where they were previously baptized.



<sup>4</sup> Bradley, Martin B., et al, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990*, Glenmary Research Center, Atlanta, Ga.

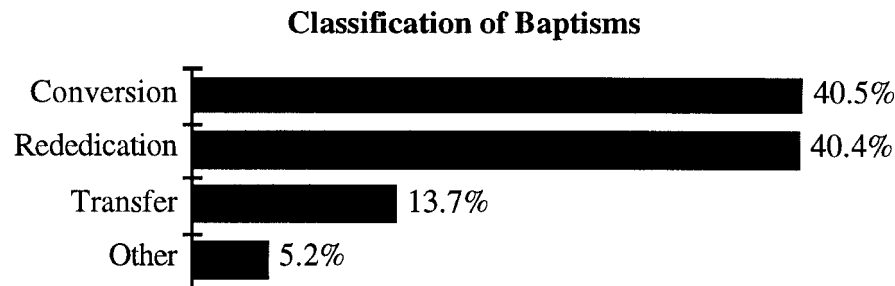
## CLASSIFICATION OF BAPTISMS

One of the essential tasks of this study is to identify those persons who have been baptized as part of a recent conversion experience. To do so requires classification of persons according to the reason for or meaning of their recent baptism. Interviewers asked respondents to think about their recent baptism and indicate one of four responses which best describes their recent baptism. The following table shows both the question and responses.<sup>5</sup>

*Which of the following best describes your recent baptism in a Southern Baptist church? Was it primarily the result of:*

Accepting Christ as your personal Savior for the first time.	40.5%
Rededicating your life to Christ.	40.4
The requirement of moving your membership from a non-Southern Baptist church.	13.7
Something other than the reasons mentioned above.	5.2
Refused to answer.	0.2
Total	100.0%

A simplified graphic of this information is as follows:



<sup>5</sup> Wording for this question proved to be crucial for the results of the study. Question construction and questionnaire design is primarily an exercise in communication. The challenge is to ask questions and allow for response in such a manner that the respondent clearly understands the question and in the context of his or her experience is able to accurately and completely communicate a response. Originally, a different response set to this question was used to classify recent baptism experience. The original question had five response categories. The first response was "A result of a recent conversion experience." The second was "The result of becoming a Christian years before but just recently joining a church." The remaining three responses were similar to those actually used. It became apparent in a pretest that respondents were not familiar with the term "recent conversion experience"; thus, relatively few were classifying themselves as new converts. While the wording made sense for researchers, it was not common language for new converts. Many of those we would classify as new converts were classifying themselves as "rededications." Since they were not familiar with the concept "recent conversion experience" they were listening for other terms they could understand. Respondents tended to choose the phrase "rededicating your life to Christ" to describe their experience because it sounded so close to the concept of dedicating their life to Christ. "Dedicating my life to Christ" was terminology they did use to describe their personal experience. As a result of the pretest of more than 120 recently baptized adults, the question was refined. Few respondents seemed to have trouble with the wording "accepting Christ for the first time" used in the final survey.

The results are quite surprising. Only 2 of 5 adults baptized in SBC churches in the 1992-1993 time period identified a first-time commitment to Jesus as the primary reason for being baptized. This means that of the approximately 150,000 adults baptized, only 60,000 represented conversions of the lost to Christ.

An almost equal number were baptized as a result of a rededication of their life to Christ. Some of this high response results from an overlap between the two categories “rededicating your life to Christ” and “the requirement of moving your membership from a non-Southern Baptist church,” i.e., these two categories are not mutually exclusive. Many of the individuals who actually transferred from another denomination viewed their decision to be baptized as more a result of their personal rededication than just a membership transfer—even though they would have likely been required to be baptized to join a Southern Baptist church. They chose to emphasize the spiritual dimension of their experience and view it as a rededication.

Almost 1 of 8 recently baptized adults did say their baptism was primarily the result of a requirement for moving their membership from a non-Southern Baptist church. A follow-up question was asked to determine the source of their prior membership. Of these, more than one-third (34.7%) moved from a Methodist church and 13.9 percent came from a Presbyterian church. Interestingly, the denomination with the third highest percent (8.4) of those baptized primarily as a requirement of moving membership came from a Catholic church. The remaining 43 percent of those who were baptized as a requirement of church membership came from a wide variety of denominational and religious groups.

One in 20 persons could not identify themselves in one of the three primary classifications of recent baptisms. They chose the response category for baptism “something other than the reasons mentioned above.” There appears to be some overlap with this response and the other choices listed. However, these persons viewed something significantly different in their experience that discriminated their experience from the others. One type of “other” response was from those that had a conversion experience that was not recent but who had only recently made the decision to be baptized. Some choosing this category did not clearly state a reason for being baptized—they just did it. Still others indicated reasons that did not seem to have religious motivations. (A complete listing of these other responses is included in appendix G.)

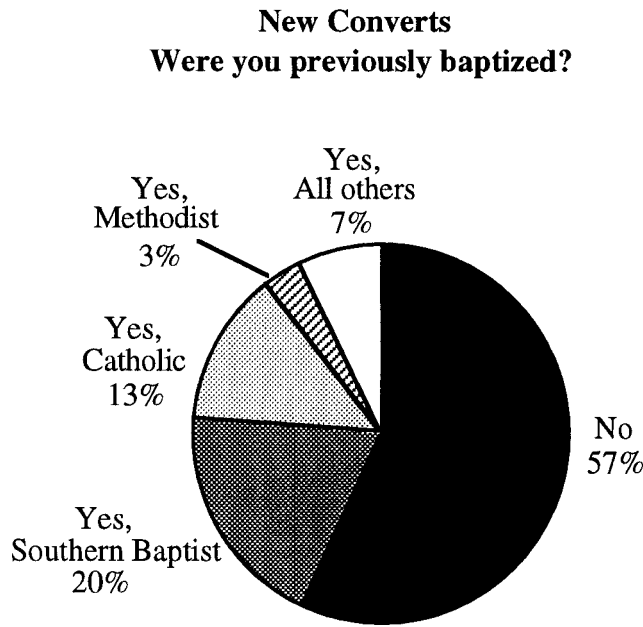
#### *IMPLICATIONS*

- Southern Baptists may not be reaching as many lost adults as the raw baptism figures indicate.
- Rededication is a major motivation for persons being baptized. This raises questions about why they feel a need to be rebaptized.
- There is an apparent lack of clarity, or perhaps consensus, about the meaning of baptism. These data suggest some serious questions: Are pastors assuming responsibility for clarifying the response of persons to the invitation call? Is the pressure to baptize so great that pastors are encouraging persons to be rebaptized rather than counseling them on assurance of salvation? Is the true meaning of baptism being taught in our churches?

**RELATIONSHIP OF CONVERSION AND REDEDICATION WITH REBAPTISM**

For recently baptized adults who reported making first-time commitments to Christ, 42.4 percent had been baptized previously. Of these rebaptized, over half (54.5%) were baptized in a church affiliated with a denomination that practices believer's baptism by immersion; most of these (47.0% out of the 54.5%) were previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church. Almost one-third of previously baptized new converts (30.9%) indicated they had been baptized in a Catholic church.

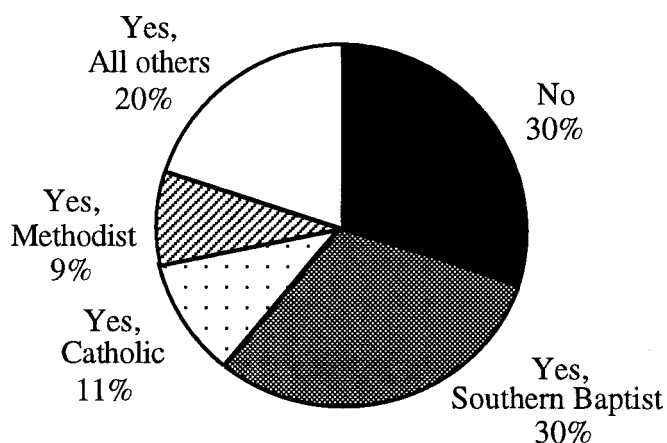
The following chart shows the distribution of all new converts by whether or not they were previously baptized and the religious group in which their previous baptism took place is given. Note that 1 of 5 new converts were previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church.



Of those rededicating their life through baptism, 69.6 percent had been baptized before. Interestingly, more than half (56.0%) of these rededicating, rebaptized adults were baptized previously in a denomination that practices believer's baptism by immersion. Fifteen percent were previously baptized in a Catholic church; 12.4 percent had been baptized in a Methodist church. Not surprisingly, the largest group (43.6%) was previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church.

The following chart shows the distribution of all persons rededicating their life in the study by the incidence of previous baptism and source of previous baptism. Note that just less than a third of persons rededicating their life were previously baptized in a Southern Baptist church.

**Rededications**  
**Were you previously baptized?**



The fact that 30.4 percent of those who indicated their baptism was a result of rededication and who had never been baptized before, suggests a long delay between their initial acceptance of Christ and their subsequent baptism or transfer from a denomination where baptism was not required. In either case, these persons did not see themselves as being baptized due to a recent conversion.

It is interesting to examine how the three major groups of previously baptized adults—Southern Baptists, Catholics, and Methodists—classify the motivation for their recent baptism experience. Southern Baptists are more likely to classify themselves as rededicating their lives compared to a first time accepting of Christ as their personal Savior, 56.3 percent versus 37.1 percent. The most frequent response for Catholics is a first time conversion experience, 47.4 percent. However, more Catholics (52.1%) view their recent baptism as a result of something other than conversion. Methodists tend not to see their recent baptisms as the result of a recent conversion—only 9.2 percent so indicated. Methodists viewed their recent baptism experience as primarily rededicating their lives or as moving their membership. The following table classifies those previously baptized in Southern Baptist, Methodist and Catholic churches by the reason they were recently baptized in Southern Baptist churches.

	<u>Conversion</u>	<u>Rededication</u>	<u>Transfer</u>
Baptist	37.1%	56.3%	1.5%
Methodist	9.2	40.9	45.3
Catholic	47.4	38.2	11.0

## INFLUENCES LEADING TO CONVERSION

The study focused on eliciting the influences that led adults to make first-time commitments to Jesus Christ. While conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, the study asked about the external influences in a person's decision to follow Christ. Adults who have been recently converted to Christ ought to be able to provide first-hand information about what was important in their journey to faith. Respondents were first asked about the most important influence in their decision to become a Christian. Assuming that conversion is the result of a more complex interaction of influences, additional questions were asked concerning the importance of a variety of factors thought to have potential impact in the conversion experience. Together these two approaches give a fuller picture of the impact of influences in the experiences of recently converted adults.

### PRIMARY INFLUENCE FOR CONVERSION

The following open-ended question was asked only of those who indicated that their baptism was the result of accepting Christ as their personal Savior for the first time.

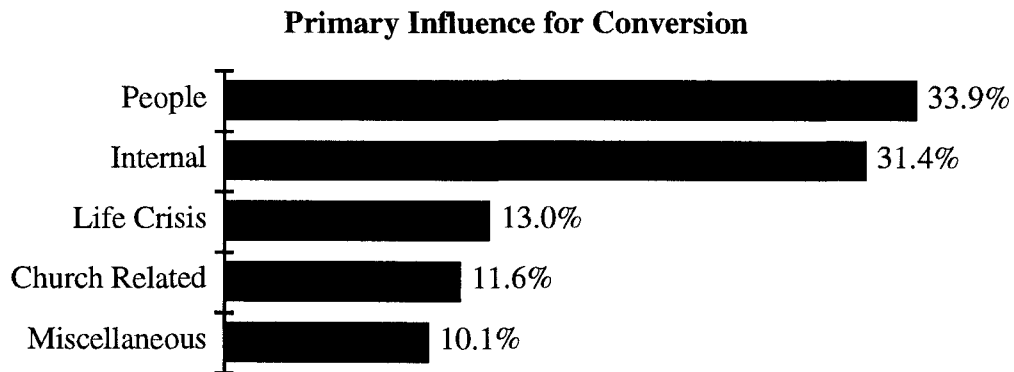
*Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the one, single most important influence that led you to accept Christ as your Savior?*

Telephone interviewers recorded responses as closely as possible to verbatim responses. They were further instructed to probe and clarify responses where necessary. As might be expected, a myriad of influences was given. After all interviewing was completed, researchers at the Home Mission Board read all responses and developed a list of 23 categories. Then each response was classified into one of the 23 categories. For example, responses were placed into categories such as: fear of hell; the pastor's preaching; the influence of a spouse; the personal witness of friends; life crisis, etc. (Appendix H contains the entire list of categories and the relative frequency of response to each.)

After examining the frequency of response for these categories, they were further consolidated into five larger categories.

- People influence (family, friends, other relationships)
- Internal factors
- Life crisis/problems
- Church-related religious activities (preaching, teaching, revival, Bible study, etc.)
- Miscellaneous/don't know

The figure below reports the percentage responses based on these consolidated groupings.



**People influence**—This category includes all those responses where particular people or groups of people were identified as the most important influence in a decision to become a Christian. Some of the people referenced are a spouse, a parent, and other family members; others referenced a friend, a co-worker, or a pastor. People provided a personal witness, an example of Christian lifestyle, or friendship. One-third (33.9%) of those who were baptized as a result of a first-time commitment to Christ identified particular people as the single most important influence in their decision (other than the work of the Holy Spirit). The comments below typify the responses from those who were influenced to come to faith by a person with whom they had some kind of relationship.

- My husband is a Christian and I saw the goodness that came to him as a result of having Christ in his life.
- My parents taught me the Lord was the way to go.
- The strength of my sister—when she was dying.
- The pastor came and talked to me about Christ.
- Influence of a godly friend by his lifestyle and his witness.
- A friend asked me to attend church—that’s when I gave my life to Christ.
- My friends talked to me about Christ.
- A customer of mine asked me if I was a Christian and that was the moment I decided.
- My co-worker told me about the peace that Christ had brought into his life, and I wanted the same peace for myself.

**Internal factors**—Other than the work of the Holy Spirit these influences seemed to have no external source. These persons were motivated primarily by an inner desire, a feeling, a realization. The desires ranged from wanting to go to heaven, to wanting to have a positive influence on children and family. Many persons seemed to have difficulty articulating anything other than an internal work of the Holy Spirit. Others said, “That’s just the way I felt.” Representative examples of these types of responses are given below.

- I just knew it was something I had to do; it was right for me.
- I realized I needed Him in my life.
- Something within me that told me that I needed to give my life to Christ.
- It just felt right.
- I knew it was time. It’s hard to explain.
- I influenced myself to accept Christ as my Savior because I don’t want to burn in hell.
- I needed a change, I needed something new in my life and God was it.
- I realized that in order to get my family in the right direction, I needed God.
- We were expecting our first child. I needed to get on the right path. I needed to pray for direction in fatherhood.

**Life crisis/problems**—Thirteen percent of adults who were recently baptized primarily as a result of making a first-time commitment to Christ named a life crisis or problem as the most important influence in their decision. The comments below show the variety and intensity of the problems which turned people to Christ.

- I was an alcoholic and drug addict, so I turned to Jesus. I knew he’d help me.
- I went through a trauma (divorce) in my life.
- My life had become unmanageable. I had no control over my life.
- My daughter’s sickness (cancer) led me to the Lord.
- He brought me out of sickness (heart condition). I know it was him cause couldn’t no-one else do it. Doctors couldn’t cure me.

- I was falling apart. I was pregnant and fixing to get a divorce. I just needed the Lord so much.
- I hit rock bottom, or so I thought. I couldn't do it—pull out of it—by myself.

***Church-related religious activities***—This category of influences includes a wide variety of responses, all related to some church event, program, activity, or some religious practice. For example, preaching, teaching, Bible reading and study, Sunday School, and revivals were grouped in this category. The comments below give verbatim examples of these kind of influences.

- A sermon that I heard. It made me take a close look at what Christ does for me. I saw that he loves us and he went through a lot for us.
- The preacher really reached me. His preaching really saved me because I was at my wit's end. He had his heart in his preaching and it reached into me.
- I guess the sermon that the preacher had given on doubting your salvation. I doubted mine and that was it.
- I attended a Bible study which made me realize I needed to accept Christ.
- The evangelistic, revival preacher; his message was right out of the Bible—he really got to me.

***Miscellaneous/don't know***—There were a variety of other responses that were difficult to categorize. In addition, a number of persons simply could not name the single most important influence on their decision to accept Christ. While there are likely external persons or events that helped lead them to Christ, these do not stand out as important or memorable enough to be identified as the primary influence. It is difficult for many to verbalize clearly such an intense, personal, spiritual experience. In the interpretation of the survey results, the particular answers shown below should not be overemphasized or highlighted unduly. They are included, however, to show the diversity of influences that seem to lead persons to Christ.

- Billy Graham show hit a nerve that I was doing wrong.
- My mother, sister, and me went to a play at a church. One scene showed a mother and child. The child died and went to heaven, but at the end of time the mother couldn't join him because she hadn't been saved. So that applied to me.
- I was listening to the radio and a song came on and the words were, “you are lost,” and I knew I was.
- No direction in my life. Saw bulletins in front of churches and everything seemed to pertain to me.

#### **ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS**

The open-ended question above sought to elicit the most important influence in a person making a decision for Christ. Responses to the question were in no way prompted and probably do represent the most important influence in the lives of recently converted adults. Responses reveal a wide variety of primary factors that influence people to become Christian. The largest number of the external factors identified can be classified under the category of “people influence.” Thus, people are most influential in bringing other people to Christ. These persons were often family members—the spouse being the most important.

The influence of the pastor is divided between two major categories above. Influence related to a pastor's teaching or preaching are combined with church-related religious activities. Responses that reference a relationship with a pastor, his personal witnessing, or his example as a Christian are listed under the people influence category. When the total influence of the pastor is considered, 1 of 8 (12.2%) new converts indicated that the pastor

was the primary influence in their decision to become a Christian—his teaching and preaching were most often cited. This information affirms the role of the pastor in bringing people to Christ.

## CONTRIBUTING INFLUENCES IN CONVERSION

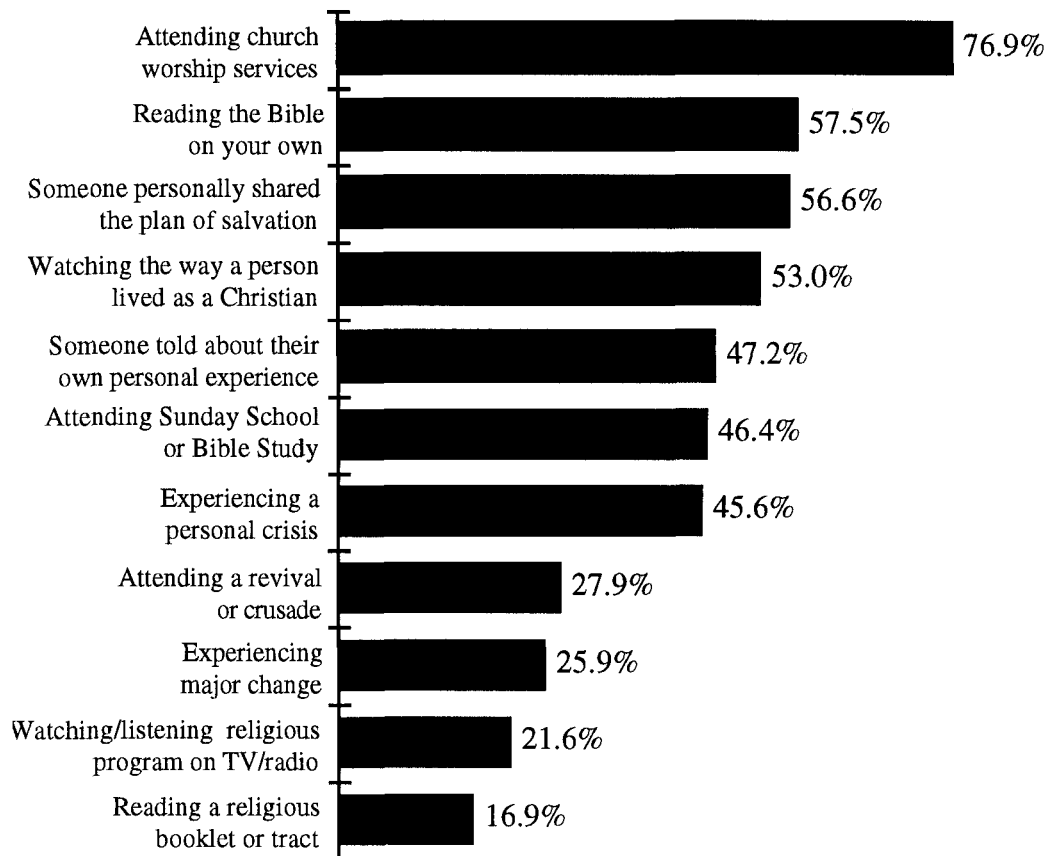
Realizing that the influences in a person making a decision for Christ are probably many and varied, additional questions were developed to probe other factors believed to be important in conversion. The order of presentation of these questions to different respondents was rotated to eliminate order bias. The series of questions was introduced by the interviewer telling the respondent that there may have been other influences in the respondent's decision to accept Christ as Savior. The respondent was then told that a list of 11 items would be read and was asked to indicate whether a particular item had been a major, minor, or no influence in his or her decision to become a Christian. Follow-up questions were asked depending on the response to certain items.

Response to these items may be inflated. Part of this appears to be reluctance on the part of respondents to say that something was unimportant in their experience, such as reading the Bible. To say that reading the Bible was not an influence in their becoming a Christian seemed to be equated with saying the Bible was not important. Also, respondents going through the series of questions appeared to lose sight of the fact that they were being asked to indicate whether an item was influential in their decision to accept Christ and instead answered whether or not the item was important to them now in their Christian life—they are identifying with symbols of their experience. In all likelihood, the importance placed on these items is biased upward, that is, the contributing importance of these contributing factors may be overstated.

“Minor influence” appeared to be a very weak response; therefore not much weight has been placed on its importance. As above, respondents seemed to be reluctant to say that certain items such as reading the Bible were not important. Thus, the value of the “minor” response was that it gave respondents an opportunity to respond in a manner other than an item had no influence in their decision to accept Christ. (Appendix I contains the detailed “major,” “minor,” and “none” response for each of the 11 items.)

The following graphic lists the 11 potential influences along with percentages of respondents that indicated each was a major contributing influence in their accepting Christ as Savior.

### Contributing Influences for Conversion



Attending church worship was clearly the most important of the contributing influences indicated by new converts. This seems to be consistent with the importance placed on the corporate worship service in Southern Baptist churches and the preaching event as the centerpiece of the service. Not only did 76.9 percent of respondents see attending church worship services as a major influence, 46.4 percent cited attending Sunday School or Bible study as major, and 27.9 percent felt that attending a revival or crusade was a major influence. All of these are church-related events, programs, or activities, underscoring the effect that a church environment has on the unsaved. Of those people who are new converts, 83.6 percent indicated that at least one of these three items was a major influence in their becoming a Christian. The results lend support to the importance of bringing people into the church as a strategy for effectively evangelizing them.

The second most-cited contributing influence was “reading the Bible on your own.” Over half (57.5%) of new converts said it was a major influence. If this question is combined with attending Sunday School, then 71.5 percent of new respondents indicate that Bible study either personally or corporately is a factor in their conversion. Again, this should not be much of a surprise given the importance placed upon the Bible in Baptist churches.

More than half (56.6%) the adults who were baptized as a result of a first-time commitment to Christ reported that someone personally sharing the plan of salvation was important. Almost half (47.2%) also said that someone who told them about their own personal experience with God was a major influence in their decision to accept Christ. Also, more than half (53.0%) indicated that watching the way a person lived as a Christian was a major influence. These influences could all be classified as personal witnessing, whether direct or indirect. Combined, 81.3 percent of new converts cited at least one of these personal witnessing items as a major influence in becoming a Christian.

Almost half (45.6%) reported that experiencing a personal crisis was a major influence in their coming to Christ. When asked to share what that personal crisis was, the largest group (25.6%) said it was a death. Divorce, illness, drug/alcohol problems, and job problems were the other crises cited most often. A significant percentage (16.8%) were not willing to tell the interviewer the nature of the crisis.

A fourth of new converts (25.9%) indicated that experiencing a major change was a significant influence in receiving Christ. The responses given most often were the birth of a child, getting married, a new job, and moving to a new residence.

Both of the previous items represent times in a person's life when they were open to the presence of God. Combined, 56.9 percent of new converts responded that either a personal crisis or a major change in their life was an important contributing influence in accepting Christ. Those seeking to minister should be particularly aware of times of major change or crisis in the lives of people. It appears that people may be more open to accepting Christ at times of major change or crisis in their personal lives.

About 1 in 4 new converts (27.9%) indicated that attending revivals or crusades was a contributing factor in their experience.

One in 5 new converts said that either watching a religious television program or listening to a religious radio program was a major contributing influence. Of these, a fourth couldn't name a specific program or program personality. The most frequently cited program or personality was the *700 Club*, followed closely by *Charles Stanley*, *Billy Graham*, *Fred Lowry*, and *Trinity Broadcasting (TBN)*. Each of these were named by less than 1 in 10 of the few people who said radio or TV was an influence.

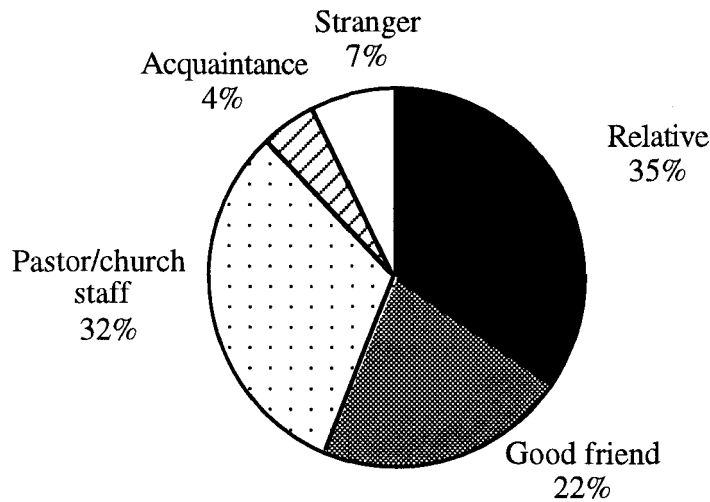
Only 16.9 percent of adults baptized as a result of a first-time commitment to Christ said that reading a religious booklet or tract was a major influence. This was the least influential of the items listed. This proved to be weaker still, given that more than half of them could not name the booklet or tract that was a major influence in their conversion. The most frequently cited publication was *Our Daily Bread*, a non-Southern Baptist publication—only five people cited this publication. The only other specific publication mentioned more than once was *Twice Pardoned*.

#### **PERSONAL WITNESSING FOLLOW-UP**

For the 56.6 percent who indicated that someone personally sharing the plan of salvation was a major influence, about one-third (34.6%) said this person was a relative; another third (31.9%) said the person was a pastor or church staff member; and 1 of 5 (21.5%) said he or she was a good friend. If the person sharing the plan of salvation was a relative, 40.8 percent said this relative was a spouse; 19.7 percent identified their mother, while 13.2 percent identified a brother or sister. There were recorded instances of strangers or acquaintances (but not considered friends) sharing the gospel and being a major influence, but the percentages are relatively low—7.5 percent and 4.2 percent respectively. While the incidence of a witness of a stranger or acquaintance seldom surfaces as having a major

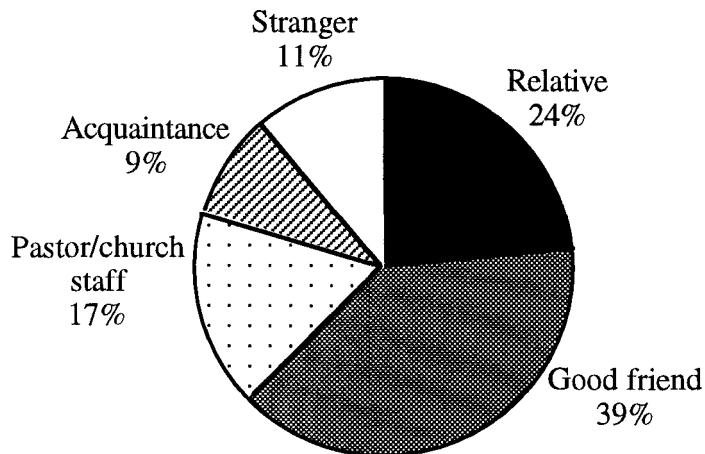
impact, the research does not conclusively determine whether this factor does not surface because people are unwilling to value a stranger's witness, or whether this type of witness rarely occurs. Whatever the reason, new converts report overwhelmingly that the witness of someone with whom they would naturally have a relationship was important in their coming to know Christ as personal Savior. A pastor or someone on a church staff may be able to witness by virtue of their role or position.

**Who shared with you the plan of salvation?**

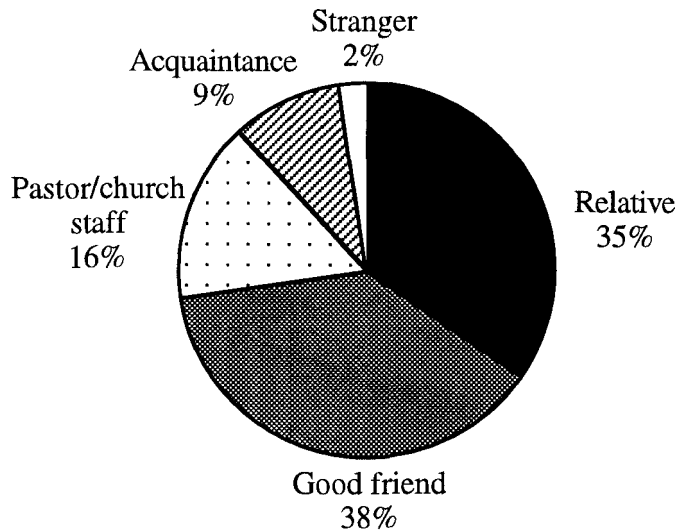


For the other two “witnessing” influences (watching the way a person lived, and telling about their own personal experience with God), the three predominant groups of persons doing the witnessing are friends, relatives, and pastor, in that order. If the person is a relative, they are most likely to be a spouse, parent, or sibling. New converts were more responsive to strangers and acquaintances sharing their own personal experiences with God than they were to them sharing the plan of salvation. One in 5 new converts (20.2%) who said that having someone share their own personal experience with God was an important contributing influence in their becoming a Christian indicated that the person was a stranger or acquaintance.

**Who shared with you their own personal experience with God?**



**Who did you watch in the way they lived their life  
as a Christian?**



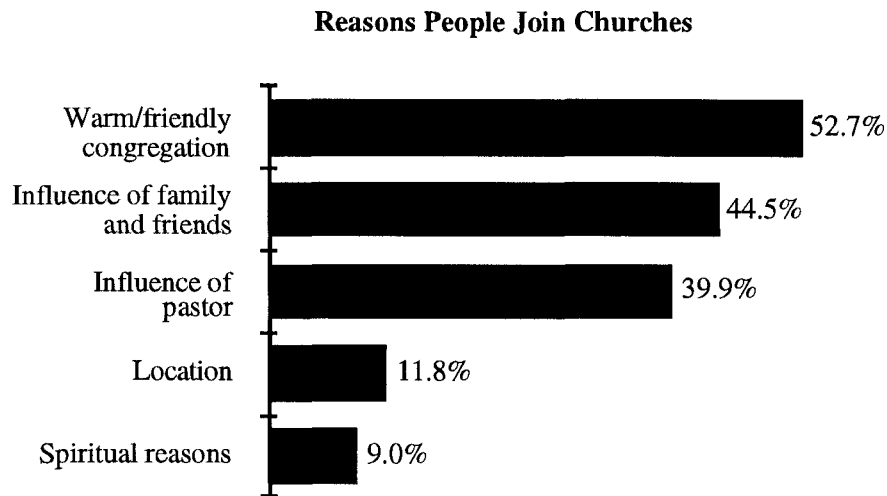
**IMPLICATIONS**

- People are led to accept Christ for a wide variety of reasons, so there is not just one evangelistic method that will be effective with all people.
- Relationships are important in people coming to Christ. In particular, family members (especially the spouse), friends, and the pastor tend to be most influential. Christians should be encouraged to share their faith—especially with those whom they already have established relationships.
- Getting people to church is important; church involvement exposes the unsaved to a wide variety of positive influences for Christ.
- Encourage Christians to be sensitive to and respond to people in times of crisis or major change in their lives. Ministry-based evangelism can provide an effective witness during times of life crisis. These appear to be teachable moments when people need help, comfort, or reassurance.
- Encourage the lost to become involved in the total church experience. While the church should always look for those opportunities to minister outside the walls of the church building, inviting the lost to come in and participate should not be minimized. There is substantial evidence that the environment of worship, Bible study, fellowship, and activities that take place inside church buildings provides a significant influence in people accepting Christ.

## REASONS FOR JOINING A CHURCH

One of questions in the survey pertained to the issue of church growth. All respondents were asked why they decided to join the particular church in which they were recently baptized. This was an open-ended question. Telephone interviewers were instructed to record responses as close to verbatim as possible. They were allowed to probe and clarify responses where necessary. After interviewing was completed, researchers at the Home Mission Board read all responses and developed a list of 27 response categories. Then researchers assigned and recorded up to 4 of these categories for each respondent. (The complete list of 27 categories, the frequency of response, and examples for each are included in appendix J.)

After the categorical responses were tabulated, some of the 27 categories were consolidated into the major groupings listed below:



***Friendliness, warmth, and acceptance of the congregation***—The single most important reason for selecting a particular church was the warmth and friendliness of the congregation. More than half (52.7%) of all recently baptized adults said the warmth, friendliness, fellowship, feeling of being loved and accepted by people in the congregation was an important factor in their decision to join a particular church. Some examples of specific responses concerning the congregation are listed below:

- I joined this church because of its warmth. The members welcomed me with open arms and I felt right at home.
- People are friendly. I felt right at home. They cared. They greeted you personally.
- Because the people totally accepted me for what I was. Strong fellowship.
- There's a great love there. The people aren't uppity. They are very friendly. You can wear whatever you want and the church is full of laughter.
- Well, it was the atmosphere. They made us feel at home. You see, I'm in an interracial marriage and I can pretty much tell how people feel, but they accepted us right off.
- I felt the Spirit of Christ in everyone at the church.

***Family and friends***—Family or friends were identified as deciding factors by 44.5 percent of respondents. These responses included those who were invited to church by friends or had friends in the church. They may have had family in the church or been highly influenced by a spouse or their children. About 1 of 10 said that their children were

an important factor in choosing a church: either the children liked the church or the church offered children and youth programs and activities that were attractive. Specific illustrations are as follows:

- A friend I highly respected suggested we attend.
- Due to a marriage.
- It was my husband's church and his family went there. I hate to admit it but that is the only reason I joined.
- My mother wanted me to join.
- Our son had joined the church and wanted us to come and visit.
- I wanted to raise my child there.
- My oldest son started going to the youth group and we visited the church.
- To get my kids in the church. It's my duty as a parent.
- They had a larger and better youth program than any other church around. They go on retreats, they meet every Wednesday. I'm not sure of exactly what they do, but my son really enjoys it.

**Pastor**—The influence of the pastor surfaced as the third most important factor for choosing a church. Two of 5 respondents (39.9%) cited their pastor. The pastor's influence was varied, from his preaching and teaching, to his personal relationships, to his personal witness. Following are example responses:

- I like the sermons. His sermons applied to real-life situations.
- I understood the preacher's sermons.
- I liked our minister. I liked his message because it's not hell fire and brimstone.
- The preacher preaches the way it ought to be preached—no matter if you like it or not.
- Preacher preaches straight from the Bible and does not interject his own opinion.
- Our pastor is very concerned with his members' welfare.
- The minister is one of the most loving, caring ministers we've come across. He's got a great sense of humor.
- My husband and I joined the church because of the pastor. We love him. He walks the talk of God; he's humble and honest. Our pastor is actively seeking God and growing in His spirit.
- Because of my previous problems I went to the church for someone to talk to. The pastor was very supportive and listened to me.

These are the major influences for choosing a church—friendly congregation, family and friends, and the pastor. A combined 86.9 percent of respondents listed at least one of these factors as a reason they chose their particular church.

A number of other factors were cited less frequently. It is likely that there are a number of conditions that, at minimum, must be met for most persons in choosing a church. For example, the location of a church is certainly a factor in that few people would travel 100 miles to go to a church if they have other options. In this study, location—the fourth most frequently cited reason for choosing a particular church—was given by 11.8 percent of respondents. Most people have enough options for choosing a church within a reasonable proximity so that location ceases to be a discriminating factor. There may be minimum basic requirements that must be met, but, once met, fail to be factors.

About 1 in 10 adults stated a spiritual reason for joining, such as an inner feeling of the Holy Spirit, a Christ-like atmosphere, or the sense that this church was where God wanted them. Like location, it seems that a person's perception of the spiritual nature of the church has to meet some minimum level, but once met, it fails to be a distinguishing factor.

Surprisingly only 1.9 percent said they joined because the church was Baptist. Also, only 4.3 percent said that a reason they joined was that the church was Bible-centered, doctrinally sound, or consistent with their beliefs. It might be argued that these are minimum basic requirements for joining a Southern Baptist church. However, these issues may be more important for those theologically trained than for laypersons.

#### *IMPLICATIONS*

- The friendliness, warmth, and acceptance of a congregation are key to drawing persons into the fellowship and, ultimately, the membership of the church.
- Relationships are crucial. The invitation and the presence of family and friends, in particular, are important.
- The pastor plays a key role in attracting persons into a congregation. Preaching, teaching, and interpersonal skills are viewed as important by potential members.

## RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

A question was asked of all respondents concerning prior religious participation. Five statements were offered which outlined participation in descending order from “continuously active in church since you were a child” to “you had no previous church experience.”

*Please tell me which one best describes your religious participation prior to your recent baptism.*

Continuously active in church since you were a child.	13.8%
Active, on and off, for most of your life.	44.2
Active in church as a child but not as an adult	21.6
Haven't really been very active in church	13.8
No previous church experience	3.7
None of the above/Refused	2.8

The majority of adults participated in some form of organized religion prior to baptism in a Southern Baptist church. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported having had some church experience as an adult, although more (44.2%) had only sporadic (on and off) activity throughout their life. When religious participation as a child is considered, the percent of recently baptized adults with prior religious experience is much higher; 4 of 5 (79.7%) respondents reported having had some previous church experience. This is consistent with national studies that show most adults, both church and unchurched, have had religious training as a child.<sup>6</sup>

While only 17.5 percent of all respondents said they have had little or no prior church experience, recent converts are more likely to have had little or no participation in church than the other classifications of recently baptized adults. Specifically, 28.6 percent of new converts had little or no previous experience compared to 12.2 percent of those rededicating their lives and 4.0 percent of adults who transferred their church membership. This 28.6 percent of new converts translates into 11.6 percent of all baptized adults. Thus, 1 of 9 baptized adults is converted from a non-church background.

While most persons interviewed had some form of prior religious activity, their participation could at best be described as marginal. Only 13.8 percent of respondents said they had been continuously active in church since they were children. An overwhelming majority (83.4%) either had sporadic participation, had only participated as a child, or had little or no prior church participation.

### IMPLICATIONS

- Most recently baptized adults have some prior church experience even though the majority of them have not been very active in church—at least as an adult. That previous contact with a church is probably very important in getting them back to church. In a long-term kingdom strategy of evangelism, it is vital for SBC churches to attract, involve, and reach children and youth in church activities, even if those youth wander away.
- Southern Baptists are reaching people who have no prior church experience; however, it appears that churches are reaching the unchurched in about the same proportion as they exist in the U.S. population.

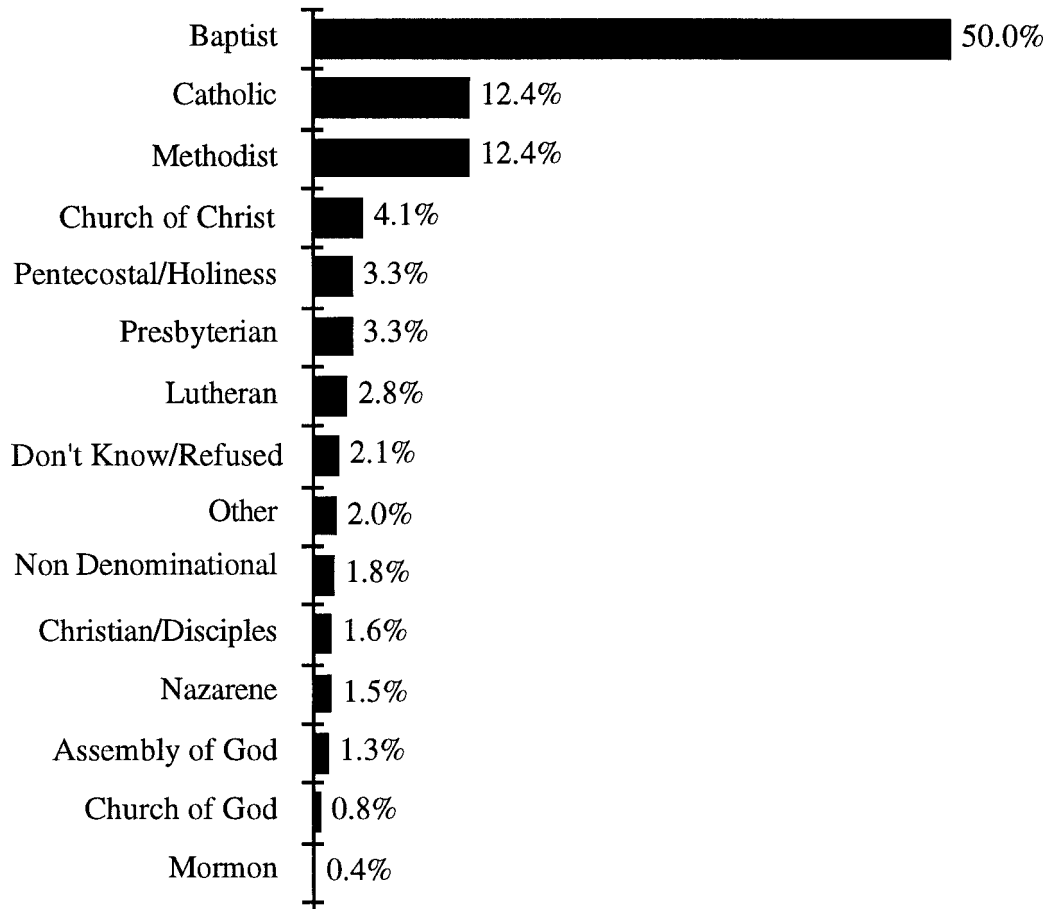
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<sup>6</sup> *The Unchurched American—10 Years Later*, Princeton Religion Research Center.

## PRIOR DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

For persons indicating they had been “continuously active in church since you were a child,” “active, on and off, for most of your life,” or “active in church as a child but not as an adult,” the following question was asked concerning prior religious affiliation.

### *In what religious group where you then most active?*



Of the respondents who had prior religious activity, half had been most active in Baptist churches—most of them in Southern Baptist churches. One-fourth had been most active as Methodists or as Catholics. The remaining fourth come from a variety of denominations and religious groups. If all those coming from non-Baptist religious groups are added to those with little or no prior religious participation in church, then 57.4 percent of all people baptized come from non-Baptist backgrounds.

The following table classifies people from the three major religious backgrounds by the reason they were recently baptized in Southern Baptist churches.<sup>7</sup>

	<u>Conversion</u>	<u>Rededication</u>	<u>Transfer</u>
Baptist	41.4%	50.3%	3.0%
Methodist	23.1	29.6	42.5
Catholic	47.3	37.2	12.4

Recently baptized people from a Baptist background are a little more likely to indicate they were baptized as a result of a rededication experience. It is not surprising that people from a Baptist background seldom report baptism as a result of transfer of church membership.

People coming from a Methodist background are most likely to view their baptism as a transfer and then a rededication after that. Most Methodists would be required to be baptized to join a Baptist church, so it is interesting to see that some Methodists (29.6%) tend to spiritualize the experience and view their baptism in a Baptist church as a rededication. Less than 1 of 4 Methodists are baptized in a Southern Baptist church as a result of recent conversion.

Catholics are most likely of these three groups to view their recent baptism as a conversion experience—almost half view it in this manner. In fact Catholic background people are the most likely of any of the religious backgrounds to indicate their recent baptism was the result of a recent conversion. Still, less than half of Catholics consider themselves to have recently accepted Christ as their personal Savior. The implication is that over half view their Christian experience as valid even before joining a Baptist church.

People coming from Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Church of God, non denominational, and Nazarene backgrounds rarely described their recent baptism experience as a first-time conversion.

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<sup>7</sup> This table is similar to the one in the section “Relationship of Conversion and Rededication with Rebaptism.” However, this section deals with religious background while the previous dealt with the religious group in which a respondent was first baptized. There is considerable overlap in these two tables since generally 70 percent or more of respondents were previously baptized in the same religious group that they report for their primary background.

## PATTERNS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

A series of questions was asked to ascertain the frequency of church attendance, both recently and one year prior to baptism. A follow-up question was asked where respondents are not attending regularly, even though they had been recently baptized, to find out why they are not attending frequently. Another follow-up question was addressed to those whose church attendance increased significantly since one year prior to baptism. The intent of this question was to determine if something happened in their life that influenced them to become more active in the church—it was speculated that something might have happened to cause them to start attending church which in turn led to the baptism.

The set of questions began with the following question:

*Approximately how often do you now attend church?*

Once a week or more	75.2%
1-3 times a month	17.5
Less than once a month	3.6
Do Not Attend	3.7

Only 7.3 percent of recently baptized adults were not frequent attenders (less than once a month). In the follow-up question, the most common response was they did not attend more regularly because of work schedule—1 of 3 (33.6%) responded in this fashion. The next most frequent response (17.2%) was that there is some conflict at the church either with members or the pastor that results in the respondent not feeling comfortable at the church. The next two most frequent responses were personal problems (13.3%) and sickness in either the respondent or their family (12.5%).<sup>8</sup>

Of those recently baptized adults who do attend church at least once a month now, it was found that 12 months prior to their recent baptism 32.5 percent attended church less than once a month or not at all. Over half (55.2%) of the respondents who were not active in church one year prior to their baptism reported their baptism was the result of recent conversion. Another 39.1 percent were persons whose baptism was the result of rededication.

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<sup>8</sup> This was an open-ended question and up to four responses were coded for categories developed by Darden Research Corporation.

The following open-ended question was asked of these people who significantly increased their frequency of attendance.

*As specifically as you can, tell me what influenced you to become more active in church?*

The open-ended responses were categorized and coded by the Darden Research Corporation. Up to four influences were recorded for each eligible respondent. The following are influences or reasons given by 5.0 percent or more of respondents.

The need to be close to God	26.5%
Enjoy/like the church/pastor/members	17.7
Family members encouraged me	13.9
Results of personal crisis	10.5
Wanted to serve God/the church/other people	9.7
Pastor encouraged me	7.4
Friends/church members encouraged me	7.3
Set example for children/children to be saved, etc.	6.7
Wanted to be a better person	6.4
Other church Activities: Sunday School, Boy Scouts	5.7
Gave self to God/wanted to be saved	5.3

When responses such as “the need to be close to God,” “wanted to serve God, etc.,” “gave self to God, etc.,” and some other less frequently specified spiritual type answers are combined, it seems that a spiritual reason for getting more active in church was reported by 47.8 percent of respondents. When the encouragement of family, friends, and pastor are combined, the encouragement of people was cited by 26.4 percent as an influence in increasing church attendance.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

- It appears that the unchurched become church because doing so meets a spiritual need, because family, friends, or a pastor encourages them to become church, or they enjoy the relationships with persons in the congregation. These last two reasons point out the importance of relationships. The church needs to communicate to the unchurched that the church is a place where they can find spiritual meaning and fulfillment and meaningful, caring relationships.
- Because few of the recent converts state they returned to church because of a conversion experience, it seems that most people first become involved in church, which in turn leads to a decision for Christ. The evidence seems to support involving people in church as an effective evangelism strategy.

#### **WITNESS TRAINING**

One of the questions asked of all participants was “Since you have been baptized, have you received training in how to witness to others?” About half (48.4 %) said “yes.” Half (50.5%) said “no” and 1.0 percent said they didn’t know. No attempt was made to find out what kind of witness training took place.

## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The following observations have been drawn from the demographic questions asked of respondents:

- Persons responding to the survey ranged from 18 to 83 years old—the median age is 33.
- Females comprised 53.2 percent of respondents, males accounted for 46.8 percent.
- Most of the respondents, 91.2 percent, classified themselves as “white, but not Hispanic.”<sup>9</sup> The other major categories used were black, Hispanic and Asian—the percentages for these groups were 2.7, 2.6, and 1.8 respectively. Respondents were less racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. population as a whole. However, the racial/ethnic grouping of respondents seems reasonably representative of Southern Baptists.
- The vast majority of respondents, 86.2 percent, had at least a high school degree. This is higher than the population as a whole. However, the percentage of respondents with a college degree, or an advanced degree, is about the same as the population as whole. Thus, most respondents tend to have just high school degrees, have technical education, or have attended but have not graduated from college.
- 58.9 percent have someone age 18 or younger living in the household.
- 65.6 percent of respondents grew up primarily in the South Region of the United States, while 34.4 percent grew up outside the South.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study was initiated out of a concern for effective evangelism. It represents a major research effort in studying adults that have been recently baptized. In particular it examines the influences leading to a conversion experience. It is hoped that a better understanding of these influences will help inform a comprehensive strategy for reaching the lost.

The reader is cautioned in generalizing the results of this study to the larger unchurched and lost population. The experiences reported here are those of adults recently baptized in Southern Baptist churches. The respondents in this study are possibly not representative of all the lost population. Southern Baptists employ worship styles, outreach methods, evangelistic methods, and general ways of doing church that are effective and appealing to some people—what is uncertain is how effective and appealing they are to other groups of people. Even though caution must be exercised, the study does provide empirical data for development of evangelism strategy.

Perhaps the most significant finding was that only 40 percent of Southern Baptist adult baptisms were the result of a recent conversion experience. This would challenge any assumption that most adults baptized are recent converts. Based on the research, the majority of baptisms do not represent recent conversions. Thus, baptisms are not an accurate count of conversions. This brings into question the traditional use of baptism counts to measure the effectiveness of evangelism among Southern Baptists. Unless there is a large number of people who are making professions of faith but are not joining

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<sup>9</sup> Many of the respondents did not understand the racial/ethnic category “white but not Hispanic.” During the survey, interviewers truncated the response to “white.”

<sup>10</sup> The South is the South Region of the United States as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. It includes the District of Columbia and the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Southern Baptist churches, then Southern Baptists are not reaching as many lost adults as the baptism figures indicate.

Since this research is the first of its kind, it is not possible to speak of trends in the Convention. The study only surveyed baptized adults in a particular year. They may not speak for those who were baptized in previous years, nor be representative of influences that are shaping the faith understandings of others not yet baptized. Perhaps a repeat of this type of research periodically could assist in analyzing trends. It is hoped that this study will encourage Southern Baptist churches to build upon their strengths and be challenged to seek new possibilities for winning the lost for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

## **Appendix A**



NATIONWIDE

1 (area code) Telephone Number (Tone) 111

(1-4)

Church Code Number      (5-11)

**BAPTISM STUDY**

Good (morning / afternoon / evening), I'm \_\_\_\_\_ with Darden Research Corporation, and I'm calling for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. May I please speak to [PERSON LISTED BELOW - YOU MUST INTERVIEW THIS PERSON].

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Respondent: Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_ Respondent ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

IF RESPONDENT NOT AVAILABLE, GET BEST TIME AND DATE TO CALL BACK. RECORD IN THEIR TIME. UPDATE AS NECESSARY.

BEST DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 BEST TIME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 [THEIR TIME]

RESULTS CODES
C - Completed Interview
R - Refusal/Terminate
W - Wrong Number/Disconnected
CB - Call Back, Not Available
X - Respondent Not Available During Study Period
D - Deceased
DSQ - Disqualified, Not Baptized in Baptist Church During Time Frame

CALL	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Time							
Date							
Results Codes							
Intv. Initials							

Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, we are conducting a short study among people who have recently been baptized in a Baptist Church. All your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be attached to them. I would like to ask you a few questions if I may.

1. Our records indicate that you were **baptized** in a Baptist Church since **October 1, 1992**. Is that correct?

Correct  1  (12)  
 Not Correct  2

IF NOT CORRECT

2. When were you baptized in a Baptist Church? [RECORD AS "XX/XX/XX"]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 [TERMINATE] Not Baptized in Baptist Church  1

IF NOT BAPTIZED IN BAPTIST CHURCH SINCE JANUARY 1, 1992, TERMINATE.

3. Have you ever been baptized before? Yes 1  
[SKIP TO Q7] No 2 (13)

IF YES

4. How old were you at the time? [ENTER AS TWO DIGITS  
- IF DON'T KNOW OR REFUSED, ENTER "DK"]  
- [IF MORE THAN ONE, TAKE MOST RECENT] Years Old:   (14-15)

5. Was your earlier baptism in a Southern Baptist Church? Yes 1  
No 2 (16)

IF NO

6. In what denomination or religious group were you previously baptized? [IF MORE THAN ONE, TAKE MOST RECENT]

Methodist 1  
Presbyterian 2  
Episcopal 3 (17)  
Catholic 4  
Lutheran 5  
[SPECIFY] \_\_\_\_\_ Other 6  
Don't Know 7

7. Let's talk about your recent baptism for a minute. Which one of the following best describes your recent baptism in a Southern Baptist Church? Was it primarily the result of: [READ LIST STRAIGHT THROUGH - TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER] - Would you like me to read them again?

- a. One, accepting Christ as your personal Savior for the first time. 1
- b. Two, rededicating your life to Christ. 2 (18)
- c. Three, the requirement of moving your membership from a non-Southern Baptist Church. 3\*

\* IF THREE

SKIP TO Q10

d. From which denomination did you move?

Methodist 1  
Presbyterian 2  
Episcopal 3 (19)  
Catholic 4  
Lutheran 5  
[SPECIFY] \_\_\_\_\_ Other 6

OR, Something other than what I have just mentioned. [PROBE & CLARIFY] 4 (20)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (21)

IF ACCEPTING CHRIST FOR FIRST TIME

8. Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the one, single most important influence that led you to accept Christ as your Savior? [TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER - CLARIFY]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (22)

9. There may have been other **influences** affecting your decision to **become a Christian**. I'm going to read a list of 11 items that may be influential in a person's decision to accept Christ as Savior. For each one, please tell me if it was a **major influence**, a **minor influence** or **no influence** in your decision to accept Christ as Savior. As I read each statement, just say major, minor or none. How about [READ LIST ONE AT A TIME & GET ANSWER FOR EACH - ROTATE ORDER]

A. Having someone **personally share** the plan of **salvation**.

	Major <u>1</u> Minor <u>2</u> None <u>3</u> Don't Know <u>4</u>	(23)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">IF MAJOR</div>		

1A. Was this **person**: [READ LIST - TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

	A Relative <u>1</u> A Good Friend <u>2</u> A Pastor or Someone on a Church Staff <u>3</u> An Acquaintance <u>4</u> OR Someone You Didn't Know <u>5</u>	(24)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">IF A RELATIVE</div>		

2A. Who was the **relative**?

Father <u>1</u> Mother <u>2</u> Spouse <u>3</u> Brother/Sister <u>4</u> Cousin <u>5</u> Grandfather <u>6</u> Grandmother <u>7</u> Uncle <u>8</u> Aunt <u>9</u> Other <u>x</u>	(25)
_____ [SPECIFY]	

B. Having someone tell about their own **personal experience** with **God**.

	Major <u>1</u> Minor <u>2</u> None <u>3</u> Don't Know <u>4</u>	(26)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">IF MAJOR</div>		

1B. Was this **person**: [READ LIST - TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

[SKIP TO Q2B] A Relative <u>1</u> A Good Friend <u>2</u> A Pastor or Someone on a Church Staff <u>3</u> An Acquaintance <u>4</u> OR Someone You Didn't Know <u>5</u>	(27)
_____	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">SKIP TO QC</div>	

**IF A RELATIVE**

2B. Who was the relative?

- Father 1
- Mother 2
- Spouse 3
- Brother/Sister 4
- Cousin 5
- Grandfather 6 (28)
- Grandmother 7
- Uncle 8
- Aunt 9
- Other x

\_\_\_\_\_  
[SPECIFY]

C. Watching the way a particular person lived as a Christian.

- Major 1
- Minor 2 (29)
- None 3
- Don't Know 4

**IF MAJOR**

1C. Was this person: [READ LIST - TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

- A Relative 1
- A Good Friend 2
- A Pastor or Someone on a Church Staff 3 (30)
- An Acquaintance 4
- OR Someone You Didn't Know 5

**IF A RELATIVE**

2C. Who was the relative?

- Father 1
- Mother 2
- Spouse 3
- Brother/Sister 4
- Cousin 5
- Grandfather 6 (31)
- Grandmother 7
- Uncle 8
- Aunt 9
- Other x

\_\_\_\_\_  
[SPECIFY]

D. Attending church worship services.

- Major 1
- Minor 2 (32)
- None 3
- Don't Know 4

E. **Attending a revival service or crusade.**

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (33)  
Don't Know 4

F. **Attending a Sunday School class or other Bible Study group.**

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (34)  
Don't Know 4

G. **Reading the Bible on your own.**

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (35)  
Don't Know 4

H. **Reading a religious booklet or tract.**

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (36)  
Don't Know 4

IF MAJOR

1H. **Which booklet or tract meant the most to you?**  
[TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

(37)

I. **Either watching a religious television program or listening to a religious radio program.**

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (38)  
Don't Know 4

IF MAJOR

1I. **Which TV or radio program meant the most to you?**  
[TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

(39)

J. **Experiencing a personal crisis in your life such as illness, death, losing a job, or divorce that made you aware of your need for God.**

[SKIP TO Q1J] Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3 (40)  
Don't Know 4

SKIP TO QK

**IF MAJOR**

1J. Would you mind **sharing the personal crisis** that was such a major influence on your decision to accept Christ?  
[PROBE & CLARIFY]

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(41-43)

K. **Experiencing major change** in your life such as moving, marriage, birth of a child, or a job change that made you aware of your need for God.

Major 1  
Minor 2  
None 3  
Don't Know 4 (44)

**IF MAJOR**

1K. Would you mind sharing the **major change** in your life that was such a major influence on your decision to accept Christ? [PROBE & CLARIFY]

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(45-47)

10. I'm going to read a list of 5 statements. Please tell me which one **best describes** your **religious participation prior** to your recent baptism.  
[READ LIST STRAIGHT THROUGH - TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

a. One, you have been continuously active in church since you were a child. 1  
b. Two, you have been active, on and off, for most of your life. 2  
c. Three, you were active in church as a child but not as an adult. 3 (48)  
d. Four, you haven't really been very active in church. 4  
e. Five, you had no previous church experience. 5  
[VOLUNTEERED] None of the Above 6

**IF a, b, or c**

11. In what religious group or **denomination** were you then most active?  
[TAKE ONLY ONE ANSWER]

Baptist 1  
Methodist 2  
Presbyterian 3  
Episcopal 4 (49)  
Catholic 5  
Lutheran 6  
Other 7

[SPECIFY]

12. Why did you decide to join the particular church in which you were recently baptized? [PROBE AND CLARIFY]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(50-53)

13. I appreciate you staying with me, we have just a few more questions.

Approximately how often do you now attend church?

- Once a Week or More 1
- 1-3 Times a Month 2
- Less Than Once a Month 3
- Do Not Attend 4

(54)

IF LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH

14. As best as you can, please tell me why you do not attend your church more often. [PROBE & CLARIFY]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(55-58)

SKIP TO Q17

IF ONCE A MONTH OR MORE

15. Let's talk about 12 months before you were baptized. At this time, approximately how often did you attend church?

- Once a Week or More 1
- 1-3 Times a Month 2
- Less Than Once a Month 3
- Do Not Attend 4

(59)

SKIP TO Q17

IF LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH

16. As specifically as you can, tell me what influenced you to become more active in church? [PROBE & CLARIFY]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(60-63)

17. Since you have been baptized, have you received training in how to witness to others?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't Know 3

(64)

18. The following questions are for classification purposes only.

Please tell me your highest level of **education**.

- Did Not Attend High School 1
- Attended High School 2
- Graduated High School 3
- Attended or Graduated Technical School 4 (65)
- Attended College 5
- Graduated College (4 year) 6
- Graduate Work 7
- Refused 8

19. Do you currently have **children**, 18 or younger, living in your **household**?

- Yes 1 (66)
- No 2

20. Would you please give me your **age**? [RECORD AS TWO DIGITS - IF REFUSED, RECORD AS "RF"]

Age:   (67-68)

21. In which state did you primarily **grow up**? [ENTER AS TWO LETTERS - IF RESPONDENT CAN NOT DECIDE, ENTER "DK"]

State:   (69-70)

22. Which of the following groups do you primarily **consider yourself**?  
[READ LIST STRAIGHT THROUGH - STOP WHEN YOU GET AN ANSWER]

- White but not Hispanic 1
- Black 2
- Hispanic 3 (71)
- Asian 4
- Other 5
- [SPECIFY] \_\_\_\_\_ Refused 6

THANK RESPONDENT VERY MUCH!!!

23. **Sex** of Respondent:

- Male 1 (72)
- Female 2

Interviewer's Name: _____	Supervised: _____
Shift: M - Morning    A - Afternoon    E - Evening	Edited: _____
Date: _____	

## **Appendix B**

## SAMPLE DESIGN

The target population consisted of 152,681 adults baptized in 24,642 Southern Baptist churches during the period covered by the 1993 Uniform Church Letter (UCL). For most churches this time frame was October 1, 1992 through September 30, 1993. Unfortunately a master list of these recently baptized adults does not exist. Therefore, it was necessary to employ a two-stage sampling design where churches were sampled first (primary sampling unit) and then recently baptized adults in those churches selected were sampled second (secondary sampling unit).

A two-stage stratified sample design was implemented. Two factors favored stratified random sampling over simple random sampling for this study. First, there was an apriori desire among planners to analyze certain subgroups of the population separately. Sampling separately from several subgroups is the basic premise of stratified sampling. Second, precision in the estimates is gained if units within strata are homogeneous and units from different strata are heterogeneous. Thus, a smaller number of sample cases within each subgroup, or stratum, is necessary to obtain adequate estimates.

Three stratification variables were used. First, churches were divided into two regions, east and west of the Mississippi River. Evangelism Section staff felt that churches in these two regions had different paradigms for evangelistic outreach.

Second, churches were classified as metropolitan or non-metropolitan based on whether their county was located inside or outside a Metropolitan Statistical Area(MSA) as defined by the Bureau of the Census. Classifying churches by MSA status was substituted for a desired rural versus urban comparison. Strategy development for churches has historically been different for rural and urban churches.

Third, churches were divided into three categories based on the number of adults they reported baptizing on the 1993 UCL—1 to 4 baptisms (low baptism churches), 5 to 19 baptisms (medium baptism churches), and 20 or more baptisms (high baptism churches). Churches with more baptisms may be using more effective evangelistic techniques, and could be analyzed separately.

The resulting 2x2x3 cross-classification divided the population of 24,642 churches into 12 strata. The distribution of the churches and the adult baptisms among the strata are given in the following tables.

### Distribution of Churches in the Sampling Frame by Stratum

		Adult Baptism Level			Total
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)	
East	Non-Metro	5,710	1,862	146	7,718
East	Metro	4,548	3,012	515	8,075
West	Non-Metro	2,858	1,211	72	4,141
West	Metro	2,249	2,005	454	4,708
Total		15,365	8,090	1,187	24,642

The following table shows the distribution of adult baptisms according to this stratification.

### Distribution of Adult Baptisms in the Sampling Frame by Stratum

		Adult Baptism Level			Total
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)	
East	Non-Metro	11,709	14,883	4,532	31,124
East	Metro	10,010	26,682	22,670	59,362
West	Non-Metro	5,941	10,137	2,107	18,185
West	Metro	5,121	18,512	20,377	44,010
Total		32,781	70,214	49,686	152,681

Desired sample sizes from each stratum were determined in advance. A sample of 120 churches was selected from each of the 4 “low baptism” strata, 60 from each “medium baptism” strata, and 30 from each “high baptism” strata. The rationale for choosing different stratum sample sizes was to produce more accurate estimates within the 3 levels of baptisms.

Sampling rates ranged from approximately 1 of 50 churches in the “East-Metro-Medium” stratum to 1 in 2.4 churches in the “West-Non-Metro-High” stratum. Within each stratum, churches were selected systematically, with equal probability, after sorting by the number of adult baptisms, state, and county.

First-stage sampling resulted in the selection of 840 churches. Pastors of these 840 churches were asked to supply the Home Mission Board with a list of adults reported baptized on the 1993 UCL, including names and phone numbers. A participation rate of 50 percent of the churches was assumed; therefore, the expectation was that 420 churches would cooperate with the project.

In churches which provided more than twenty names and useable phone numbers of baptized adults, a second stage sample was selected. The second stage process systematically selected 20 names from each of these churches’ lists. A participation rate of 75 percent of adults was assumed, which would have provided approximately 2,000 names for the survey.

Appendices D and E. detail the response received in the survey.

## **Appendix C**

April 4, 1994

Screven Memorial Baptist Church  
397 Lafayette Rd  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Dear Pastor:

Would you assist in an important new research project? The Home Mission Board is conducting a survey of recently baptized adults. *The purpose is to help churches become more effective in reaching the millions of lost adults in our nation. The results of the study will help your church develop effective methods of evangelism and church growth.*

On the 1993 Uniform Church Letter, Screven Memorial Baptist Church reported 17 adult (age 18 and over) baptisms. Would you send us the names and current phone numbers of these adults? They will be surveyed by telephone and asked how they came to know Jesus and decided to join your particular church.

We have included pink forms that you can use to report the names and phone numbers of these adults. If you prefer you can report this information in some other manner, such as a typed or computerized list—please include your church name and ZIP code somewhere on the list. This should only take about ten minutes. This small investment of your time may help many churches reach people for Christ.

Be assured that all responses will remain confidential. No church or person will be identified in the published results of the study or outside the Research Division of the Home Mission Board.

Place the completed forms (or a substitute list) in the postage-paid, addressed envelope. Upon completion of the study, *we will send a summary of the results to pastors of churches who provide us names and phone numbers.*

Your help with this survey really counts. Thanks for being a part of the work of Home Missions!

Sincerely,

Phillip B. Jones  
Director, Research Division

**P.S. Please reply by April 20**

**Name And Phone Number Sheet for Adults Baptized**  
**(For Persons Reported on the 1993 Uniform Church Letter)**

**Church Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church ZIP Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

If the post-paid envelope has been misplaced please return to:  
Research Division  
Home Mission Board, SBC  
1350 Spring St. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30367-5601

May 12, 1994

First Spanish Baptist Church  
96 Wadsworth Ave  
New York, NY 10033

Dear Pastor:

- ⊕ What percentage of baptisms are people previously baptized? are transfers from another denomination? are people who have recently had a conversion experience?
- ⊕ Do sermons have an impact in a conversion experience?
- ⊕ Are revivals an effective form of evangelism?
- ⊕ What are the best ways to communicate to the lost?
- ⊕ Which personal relationships are most important in bringing a person to Christ?
- ⊕ Does a cold contact ever work?

These are the types of questions we are attempting to answer in a study of adults recently reported as baptized by Southern Baptist churches. *The purpose is to help churches become more effective in reaching the millions of lost adults in our nation.*

On the 1993 Uniform Church Letter, First Spanish Baptist Church reported 2 adult (age 18 and over) baptisms. Recently we asked for your participation in this study by providing us with the names and the phone numbers of these persons. We haven't heard from you. Yours is one of 840 churches scientifically selected and we need your participation to help make this a representative study of Southern Baptist baptisms.

We have included a yellow form that you can use to report the names and phone numbers of these adults. It should only take several minutes to complete. In a few weeks, these persons will be surveyed by an independent marketing research company. All responses will remain confidential. No church or person will be identified in the published results of the study, or outside the Research Division of the Home Mission Board, or the independent marketing research firm.

Place the completed form in the postage-paid, addressed envelope. Please include your church name and ZIP code on the form. This will enable us to send you a summary of the results upon completion of the study and to eliminate follow-up mailings.

Your participation is important to the success of this project! Call us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

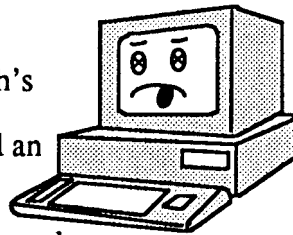
Phillip B. Jones

**P.S. Please reply as soon as possible.**

*To err is human, but to really foul things  
up, it takes a computer!*

In our second request for your church's participation in the national study of recently baptized adults, we included an incorrect number of adults reported baptized by your church in 1993.

Please ignore the number in our letter and send us the names and phone numbers for the adults actually reported on the 1993 Uniform Church Letter.



Call us at 404/898-7676 if you have questions.

Thanks for your help.

Phillip B. Jones  
Director, Research Division  
Home Mission Board, SBC



Time is running out on our study!

The Home Mission Board is conducting a study of recently baptized adults. We want to know more about their experiences of accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Please help by giving us the names and phone numbers of persons your church reported as baptized on the 1993 Uniform Church letter.

You can call us **toll free** and give this information to one of our customer service representatives. The number is **1-800-634-2462**. You can call from 8:00AM until 6:00PM (Eastern Standard Time) Monday through Friday. Just tell them you have names and numbers for the **Adult Baptism Study**.

We have already talked to hundreds of recently baptized Southern Baptists—but we need **your** help soon to make this a representative study of all Southern Baptist churches.

If you have questions about the study you can call Phil Jones, Director of Research, at 404-898-7678. We will send a summary of the results to pastors of churches that participate in the study.

All responses will be kept confidential. No church or person will be identified in the published results of the study or outside the Research Division of the Home Mission Board.

**Please help!**

**P.S.** If you prefer to fax this information to us, our fax number is 404-898-7127. Please include your church name and ZIP code with the names and phone numbers.

## **Appendix D**

## RESPONSE RATES

There were 840 churches sampled as a part of the study. These churches reported 7,108 adult baptisms on the 1993 Uniform Church Letter (UCL). The survey was designed so that a maximum of 20 adults would be interviewed from any one church. Given this constraint, 5,497 adults should have been interviewed from these churches. This number of interviews would have taken place if there had been no error in the reporting of UCL data, if all churches had responded and provided names and accurate telephone numbers for all adults baptized, and if all adults could have been reached by phone and all had agreed to complete an interview.

Out of the 840 churches sampled for the study, 443 churches responded to the Home Mission Board's request for help by providing at least some names and addresses. This is a response rate for churches of 52.7 percent. There were a few other churches that contacted the Board but declined to participate in the survey—the most common reason was they had guidelines that prevented them from releasing information about their members.

These 443 responding churches reported 4,101 adult baptisms on the 1993 UCL, yet they were only able to provide the names of 3,304 baptized adults. Thus, they sent us names equivalent to 80.6 percent of the number they reported. Of these 3,304 names, phone numbers were supplied for only 2,793. Thus, to begin the surveying process, the Research Division had names and phone numbers for only two-thirds (68.1%, 2,793 of 4,101) of the adults reported by the 443 responding churches.

There were a wide variety of reasons that responding churches seemed unable to provide names and phone numbers for all persons reported baptized. Some had error in their original reporting on the UCL. Some made decisions that selected adults did not want to be interviewed. Some had adults that probably did not have phones or were unreachable by phone. The most common reason for not providing names and phone numbers was that churches had simply lost contact with those they had recently baptized. Some of the adults baptized were from highly mobile populations such as migrant workers, residents of rehabilitation centers or jails, military personnel, and college students. Others had relocated because of employment. The point is, churches have lost contact with a significant portion of those baptized—people they would have baptized in the previous year and a half. There is concern that many of these people are not being adequately disciplined and integrated into the life of some church.

Starting with the 2,793 names and telephone numbers provided, but selecting no more than 20 adults from each church (these 20 were randomly selected), 2,450 names and phone numbers were provided to the Darden Research Corporation, Atlanta, Georgia, for telephone interviewing.

Of the 2,450 names and phone numbers, Darden Research was able to complete 1,358 interviews from mid July to mid August, 1994. Each respondent was called at least 7 times if there was no answer. These call backs were made throughout the calling period on different days and at different times. Some were called up to 13 times. The adjusted response rate for those persons reached by phone was 57.4 percent. (The adjusted response rate was derived on a base of 2,450 minus 80 people who were disqualified because they were either under age 18 or they had not been recently baptized. Another 6 were subtracted because they were deceased.)

The following table shows the outcome of the 2,450 names and numbers provided to Darden Research.

Number	Percent	Outcome
1,358	55.4%	Completed interviews
447	18.2	Wrong number/Disconnected
219	8.9	Unable to contact/Called seven times
200	8.2	Refusal/Terminate
80	3.3	Disqualified (either under 18 or baptized before January 1, 1992)
76	3.1	Call backs/Research terminated before called seven times
36	1.5	800 number call backs (these are persons given an 800 number to call and complete the interview—but did not do so)
24	1.0	Respondent unavailable during study period
6	0.2	Deceased
4	0.2	Pretest questionnaires that could not be reinterviewed
<hr/> 2,450	<hr/> 100.0%	

The percentage of wrong and disconnected numbers is surprisingly high. Actually this figure represents the wrong and disconnected numbers after attempts to get corrected numbers from reporting churches.

The 1,358 persons interviewed were from 336 different churches. Thus, of the 840 churches originally sampled, 40.0 percent are represented in the final study. These respondents and their churches comprise the realized sample for the study. In analyzing the realized sample by strata in the sample design, it was found that low baptism churches, those with 1 to 4 baptisms, had the lowest participation rate of churches from the original sample of 840 churches, i.e., the realized response rate for low baptism churches was 29 percent compared to 55 percent and 61 percent for medium and high baptism churches. Responses are weighted so that each stratum is properly represented in the sample estimates.

If the realized sample of 1,358 persons interviewed are compared to the desired sample of 5,497 interviews that would have occurred given no error and no non response, then this study is based on a 24.7 percent response rate.

The key question is, “How well do the 1,358 people actually interviewed reflect the entire population of recently baptized adults in the Southern Baptist Convention?” The study is most vulnerable to non response error—the error that occurs because the experiences of those not responding are different from those that do. This error cannot be evaluated directly, since information from non responding churches and people is not available.

In defense of the representativeness of the study, a large number of interviews were completed—over 1,350—a number comparable to large scale national surveys conducted by the Gallup and Roper organizations. Furthermore, once they were reached by phone,

the refusal rate of those selected to participate in the study was 12.8 percent. Thus, there appears to be no major self selection bias of people that would greatly alter the results of the study.

The reason the adjusted response rate for the telephone interviews is only 57.4 percent is primarily because of the large number of wrong and disconnected numbers provided by churches. If these are removed from the calculation, then the adjusted response rate for the telephone calling would be 70.8 percent, which is really quite good.

There may also be some differences in the experiences of people in churches that did not respond to the Home Mission Board's request for information. It seems likely that the churches 1) chose not to respond because it was too much trouble, 2) had policies or guidelines preventing them from releasing information on their members, 3) did not get any of the correspondence requesting their help (attempts were made to reach all churches by phone but there were some unreached churches), or 4) just did not get around to it. The response rate of 52.7 percent for churches (while not considered good theoretically) in practicality is about as good as it gets for churches. In fact, a 50 percent response rate for churches was anticipated and built into the sample design. So there is no unusual non-response bias expected on the part of churches due to sensitivity to the subject matter of baptisms.

The high percentage of wrong or discontinued phone numbers along with the missing names and phone numbers of one-third of the recent adult baptisms reported on the UCL by responding churches, does cause concern. It may be that there is a highly mobile segment of adults that this study does not properly represent—again it is not known if and how the experiences of these adults vary from those in the study.

Even with the inherent non response difficulties, this study offers an advanced attempt to analyze recent baptisms of adults in Southern Baptist Churches.

## **Appendix E**

## WEIGHTING

In order to make inferences to the desired target population of 152,681 adult baptisms reported on the 1993 UCL, a weight must be assigned to each of the 1,358 respondents who completed an interview. The weight for an individual can be thought of as the number of persons in the sampling frame that she/he represents. The sum of the weights for all respondents should equal the target population.

Individual weights are determined by three factors—the probability that a respondent’s church was selected as a primary sampling unit; the probability that the respondent was selected as a secondary sampling unit; and a ratio adjustment to assure that the sum of the weights for all respondents in a given stratum equals the total number of adult baptisms reported in that stratum.

### FIRST STAGE WEIGHTS (CHURCHES)

Churches were selected with different sampling rates in different strata; therefore, first-stage probabilities and weights vary by stratum. The distribution of the sampling frame of churches across the 12 strata of the design is given in appendix B. The realized sample size of churches in each stratum is the number of churches that participated in the study and had at least one baptized adult complete an interview. First-stage weights are calculated based on the realized sample rather than the desired sample from each stratum. The first-stage weight for a stratum is calculated by dividing the number of churches in the sampling frame by the number of churches in the realized sample. Sample counts and first-stage weights for each stratum are given in tables below.

A word of caution is in order concerning the weighting and subsequent calculation of standard errors (see appendix F) for the survey. Pragmatism compels the use of the realized sample counts in calculating weights. Such pragmatism assumes that the churches in the realized sample represent a random selection from the sampling frame in each stratum. An inherent assumption is that churches in the realized sample are randomly representative of churches in the desired sample for a stratum—which is another way of saying that non-response bias is minimal.

For example, in the “East-Non-Metro-Low” stratum, the desired number of churches originally selected was 120. The realized sample contains only 34 churches. Pragmatically there is no choice but to assume these churches randomly participated and represent the 120 churches in the desired sample. These 34 churches are weighted to represent the 5,710 churches in the sampling frame in this stratum, yielding a weight of 167.9 ( $5,710 \div 34$ ).

### Distribution of Churches in the Realized Sample by Stratum

		Adult Baptism Level			
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)	Total
East	Non-Metro	34	30	18	82
East	Metro	40	40	16	96
West	Non-Metro	35	30	23	88
West	Metro	32	32	16	80
Total		141	132	73	346

### First-Stage Weights (Churches) by Stratum

		Adult Baptism Level		
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)
East	Non-Metro	167.9	62.1	8.1
East	Metro	113.7	75.3	32.2
West	Non-Metro	81.7	40.4	3.1
West	Metro	70.3	62.7	28.4

### SECOND-STAGE WEIGHTS (PERSONS)

Secondary sampling units were recently baptized adults within the sample churches. The planned sample design called for interviews with each adult in the sample churches, with a maximum of 20 per church. Several factors caused the realized sample of completed interviews from most churches to be less than the desired sample. Response rate factors, discussed in detail in appendix D, included unavailable or incorrect phone numbers, inability to contact the person during the interviewing time period, and refusals.

The second stage weight for an individual is calculated as the number of adults reported as baptized on the 1993 UCL for his/her church, divided by the realized sample (completed interviews) for the church. All respondents from the same church have the same second-stage weight. The same pragmatism mentioned above comes into play at the second-stage sampling, as persons with completed interviews represent all baptized adults from a given church.

The following table provides the realized sample of persons (i.e., the number of completed interviews) in each stratum. Second-stage weights are not given because they vary among the 346 churches in the realized sample of churches. These weights vary from 0.33 to 25.

#### Distribution of Adult Baptisms in the Realized Sample by Stratum (Completed Interviews)

		Adult Baptism Level			Total
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)	
East	Non-Metro	48	115	170	333
East	Metro	64	165	157	386
West	Non-Metro	56	104	187	347
West	Metro	53	120	119	292
Total		221	504	633	1,358

**RATIO ADJUSTMENTS TO WEIGHTS**

Next, preliminary weights were calculated by multiplying the first-stage weight (churches) by the second-stage weight (persons). These preliminary weights were summed within each stratum. Weights needed to be adjusted so that the sum of weights for respondents in a given stratum equaled the number of adults baptized in that stratum. This is a common procedure for calculating sample weights.

For example, the sum of preliminary weights for respondents in the “East-Non-Metro-High” stratum was 13,435, but the number of baptized adults reported by churches in this stratum was 11,709. Each respondent in this stratum has a weight adjustment of 0.8715 (11,709÷13,435).

**Ratio Adjustments to Weights by Stratum**

		Adult Baptism Level		
		Low (1-4)	Medium (5-19)	High (20 plus)
East	Non-Metro	0.8715	0.9592	1.0622
East	Metro	0.9171	1.0331	1.2466
West	Non-Metro	0.8766	0.9335	1.0926
West	Metro	1.0263	0.9751	1.2213

**FINAL WEIGHTS**

Final weights for individual respondents were calculated as:

$$\text{FINAL WEIGHT} = \text{FIRST-STAGE WEIGHT (CHURCH)} * \text{SECOND-STAGE WEIGHT (PERSON)} * \text{RATIO ADJUSTMENT}$$

The sum of these final weights for all 1,358 respondents is 152,681, the total number of adult baptisms in the target population of the study.

## **Appendix F**

## STANDARD ERRORS

Inquiring minds always want to know the accuracy of survey results. Standard errors measure the sampling error of surveys. Sampling error speaks to the likelihood that repeated samples conducted by the same design would produce similar estimates. Another way of posing this question is to ask “How certain am I that an estimate produced from this sample is ‘near’ the true population value being estimated?”

Standard errors for this study have been calculated using Professional Software for SURvey DATA ANalysis for multi-stage sample designs (SUDAAN), a software package developed by Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. “SUDAAN’s primary advantage is to obtain estimates using the proper sample design parameters and, most importantly, to compute appropriate standard errors of these estimates. SUDAAN uses the widely-known first-order Taylor series approximation of the deviations of estimates from their expected values” in calculating standard errors.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the population parameters of interest in this survey are proportions of the population that possess a certain characteristic or would give a certain response to a question. Both the estimated proportions and the standard errors of those estimates will be expressed as percents. It is customary to report such findings, for example, as 45.5 ( $\pm 2.5$ ) percent.

The simple formula for the standard error of an estimated percentage,  $p$ , is calculated as the square root of  $(p*(100-p)/n)$ , where  $n$  is the sample size. For example, if the estimated percentage is 40,  $100-p$  is 60, and  $n$  is 1358, then the standard error of  $p$  is the square root of  $(40*60/1358)$ , or 1.3. Of course the calculations performed by SUDAAN are much more complicated since it accounts for the sample design. Note that standard errors are maximized when  $p$  is 50 percent and sample size is small.

## CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

Single number estimates of population parameters are called point estimates. Point estimates are the best guesses available from the sample data. Often, interval estimates called confidence intervals are used in conjunction with point estimates. A 95 percent confidence interval for a percentage  $p$  with standard error  $s$  can be calculated as  $(p-1.96s, p+1.96s)$ . In the example used above, the 95 percent confidence interval would be  $(40-1.96*1.3, 40+1.96*1.3)$ , or (37.5, 42.5).

With a 95 percent confidence interval, statisticians are 95 percent “confident” that the true value of a population parameter lies within the interval. If the same sample design was used and the study repeated 20 times, the 95 percent confidence interval should contain the true parameter value 19 times, according to the laws of probability. The beauty of being a statistician is never having to say you are 100 percent certain.

The following are examples of the standard errors and resulting confidence intervals derived for selected variables in the dataset.

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<sup>1</sup>Babubhai V. Shah et al., *SUDAAN™ User’s Manual* (Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute, 1991), p.2-42.

**STANDARD ERRORS AND CONFIDENCE INTERVALS  
FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS**

*Our records indicate that you were baptized in a Baptist Church since October 1, 1992. Is that correct?*

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Correct	99.4	0.4	98.7	100.0
Not Correct	0.6	0.4	0.0	1.3

*Have you ever been baptized before?*

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Yes	61.1	1.9	57.4	64.8
No	38.9	1.9	35.2	42.6

*Was your earlier baptism in a Southern Baptist church?*

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Yes	35.7	2.9	29.9	41.4
No	64.0	2.9	58.3	69.8
No Response	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.7

*Which one of the following best describes your recent baptism in a Southern Baptist Church? Was it primarily the result of:*

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Accepting Christ for the first time?	40.5	2.2	36.2	44.9
Rededicating your life to Christ?	40.4	2.0	36.4	44.4
A requirement to move your membership?	13.7	1.5	10.7	16.6
Something other?	5.2	0.9	3.5	7.0
No Response	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.4

***Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the one, single most important influence that led you to accept Christ as your Savior?***

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Do not know	8.1	1.4	5.5	10.8
Holy Spirit	6.4	1.6	3.3	9.5
Inner realization	16.3	2.1	12.2	20.4
Fear of hell	3.2	1.1	0.9	5.4
Bible study group	2.3	0.7	0.9	3.8
Revival/evangelist	1.6	0.6	0.4	2.7
Pastor: Preaching	7.8	2.1	3.8	11.8
Pastor: Personal witness	1.7	0.8	0.1	3.3
Pastor: Friendship/example	1.1	0.5	0.1	2.0
Pastor: Multiple w/o witness	0.5	0.3	0.0	1.0
Pastor: Multiple with witness	1.1	0.8	0.0	2.6
Family: Spouse	8.7	2.2	4.5	13.0
Family: Parents	1.2	0.5	0.2	2.1
Family: Other	6.6	1.4	3.8	9.3
Friends: Example	0.7	0.3	0.0	1.3
Friends: Invited to church	1.1	0.5	0.1	2.1
Friends: Personal witness	3.0	1.0	1.0	4.9
Multiple People	0.9	0.5	0.0	1.8
Marketplace evangelism	1.1	0.5	0.2	2.1
People in church	4.0	1.0	2.1	5.9
Other people	2.2	0.7	0.9	3.5
Wanted to be positive influence on family	5.5	1.3	3.1	8.0
Life crisis	13.0	2.0	9.1	16.9
Miscellaneous	2.0	0.9	0.3	3.7

***Why did you decide to join the particular church in which  
you were recently baptized?***

	Estimated Percentage	Standard Error	95 % Confidence Limits	
			Lower	Upper
Preacher: Sermons/teaching	24.0	2.0	20.1	28.0
Preacher: Example/friendship	18.7	1.5	15.8	21.7
Preacher: Counseling	0.6	0.2	0.1	1.1
Congregation: Warm/friendly	50.4	1.7	47.1	53.7
Friends in church	13.1	1.3	10.6	15.6
Spouse in church	13.3	1.2	10.9	15.8
Family in church	14.7	1.3	12.2	17.3
Children or youth programs	8.8	0.9	7.0	10.7
Variety of programs	2.9	0.8	1.2	4.5
Sunday School/Bible study	4.3	0.8	2.6	5.9
Ministry of the church	2.7	0.5	1.6	3.7
Felt Holy Spirit	5.2	0.8	3.5	6.8
Where God wanted me	3.9	0.7	2.7	5.2
Place of Service	1.4	0.4	0.5	2.2
Long time attendee	8.5	1.2	6.3	10.8
Location	11.8	1.2	9.4	14.3
Worship style/music	3.5	0.7	2.1	4.8
Sound doctrine	4.3	0.6	3.0	5.5
Christian example of people	4.3	0.7	3.0	5.7
Size of church	6.1	1.1	3.9	8.2
Baptist church	1.9	0.4	1.1	2.8
Met spiritual needs	0.8	0.3	0.2	1.4
Married in this church	1.3	0.4	0.5	2.1
Accepted Christ in this church	0.6	0.2	0.2	1.0

## **Appendix G**

## OTHER RESPONSES

*Which one of the following best describes your recent baptism in a Southern Baptist church? Was it primarily the result of (1) accepting Christ as your personal Savior for the first time, (2) rededicating your life to Christ, (3) the requirement of moving your membership from a non-Southern Baptist church or (4) something other than what I have just mentioned?*

I had become a Christian in a different congregation but we were looking for a church to belong to and my boyfriend was already a member of this Baptist church, so I got baptized there.

I don't really believe in the Baptist church, but this pastor first baptized my mother, but I don't feel that baptism is a very necessary part of accepting Christ. He (pastor) had baptized everyone in my family, so I said, "I might as well get baptized, too."

The completion of a dedication process. I accepted him a long time before but I just felt I should do this also.

This last baptism was an adult experience as opposed to my earlier baptism as a child. (what) Through baptism you lose your old self and are born again. I did not fully understand the meaning of baptism when I was first baptized. I did not always live as a Christian when I was young, so this was the first baptism that really counted because I understood its meaning. It was a result of needing to cleanse myself of past sins.

I just felt it was what I needed to do, just the symbolism of the whole thing.

I had accepted Christ at an early age but I had never been baptized. I wanted to do it.

I have always accepted Christ; all my life.

My wife was being baptized, I wanted to do it with her and make it a family event.

I have always gone to a Baptist church and I had been saved a long time ago but I never had been baptized. Then, my husband decided to get baptized at that church and we thought it would be good to do it together.

The first time I don't think. . . I was not sure if I was saved for the first time. I'm reluctant to say why.

I was baptized as a young child and had already accepted Christ, but to me rededication implies that I had always been dedicated but I hadn't gone for about 8 years. My husband's boss had talked to us about accepting Christ again and I finally decided it was time (rededication 1st time).

My first baptism I accepted Christ but this was the first time I achieved full dedication.

I had a close relationship with Christ in high school. I thought I should do things in order and get baptized.

I felt the need to give my life to the Lord, but I did not want to rush into the first church I saw. I wanted to find the right church.

Well, I had never been baptized before. I had never belonged to a church. No, I had accepted Christ before.

Had controversy in my life over Christ. I felt the time was right to accept Christ. I haven't fully accepted him yet. Personal tribulation.

With Baptists you have more freedom to make your own personal decisions (what) when I was first baptized it wasn't my decision, so I wanted to do it when it was my decision, but I had accepted Christ long before my second baptism (rededication no, this is the first time I've really dedicated my life to Christ.)—

I thought I was saved the first time, but I wasn't. So when I got saved this time I wanted to be baptized.

I was saved two years prior, but only started going to church after I got married, so I decided to get baptized.

I had give my soul years before but wanted to become baptized formally for a true sense of belonging.

I was a Catholic my entire life and I married into a family that was prominent in the Baptist religion and I thought it would be best for the sake of the family for us all to be Baptist.

I needed to make sure of my salvation. Overtime I was on and off with Christ and I needed to commit this time I don't feel you need a baptism to rededicate your life, but I just made the decision to be strong with God and get baptized again.

Becoming a member of that church with my husband; I was already Baptist.

Holy Spirit moved me to follow God's will.

I accepted Jesus Christ when 15 but was too young so I prayed about it. The prayer was answered and then I just knew it was time.

I just wanted to do it as adult to be sure. I wanted to reinforce my faith.

It was rededicating and because the Bible says we have to. I can't chose one because it is definitely both.

Just to do it.

I was in a car accident and my husband and son were killed.

I was saved after my first baptism and long before my second, but since I work in the church I was too proud to admit that I hadn't been saved the first time.

I'd never been baptized before and I felt I should because I had done everything else but I'd just never been baptized.

Never been baptized before I felt it was important. But I accepted Christ in my life a long time ago.

I've been a Christian for a long time but, because of the influence of my Sunday School teacher, I just recently got baptized.

I don't know. I thought I should make my own decision to be baptized. Before it wasn't on my own—I was a baby. I just want to be baptized and in a Baptist church is where I wanted it.

My daughter's death; I needed peace.

I lost my daughter. There was more friendliness in Baptist church after her death.

Mixture of 3 and 2; I can't choose one—it really is both.

It's more than any of those things. I don't know how to explain it. It's just more than any of those things. It's something that very few people have.

I had accepted Christ, I had always believed in Christ, but I felt the baptism was the final commitment.

I was saved as a child but never baptized. As an adult I wanted to be baptized since I hadn't been as a child.

I never became baptized as a child.

I was making a public commitment.

A godly repent. I had to be relieved of my sins.

There was a battle within myself whether to be baptized. I felt God said to do it. It was a public admittance of my faith.

Just joining that particular church; because it's the one I grew up in.

The first time I accepted Him I didn't dedicate my life to Him. This time I accepted Him in my heart.

I wanted to change to my wife's church; baptism was not a requirement.

I was being ordained a deacon. I just wanted to be baptized a second time for personal reasons.

Well, it was because I was moving from another church but this baptism was the first time I had become an official member of a church. Previously I attended a Free Will Baptist church.

I was unsure of my salvation at that time. I just knew that I need God in my life.

I grew up Southern Baptist and hadn't done anything publicly.

My will to obey God and to become baptized and worship him as my savior. This was absolutely not a first acceptance of Him.

I like to feel closer to God.

Because I hadn't done it as an adult. Felt the need to do it when it was my own decision.

The requirement of becoming a Baptist; I did not belong to another denomination when I was baptized.

I never knew one had to be baptized after being saved, so when I found out (via communication with God) I became baptized.

I was born Jewish, but I had accepted Christ 15 years ago, but I had never been baptized, and it was more than just a requirement.

I had always wanted to be immersed and the other times I had been baptized I hadn't.

I felt I had gotten Baptized the first time for the wrong reasons. I was pressured by family the first time and this time I felt I was doing it for myself.

I felt comfortable. I like the people. They were kind and giving.

I knew I was saved, but I wanted to get baptized again when I was older so it was all my own decision.

I just felt it was something I had to do.

My husband did so I did.

We just wanted to be a part of that church.

It was something I have wanted to do all my life and I finally found a church in which to do it.

The first time I accepted Christ I had not dedicated my life to him. This baptism I dedicated my life to him.

I had a conviction that God was telling me to get baptized. I really don't know why.

Obedience out of God. It's just doing what He wants me to do. I felt He wanted this. I could just tell.

## **Appendix H**

The following open-ended question was asked only of those who indicated that their baptism was primarily the result of accepting Christ as their personal Savior for the first time.

*Other than the work of the Holy Spirit, what was the one, single most important influence that led you to accept Christ as your Savior?*

All responses were read by staff in the Research Division of the Home Mission Board and then 23 categories were developed to condense responses. Research staff then assigned each response to one of the 23 categories. The following is a listing of the 23 broad categories grouped by the consolidated categories along with the percentage of respondents assigned to each.

<b>People Influence</b>	<b>33.9 %</b>
Family: Spouse	8.7
Family: Parents	1.2
Family: Other ( This includes more than one family member being cited and may include spouse or parents)	6.6
Friends: Their personal witness	3.0
Friends: Their invitation to church	1.1
Friends: Their example	0.7
Multiple people/groups of people (These are predominantly family and friends)	0.9
Pastor: His personal witness	1.7
Pastor: His example or friendship	1.1
Pastor: Multiple things about the pastor cited	1.6
People in the church	4.0
People in the marketplace (people that you work with)	1.1
People not otherwise categorized	2.2
<b>Internal Factors</b>	<b>31.4</b>
Inner realization/inner desire	16.3
Work of the Holy Spirit	6.4
Wanted a positive influence on children and family	5.5
Fear of Hell/desire for Heaven/desire for Everlasting Life	3.2
<b>Life Crisis/Problems</b>	<b>13.0</b>
<b>Church Related Religious Activities</b>	<b>11.6</b>
Pastor: His preaching and/or teaching	7.8
Reading the Bible/participating in Bible study group	2.3
Revival	1.5
<b>Miscellaneous/Don't Know</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Don't know	8.1
Miscellaneous (otherwise unclassified)	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

Detailed examples of most of the categories are as follows:

***Family: Spouse—***

- My husband is a Christian and I saw the goodness that came to him as a result of having Christ in his life.
- My wife threatened to divorce me.
- My husband influenced me by talking to me about Christ.
- My husband living the word of God before me.
- My wife was a great witness to me.

***Family: Parents—***

- My parents taught me the Lord was the way to go.
- My Christian upbringing with my parents.
- My mother is a good Christian, and I wanted to be more like her.

***Family: Other—*** (This also includes more than one family member being cited and may include spouse or parents)

- My daughter's testimony: she said she wanted to go to heaven and she wanted her mother and father to go with her.
- My family influenced me to accept Christ because he is the only one that can save me from hell.
- My mother-in-law was a Christian and I saw how peaceful she was and I wanted that same peace of mind. The only way I could get that peace of mind was by accepting Christ as my Savior.
- Because if my family went there, I wanted to be with them.
- All my family are saved and in the Baptist church. My family wanted me to give my life to Christ.
- The strength of my sister—when she was dying.
- My sister discussed the need to redo my baptism because the first time I was too young to understand what it meant.
- I think just watching the lives my niece and nephew were leading. The Lord had blessed their lives and that inspired me to accept him as Savior.

***Friends: Their Personal Witness—***

- Influence of a Godly friend by his lifestyle and his witness.
- A friend kept showing concern and took time to answer my questions on a level I could understand.
- The fellowship and my friends. Their constant preaching to me.
- My friends influenced me to accept Christ as my Savior. They told me in order to live right and see Christ in heaven, I had to turn my life over to him.
- My friends talked to me about Christ.

***Friends: Their Invitation to Church—***

- A friend asked me to attend church—that's when I gave my life to Christ.
- I attended church and felt the spirit. It was like a whole new life and I decided it was the way to live.
- My girlfriend got me going to church and I started listening to the sermons and what the pastor had to say.

***Friends: Their Example—***

- A friend of mine set a good example for me to follow.
- I could see the Holy Spirit in the life of a friend of the family.
- My boyfriend set a good example for me by going to church himself.
- I saw the love he gave to a particular friend of mine. He never hugged people and now he hugs all the time.

***People: Multiple Groups—*** (predominantly family and friends)

- My family, girlfriend, and youth minister were all there for me if I had any questions.

***Pastor: His Personal Witness—***

- The pastor came and talked to me about Christ.
- My pastor speaking to us by coming to our home and delivering the word of God to us.
- My pastor was always around. He talked to me about the Lord, and he's very convincing.
- Pastor: His Example or Friendship—
- The pastor's talking; real easy to talk to ; not like some others.
- My pastor is real personable and he's on my level. He's friendly and not high and mighty.
- The preacher's actions and his way of life set a good example for me to follow. Things were going well for him and I liked the way he was living.

***People in the Church—***

- Christian fellowship; being around them and watching their way of life.
- Members of the church came to visit. It made me feel that they could accept us.
- The people of the church have been very supportive towards me and my family.
- My church members knew the Lord and they talked to me about the Lord.

***People in the Marketplace—*** (people that you work with)

- My co-worker told me about the peace that Christ had brought into his life, and I wanted the same peace for myself.
- A customer of mine asked me if I was a Christian and that was the moment I decided.
- My boss read the Bible with me at home and on my job.

***Other People—***

- I witnessed the good that Christ was doing in the lives of others.
- The way the Christians that were surrounding me lived their lives—it was an example to me.
- The way people were towards me. They taught me about Christ and showed me I needed to accept him.
- Seeing other peoples' life change; they were like me, in a mess.
- A lady, when I was eight years old, used to take me to church because my family didn't. The seeds were planted by those early Sunday School classes and they never left me.
- The surrounding I was in. The people talked about Christ and I went to church with them.

### ***Inner Realization/Inner Desire/the Way I Felt—***

- I just knew that it was something I had to do; it was right for me.
- Something within me that told me that I needed to give my life to Christ.
- Realizing that I didn't remember if the first time if I had really accepted Christ or if I just ... I wanted to be sure I was saved.
- Mainly, it was that I had a void in my life and I knew what I needed to do to fill it. I didn't have Christ in my life, I needed to get baptized and accept Christ in order to be complete.
- Nothing dramatic happened to me. It was just the way I felt.
- Feeling of emptiness, looking for something to fill my need. So I made the most important move in my life by accepting Christ as my Savior.
- It just felt right.
- I needed a change, I needed something new in my life and God was it..
- The feeling that something was missing.
- I knew it was time. It's hard to explain.

### ***Wanted a Positive Influence on Children and Family—***

- My children need a good Christian role model, and that only happens through a good parent, one who accepts Christ.
- I realized that in order to get my family in the right direction, I needed God.
- If I wasn't saved and I wasn't living right, there was no telling what they would be doing. I knew I had to get my life together to give them a new home.
- We were expecting our first child. I needed to get on the right path. I needed to pray for direction in fatherhood.

### ***Fear of Hell/Desire for Heaven/Desire for Everlasting Life—***

- I influenced myself to accept Christ as my Savior because I don't want to burn in hell.
- I knew this was the only way I could go to heaven.
- The realization that if I did not go, I would go to hell.
- I wanted to go to heaven, just like everybody else, and I needed to have Christ as my Savior.

### ***Life Crisis/Problems—***

- My grandmother died. I didn't know if I would go to heaven, so that became important to me. I wanted to be there for my children.
- I was an alcoholic and drug addict, so I turned to Jesus. I knew he'd help me.
- I went through a trauma (divorce) in my life.
- My life had become unmanageable. I had no control over my life.
- I hit rock bottom, or so I thought. I couldn't do it—pull out of it—by myself.
- I was falling apart. I was pregnant and fixing to get a divorce. I just needed the Lord so much.
- My daughter's sickness (cancer) led me to the Lord.
- I wanted a change in my life. I was on drugs real bad.
- The death of my father. I never knew how much I needed my father in my life.
- My brother died at 25—got me thinking about my life.
- He brought me out of sickness (heart condition). I know it was him cause couldn't no-one else do it. Doctors couldn't cure me.

### ***Pastor: His Preaching and/or Teaching—***

- The pastor's sermon one Sunday influenced me because he asked the question "are you 100 percent sure you are saved?" My answer was "no"—so I knew I needed to get saved.
- The preacher and how he delivers the Word. He doesn't sugarcoat it; he leaves no gray areas.
- The way the preacher preached was very open and clear. I liked his sermons.
- My pastor preached good sermons. I felt he was preached directly to me—I felt I was almost put there on purpose to hear the Word of God.
- A sermon that I heard. It made me take a close look at what Christ does for me. I saw that he loves us and he went through a lot for us.
- His messages are very thorough and understandable and we really love him.
- The preacher's sermon that night. It was preached towards me. I had doubts before, but his message that night led me to be saved.
- The preacher really reached me. His preaching really saved me because I was at my wits end. He had his heart in his preaching and it reached into me.
- I guess the sermon that the preacher had given on doubting your salvation. I doubted mine and that was it.

### ***Reading the Bible/Bible Study Group—***

- I would say that reading the Bible was the major influence. Just studying it and getting to know what God expects of us.
- I attended a Bible study which made me realize I needed to accept Christ.
- Reading and studying the Bible.

### ***Revival/Evangelist—***

- . . . it was that revival; it was something I went to when I realized that something was missing and I knew then that it was Christ.
- The fact that I'd always wanted to and I'd never had the chance to. I attended a revival and there was an altar call, so I went up.
- We had a revival at our church. There was an evangelist there who influenced me to accept Christ.
- The evangelistic, revival preacher; his message was right out of the Bible—he really got to me.

### ***Miscellaneous—***

- My mother, sister, and me went to a play at a church. One scene showed a mother and child. The child died and went to heaven, but at the end of time the mother couldn't join him because she hadn't been saved. So that applied to me.
- Billy Graham show hit a nerve that I was doing wrong.
- I was listening to the radio and a song came on and the words were "you are lost," and I knew I was.
- All the prayers that went up for me.
- Had a lay renewal at our church.
- No direction in my life. Saw bulletins in front of churches and everything seemed to pertain to me.

## **Appendix I**

There may have been other influences affecting your decision to become a Christian. I'm going to read a list of 11 items that may be influential in a person's decision to accept Christ as Savior. For each one, please tell me if it was a major influence, a minor influence or no influence in your decision to accept Christ as Savior.

<u>Major</u>	<u>Minor</u>	<u>None</u>	
56.6	25.7	16.7	Someone personally shared the plan of salvation
47.2	36.7	15.2	Someone told about their own personal experience with God
53.0	33.7	13.3	Watching the way a person lived as a Christian
76.9	16.9	5.6	Attending church worship services
27.9	28.4	42.5	Attending a revival or crusade
46.4	34.2	19.4	Attending Sunday School or Bible Study
57.5	30.5	12.0	Reading the Bible on your own
16.9	42.5	39.9	Reading a religious booklet or tract
21.6	35.0	43.5	Watching a religious television or listening to radio
45.6	15.8	37.9	Experiencing a personal crisis
25.9	24.7	48.2	Experiencing major change

## **Appendix J**

All respondents were asked why they decided to join the particular church in which they were recently baptized. This was an open-ended question. Telephone interviewers were instructed to record response as close to verbatim as possible. They were allowed to probe and clarify responses where necessary. After all interviewing was completed, researchers at the Home Mission Board, read all responses and developed a list of 27 categories for all the different reasons given. Then researchers read back through the answers for each respondent and assigned and recorded up to 4 different reasons that a person stated for joining the church.

The categories developed for responses to this question and the frequency of occurrence are as follows:

Preacher: sermons/teaching	24.0 %
Preacher: personal relationships/example/nice guy/friendship/personal witness/non-specific preacher responses	18.7
Preacher: pastoral counseling	0.6
Congregation: people warm and friendly/fellowship/I felt loved/I liked the people/acceptance/openness/welcome us/felt comfortable/felt at home	50.4
Friends: invited to church/my friends are in the church	13.1
Spouse: spouse in the church/spouse liked it (picked it)	13.3
Family : family in the church	14.7
Children: my children liked it/children and youth programs/opportunities	8.8
Variety of programs	2.9
Sunday School/Sunday School teacher/Bible Study	4.2
Ministry of the church/ministry-based outreach	2.7
Felt the Holy Spirit/Christ-like atmosphere	5.2
Felt it was where God wanted me/it felt right	3.9
A place to serve/I became involved	1.4
Long-time attendee/attended church all my life/grew up in church	8.5
Location	11.8
Worship style (praise)/good music	3.5
Bible centered/sound doctrine/church is consistent with what I believe	4.3
Christian example of the people/the Christ-likeness of the church people/witness of church members/church visitation/outreach program	4.3
Size of church (usually preferred small congregation)	6.1
Because it was a Baptist church	1.9
Met spiritual needs	0.8
I was married there	1.3
Accepted Christ there/attended a revival	0.6
Other church staff (also non-specific church staff)	0.7
Don't know (includes no discernible reason)/just did it	1.3
Miscellaneous responses	3.4

Detailed examples of most of the categories are as follows:

***Preacher: sermons/teaching—***

- The pastor preaches the way it ought to be preached—no matter if you like it or not.
- The preacher speaking on my level. I get a lot out of what he says. Sometimes, I think he is speaking right to me.
- Preaching really explained the Bible and preached directly from the Bible. The sermons were very clear and easy to understand.
- I like the sermons. His sermons applied to real-life situations.
- I liked the preacher because he preached so that I could understand.
- I liked our minister. I liked his message because it's not hell, fire and brimstone.
- Preacher preaches straight from Bible and does not interject his own opinions.

***Preacher: personal relationships/example/nice guy/friendship/personal witness/non-specific preacher responses—***

- The minister he visited frequently when my husband was sick, and he supported us. He's closer to us.
- The minister is one of the most loving, caring ministers we've come across. He's got a great sense of humor.
- Because I love my pastor. He helped me through a rough time. I just love him.
- My husband and I joined the church because of my pastor, we love him. He walks the talk of God; he's humble and honest. Our pastor is actively still seeking God and growing in His spirits.

***Preacher: pastoral counseling—***

- Because of my previous problems I went to the church for someone to talk to. The Pastor was very supportive and listened to me.
- Talking to preacher about my problems and decided I should join the congregation because as I talked about my problems, even though they're not all solved, I feel better.

***Congregation: people warm and friendly/fellowship/I felt loved/I liked the people/acceptance/openness/welcomed us/felt comfortable/felt at home—***

- Just started going and I liked the down-home, Southern atmosphere and the friendly, caring people.
- People are friendly. I felt right at home. They cared. They greeted you personally.
- I liked the fellowship. The members were genuinely caring when we came together for worship. They communicated openly with me whenever I came to them with problems.
- Fellowship in the church—very “family” atmosphere, very warm and outgoing. They have a strong social program, not just services and classes.
- Because the people there totally accepted me for what I was. Strong fellowship.
- Checked several churches and this was the warmest, friendlier church. It was also close to home. The people there make you feel good. They listen to you when you talk.
- We visited the church for about 3 months. Everybody just made us feel welcomed. No one was a snob, they just included us in their love.
- Well, it was the atmosphere. They made us feel at home. You see, I'm in an inter-racial marriage and I can pretty much tell how people feel, but they accepted us right off. No, that's pretty much it.
- There's a great love there. The people aren't uppity. They are very friendly. You can wear whatever you want and the church is full of laughter.
- They just accepted you as you were. . . . you didn't have to dress a certain way or act a certain way. It was just come as you are.

***Friends: invited to church/my friends are in the church—***

- A friend I highly respected suggested we attend.

***Spouse: spouse in the church/spouse liked it (picked it)—***

- Due to a marriage. My wife was attending Calvary Baptist and I transferred my membership from the Methodist Church to Calvary Baptist.
- It was my husband's church and his family went there. I hate to admit it but that is the only reason I joined.
- I recently got married and it was his (husband's) church already.

***Family: family in the church—***

- Our son had joined the church and wanted us to come and visit.
- My mother wanted me to join. I went to church as a Mother's Day present for my mom. My brothers also went to this church.

***Children: my children liked it/children and youth programs/opportunities—***

- We were in a church that we didn't like when my daughter started going to New Zion because of their youth group. As she became more active and enthusiastic we decided to go.
- I wanted to raise my children there.
- We had moved to the area from California and our daughter began to go with some friends and that led us to join. Our daughter liked it.
- My oldest son started going to the youth group and we visited the church.
- There was more opportunity for my children to be with other children.
- To get my kids in the church, it's my duty as a parent.
- They had a larger and better youth program than any other church around. They go on retreats, they meet every Wednesday. I'm not sure of exactly what they do, but my son really enjoys it.

***Variety of programs—***

- They offered the most for our family; activities for our children and programs for adults.

***Sunday School/Sunday School teacher/Bible Study—***

- It had a better Sunday School program than the other churches I visited.

***Ministry of the church/ministry-based outreach—***

- I left my prior church because of problems. The church I attend now aids the community.
- They also supported me after my divorce by making me feel still part of the church.

***Felt the Holy Spirit/Christ-like atmosphere***

- I felt the Lord was there.
- It felt like you could feel the presence of God.
- It was a spiritual church.
- The church. I feel that the Holy Spirit was working in the church.

***Felt it was where God wanted me/it felt right—***

- I felt that was where God wanted me to be.
- Me and my wife felt that that's where the Lord wanted us.
- God told me to go there.
- The Lord called me to that church.
- Because the Lord led me there.
- It just felt like the right place.

***A place to serve/I became involved—***

***Long-time attendee/attended church all my life/grew up in church—***

- I have been there since I was born. I have never thought of going anywhere else.

***Location—***

- The Methodist church was our family church, but it was 30 minutes from our poultry farm and the Southern Baptist church was only 5 minutes away.
- It was in the community.

***Worship style (praise)/good music—***

- The services are step-by step-programmed format, lets you get comfortable and at ease; my wife also feels that way. It's a pleasure to go, I take pleasure going. Let's just say my home is "prayer-conditioned"—not air-conditioned.

***Bible centered/sound doctrine/church is consistent with what I believe—***

- I joined because it's a God-fearing, Bible believing and teaching church. By this I mean every member believes in the Bible and the pastor teaches the word of God like you can't believe.
- Biblical principles. Their theological practices follow more closely the Biblical principles in our opinion. We had visited other churches and the Baptist church which we are now members of satisfied us more in terms of their principles. It's a theological thing you know. I guess that's basically what I'm trying to say.
- The church taught what I believe in.
- ...we share the same values and beliefs.
- Their beliefs are similar to my personal beliefs about God. They believe that Jesus is love. There are no other reasons.
- I had attended many different denomination's services and I felt that this church followed closest to the true meaning of the scriptures.

***Christian example of the people/the Christ-likeness of the church  
people/witness of church members/church visitation/outreach program—***

- I felt the Spirit of Christ in everyone at the church. Everyone just talked of Christ only and was willing to work as His holy workers and pleasing him to no end.
- I really love the congregation because you can feel the Holy Spirit flowing through the church in everyone as good Christians.

***Size of church—*** (usually preferred small congregation)

- Cause it's a small church.
- We liked it because it was small and comfortable.
- It was a small church. Large churches intimidate me.
- The size of the church. It has more than a 30 person congregation, which makes it have a lot to offer.

***Because it was a Baptist church—***

***Met spiritual needs—***

- I was getting more from it spiritually than the others.

***I was married there—***

***Accepted Christ there/attended a revival—***

***Other church staff (also non-specific church staff)—***

***Don't know (includes no discernible reason)/just did it—***

- We were just looking for a new church. We found it, we liked it, we joined it (particular liked?) Nope, just liked it
- My choice to learn new ideas.
- It's personal. I'd rather not share that.

***Miscellaneous responses—***

- Great facilities; nice building.
- Well, I am divorced and have a living husband and I can't participate in the Catholic church like I wanted to, but I found that I could participate fully at this church.
- I did not join. I still attend a Methodist church. I just wanted an immersion baptism, the first time was just sprinkling.
- The church services are very well coordinated. The ushers are lined up in perfect order. The short ones are in front and the tall ones are in the back. The musicians are always playing at exactly the right moment. They never make a mistake. I really just love that.
- Because they had an early service. I go fishing on Sundays so it is convenient for me. I said to my wife, "If you can find an early service that I can attend, I will attend" and she did.
- The building was real nice looking.
- My wife's parents chose the church for us in the yellow pages.
- It's a growing church and it's moving forward.
- It's a young and growing congregation.

## **Appendix K**

## ANALYSIS BY STRATIFICATION VARIABLES AND SOUTH/NON SOUTH CLASSIFICATIONS

There were three stratifying variables used in the design of the survey and the selection of the sample. The first variable classified churches into low, medium, and high baptism churches. The second variable classified churches east and west of the Mississippi; the third classified churches into metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The study was designed so there would be enough respondents from churches in these categories to draw conclusions about their differences. An additional classification variable was created after the data were collected. The variable classified churches into those in the South region of the U.S. and those outside the South.

Cross tabulating most all variables by these special classification variables revealed no huge differences. Most differences were either statistically insignificant or too small to make a practical difference. The differences that did appear are detailed below by classification variable.

### LOW, MEDIUM, AND HIGH BAPTISM CHURCHES

There was a relationship between the level of adult baptisms and whether or not people had been previously baptized. The percentage of adults previously baptized consistently increased from low baptism churches to high baptism churches. Half (49.6%) of respondents from low baptism churches had been previously baptized, while 61.6 percent of respondents from medium baptism churches and 67.9 percent of high baptism churches had been previously baptized.

There is a relationship between low, medium, and high baptism churches with rebaptism of Southern Baptists. The following tables shows the percentage of new converts that were previously baptized in Southern Baptist churches by church type.

	Low	Medium	High
Previously baptized Southern Baptist	8.3%	16.7%	31.6%

There is also a difference in those rededicating their lives among the different church type. The following table shows the percentage of persons rededicating their lives that were previously baptized in Southern Baptist churches.

	Low	Medium	High
Previously baptized Southern Baptist	22.4%	32.5%	32.1%

Higher baptism churches apparently encourage members to question their prior conversion and baptism experience and to be rebaptized.

The contributing influences of attending Sunday School and experiencing personal crisis in the conversion process were inversely related to the level of baptisms in respondents' churches. Both of these factors were less important in high baptism churches than in low baptism churches. The percentage of respondents in these three types of churches reporting Sunday School and personal crisis as a major contributing influence in their conversion experience is as follows:

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>
Attending Sunday School	51.1%	47.8%	41.6%
Experiencing Personal Crisis	56.4%	44.3%	39.8%

The implication is that higher baptism churches rely less on their Sunday School program and ministry in times of personal crisis, and more on some other types of outreach.

The only other important difference found in the study is that respondents in high baptism churches report more frequently that they joined because of the preacher's sermons. The percentage of respondents citing the pastor's sermons as a reason for joining their church is as follows:

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>
Pastors Sermons	19.3%	21.3%	31.0%

There were no other major differences found for this variable.

### **METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN CHURCHES**

Respondents in nonmetropolitan churches stated that an inner realization was the primary influence in their conversion more frequently than those in metropolitan churches—23.5 percent versus 12.7 percent. On the other hand, respondents in metropolitan churches more frequently cited experiencing a life crisis as the major influence in their decision to become a Christian—16.9 versus 5.0 percent.

Respondents in nonmetropolitan churches were more likely to report that attending revival services was a major contributing factor in their decision to become a Christian than their counterparts—35.0 versus 24.4 percent.

Respondents in metropolitan churches reported to a greater extent that they joined their church because of the warmth and friendliness of the congregation—54.0 versus 42.8 percent.

### **EAST AND WEST CHURCHES**

There were no major differences found between churches East of the Mississippi River and those West of the Mississippi.

### **SOUTH AND NON-SOUTH CHURCHES**

The Southern Baptist Convention, though a denomination found throughout the U.S., is still primarily a southern phenomenon. Eighty-one percent of all Southern Baptist churches are in the South Region of the U.S. and 86 percent of its members are in the South. Also, 81 percent of baptisms reported for 1993 were from churches in the South.

At one time Southern Baptist churches outside the South were largely populated by transplanted Southerners. One of the significant findings of this study is that Southern Baptist churches outside the South are primarily baptizing non Southerners. The evidence is that if they are not already indigenous, they are rapidly becoming so. Ninety percent of all respondents baptized in churches outside the South primarily grew up outside the South. By comparison, 80 percent of respondents baptized in churches in the South primarily grew up in the South. Apparently churches in the South are benefiting from the immigration of people from other regions.

The only other significant difference is that respondents in the South were more likely to report that reading the Bible was a major contributing factor in their conversion experience than those outside the South—60.3 percent versus 45.3 percent. It seems reasonable that the Bible is more highly revered in the Bible Belt.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The information in the study should be fairly representative of all adults baptized in the Southern Baptist Convention regardless of location and church type.

There are relatively few significant differences found for the stratification variables in the study. There was probably little design effect gained by using these three stratification variables, i.e., there was little reduction in the overall standard error gained by stratification. In particular, the East/West stratification was least helpful.

The advantage of stratification is that it ensured the sample to be representative of the whole Convention rather than dominated by small Southern churches in rural areas.