

# Research Report

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*1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day Survey Evaluation*

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day materials were sent to all Southern Baptist (SBC) pastors in the summer of 1997, prior to the suggested implementation of a soul-winning commitment campaign in September-October. The 1997 theme was *Light Your World*. This study attempts to document the reception and use of the *Light Your World* materials as well as the prevalence of churches which conducted a Soul-Winning Commitment Day (SWCD) in 1997.

A systematic sample of 1,000 churches (pre-sorted by church size) was selected from constituted churches reporting at least one member and with mailing addresses reported on the 1996 Annual Church Profile. The survey was designed to be short and easy to return. Four questions (plus a space for comment/suggestions) were printed on a stamped, return-addressed post card (see appendix) enclosed with a letter from Jack Smith, Soul-Winning Evangelism Associate at the North American Mission Board, requesting pastors to respond. The response rate is shown below. Despite efforts to increase the response rate, the 27.1 percent rate is low. Although it is impossible to predict precisely how non-responders would have answered, the results do give us indicators of the levels of 1997 participation in SWCD and use of the theme materials.

Surveys mailed	1,000
Surveys returned—bad addresses	24
Surveys successfully mailed and received	976
Completed surveys	264
Adjusted response rate	27.1%

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Overall, 85.2 percent of the respondents received the *Light Your World* materials. The table below reports the number and percentage of responses to the first survey question.

*Did you receive the 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day package titled Light Your World?*

yes	225	85.2%
no	34	12.9%
no response	5	1.9%
total	264	100.0%

Almost half the respondents (47.0%) indicated that their churches conducted a Soul-Winning Commitment Day in 1997—or had one scheduled (see table below). About half (49.6%) had not conducted—nor did they plan to conduct—an SWCD. The remainder (3.4%) did not answer the question.

*Have you conducted a Soul-Winning Commitment Day in 1997  
or do you have one scheduled?*

yes	124	47.0%
no	131	49.6%
no response	9	3.4%
total	264	100.0%

With no accurate way to evaluate non-responders, the best available evidence is that 47 percent of SBC churches conducted a 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day. If these figures fairly represent all Southern Baptist churches, then 17,000 SBC churches conducted—or planned to conduct—a 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day. Since there was such a high non-response to the survey (72.9%), this is probably the highest possible figure. Somewhat less positive results can be assumed for SWCD participation among the non-responders. Generally, if pastors have participated in a program/project one could assume they would be more likely to respond than if they did not participate or use the materials. A worst case scenario—none of the non-responders conducted an SWCD—would mean that 12.7 percent (representing about 4,600 churches) conducted an SWCD. In any case, the survey shows that a significant number and percentage of Southern Baptist churches conducted a 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day.

The survey asked a follow-up question to those who responded that their church had already conducted or planned to conduct an SWCD. Of the 124 respondents who conducted or planned to conduct an SWCD, 107 (86.3%) planned to use the *Light Your World* materials. Interestingly, 10 of the 131 churches that did not conduct an SWCD indicated that they planned to use the materials. Judging from comments on the cards, the materials were sometimes used beyond just the SWCD campaign (e.g., Sunday School growth campaigns, sermon ideas, etc.).

Almost all of those who used the *Light Your World* materials (96.0%, or 144 respondents) found them helpful. Only 6 pastors indicated the materials were not helpful.

There were 100 respondents who received the materials, conducted an SWCD, used the *Light Your World* materials, and found them helpful. This represents 44.4 percent of all churches that received the *Light Your World* packet. An optimistic assumption that non-responders would have answered similarly means that about 13,800 SBC churches conducted an SWCD, used the *Light Your World* materials, and thought the materials were helpful.

Most of the comments and suggestions written by respondents were positive about the materials. Many pastors reported how the SWCD and the *Light Your World* materials benefited their churches. A number of pastors attributed increases in attendance, prospects, and professions of faith to the *Light Your World* SWCD campaign. Many also offered words of thanks and encouragement for the materials. Suggestions for the future included: providing

materials in Spanish, making clip art available on the World Wide Web, and offering audio and video tape resources. See Appendix A for the verbatim responses to the comments/suggestions section of the survey.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear from this survey that Soul-Winning Commitment Day is widely observed in the Southern Baptist Convention, with as many as 17,000 churches participating in 1997. Even if the large non-response rate means that fewer churches actually observed SWCD, a sizable number of SBC churches—several thousand—did participate; and almost all of those conducting a Soul-Winning Commitment Day used (or planned to use) the materials and found them helpful.

## **Appendix A**

## Verbatim Responses from the 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day Survey

### Comments/Suggestions:

- Drama, skits, especially helpful.
- Greatly appreciate the suggestions, sermon ideas, clip art and promo help.
- Would like a video available for purchase with commercial/promotional spots to motivate congregation in weeks leading up to day, plus one longer testimony.
- SWCD material was very helpful. We had increase in attendance, prospects. One saved during the month.
- Need to put downloadable clip art on the web—from original art, not scans.
- Thank you for your desire to serve God's churches. In past, I have found most "canned" material to be of little help.
- Great job!
- The ideas and suggestions were very helpful.
- We used the dramas (very effective and are using the lights in the windows). We also had the special days (neighbor, friend, associate, etc.).
- Pretty usable, better message, sermon with more illustrations would help.
- Materials were somewhat helpful.
- Used materials in the past (and they were helpful). We didn't do an SWCD this year because of a scheduled revival, but we plan to do one in 1998.
- Our pastor has been unable to schedule a time to use the materials due to illness (cancer) in his family. We still plan to use the materials.
- I am new on the field and waiting until spring to make such a promotion.
- I did use some of the ideal but did not set a commitment day. We have had five saved in the last two months.
- What does this have to do with home missions. This seems to be something that we are already getting from the Evangelical Department of State Conventions.
- I just came on the field. I would like to do one in '98. Please send me the materials so I can possibly do it in '98. Pastor, Ingleside Baptist Church, 4000 Velva Ave., Shreveport, La, 71109.
- I have used the material in the past and found it very helpful.
- [We didn't do an SWCD] but we modified the plans for a light your world, three week outreach emphasis.
- Thank you! I think the materials are great. Keep up the good work!
- [Not scheduled now] we will schedule it later in the year.
- We use the *Light Your World* emphasis for the whole month of October. It was very helpful.
- We did not follow every suggested activity. We did emphasize *Light Your World* in September—promotion. We did emphasize *Light Your World* in October—activity—and made a coordinated effort during Sunday sermon. Results—increased S.S. attendance—we hope to build on this. Thank you.
- I moved churches at the time and didn't get to plan such a day this year.
- [Didn't do in '97] hope to do in '98.
- Please, we need the materials in Spanish.

Comments/Suggestions (continued):

- I have used in previous year, but now in a new church start.
- Materials are adaptable and usable—I appreciate that.
- Some years we use these. They are helpful and well done. I encourage you to continue.  
Guy Hollowly, Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.
- Did not use because of moving into new facilities after a fire.
- We teach personal evangelism annually from the pulpit.
- We did use wall posters. They were helpful.
- Don't remember receiving material.
- Plan for spring '98.
- We need the same materials in Spanish.
- We are about one year away from being able to do a church wide soul winning emphasis.
- I used *Light Your World* in the fall and will do an SWCD in Jan '98 due to the seasons in flux.
- Great materials!
- We had very good response!
- Former pastor left in May. Current pastor has not seen material.
- Very good, very helpful.
- Please send.
- Excellent material.
- Most helpful! Buckhead Baptist, Atlanta, Ga.
- Best yet.
- All year is soul winning commitment for us, not only one day.
- They were very helpful.
- I didn't use them this year, but I have in the past.
- Great lay-out. We had a great response!
- I am a new pastor at Pleasant Valley [Cape Girardeau, Mo.]. I do not know if they received the packet or not. If they did, we have not to my knowledge used any of the material. Sincerely yours, Rev. Bruce Pittman.
- Small struggling congregation. I've only been here for short time and just now getting things together.
- Southern Baptist churches are programmed to death. Need more spiritual emphasis like Henry Blackaby supplies.
- For January '98.
- Need good tracts for singles and divorcees (and youth).
- [Material] would seem to be helpful. Church was without a pastor at this time.
- We have our own church schedule so we seldom will use outside materials.
- Need to find way to genuine renewal before taking the next step.
- People just won't commit to it by signing & returning cards.
- I plan to use next year.
- Whitesville Road Baptist is changed to Central Baptist, 8303 Whitesville Rd., Columbus, Ga 31908.

Comments/Suggestions (continued):

- The packet was great! The step by step instructions were helpful. Although we didn't see a great change in attendance, several of our members made decisions for evangelism and missions. Thanks! Chet Roden, P.S. send another one next year.
- Please send me the soul-winning packet. Pastor Torres, 2902 N. Armstrong, Kingsville, Tx 78363.
- I am a new pastor at this church. It is possible that the material was never circulated to me. I don't remember seeing it. We use E.E. currently.
- Include a cassette tape of the message(s) actually being preached.
- Good material—good response.
- I have not seen it?
- Great timing for us!
- Thanks.
- Pack looks good. [will be helpful] probably. Thanks for remembering us.
- We used the materials for Sunday School emphasis day.
- I just accepted the call here.
- Our people had problems setting a numerical goal—much opposition to that aspect of *Light Your World*.
- Thank you!
- I've only been at this church as pastor for two months.
- We are improving and appreciate your materials. T. Kidd
- None at this time.
- Pray, pray, pray some more!
- Did it before material came.
- I will be working to effect some things. Plan now. The prayer walk—in near future. Dr. Frank Kuriger, Pastor.
- Will be Jan 1998.
- My pastorate here began in June 97. I am bivocational. Have not seen the material but would like to look at it.
- Please send package. Would love to see materials.
- The church has lost it's pastor. Don't know the above.
- [Will use] if sent [did not receive].
- I appreciated the resources!
- Would be more [helpful if] poster [was] larger size for bulletin board.
- I have used it in a presentation for a bible study class. Frank Wilson
- Appears to be helpful.
- Very well done this year. We saw an increase in S.S. and worship. Thanks.

## **Appendix B**

## 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day Survey Questions

Did you receive the 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day package titled *Light Your World*?

yes  no

Have you conducted a Soul-Winning Commitment Day in 1997 or do you have one scheduled?

yes  no

If yes, did you use—or do you plan to use—the materials in the 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day package?

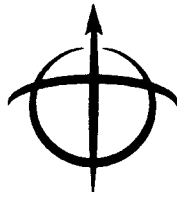
yes  no

Are the materials in the packet helpful?

- yes, helpful
- no, not helpful
- don't know, haven't used them

Comments/suggestions:

## **Appendix C**



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC  
**NAMB**

October 31, 1997

Dear Pastor:

We need your help. The North American Mission Board is committed to providing resources to help you and your church reach persons in your community with the good news of Jesus Christ. *You can help us to help you by taking a few minutes right now to complete a brief, postcard questionnaire and return it to us.* The card is already stamped and addressed to make it easier for you to respond quickly.

Earlier this year you should have received 1997 Soul-Winning Commitment Day materials (the theme: *Light Your World*). The short questionnaire references these materials.

*Please complete the questionnaire and return it to us—even if you do not remember getting the Soul-Winning Commitment Day materials, or even if you did not use them!* Your response will be valuable information for us.

Thank you in advance for your help and for your commitment to reaching people for Christ. Your response will help us be good stewards of the funds you have entrusted to us.

Sincerely,

Jack R. Smith  
Soul-Winning Associate