

Evangelism 2024 Pt. 2 – Stats

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, June 30, 2024

MEMBERSHIP

NOTE 1 – Before we dismiss the children and accompanying volunteers, I want to welcome five new members!

Q. Why is membership to a local church so vital?

A1. It Has Scriptural Precedent. It was the norm for believers in the Early Church to identify with a local body. The Epistles of Paul were addressed to both recognized and recognizable communities of believers (e.g., Rome, Colossae, Ephesus and Thessalonica). Though they may not have used the same process we do in 2024, individual believers were absolutely connected with and committed to local branches of the Church Universal.

A2. It Promotes the Spiritual Development of the Member. I have never seen a mature, healthy church-hopper. Moreover, I have never seen a mature and healthy loner (i.e., one who lives isolated from the Body of Christ). No, those who flourish in the kingdom are those who are connected with and committed to a local fellowship.

A3. It Promotes the Cause of Christ in the Earth. How can the Church of Jesus Christ fulfill its sacred mandate to reach the lost and make disciples if the Body of Christ is disunited, disconnected and uncommitted in the earth? We can accomplish so much more in the Lord when we work together, so let us work together in Christ in kind!

NOTE 2 – This morning we welcome five men and women into the official membership of New Life (**STAND**): **a)** Miguel Core; **b)** Nancy Colbert; **c)** Katherin Gentile; **d)** Rick Hosterman; and **e)** Abby Tupper. God bless you all!

NOTE 3 – I offer you this charge: **a)** serve the Lord with dedication, passion and joy; **b)** prioritize connection with this local church body (relational investment); **c)** prioritize commitment to this local church fellowship (service).

KEY – As each of you who stand before me today have completed the requirements for membership as outlined in Scripture and in our governing Constitution and Bylaws—and upon the recommendation and approval of the Board of Deacons and the Executive Board—it is my privilege to welcome you into the membership of New Life. May this be the beginning of a long and wonderful partnership in the work of Christ!

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – This morning I want to introduce a new multi-part series on evangelism (i.e., the sharing of the gospel). As your Pastor it is my hope that this series will prove transformative to you, this church, and our community. Without much in the way of introduction, I posit that we who live under the lordship of Christ live under this order:

Matthew 28:19b–20a (NIV)

19 “. . . go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

NOTE 2 – The Gospel of Mark records an order quite similar in wording, tone and urgency! Let us note together:

Mark 16:15b–16

15 “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Q1. How many are aware of the ‘Great Commission’ of Jesus Christ?

Q2. How many believe they are responsible to make Jesus Christ known?

Q3. How many believe there are eternal stakes in the outworking of this call?

Q4. Yet how many struggle in obeying this particular mandate of the Risen One?

Q5. Why do we struggle to obey Him when His call is clear and so much is at stake?

NOTE 2 – We do well to consider such questions and our response(s) to them. This will be our focus this morning! I have chosen to contend with such queries citing research conducted by Jesus Film Project’s Multigenerational Survey on Evangelism (<https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog/christian-evangelism-statistics/>) (2020). In said survey more than 1,600 Christians were asked questions about the sharing of their faith—questions like the following:

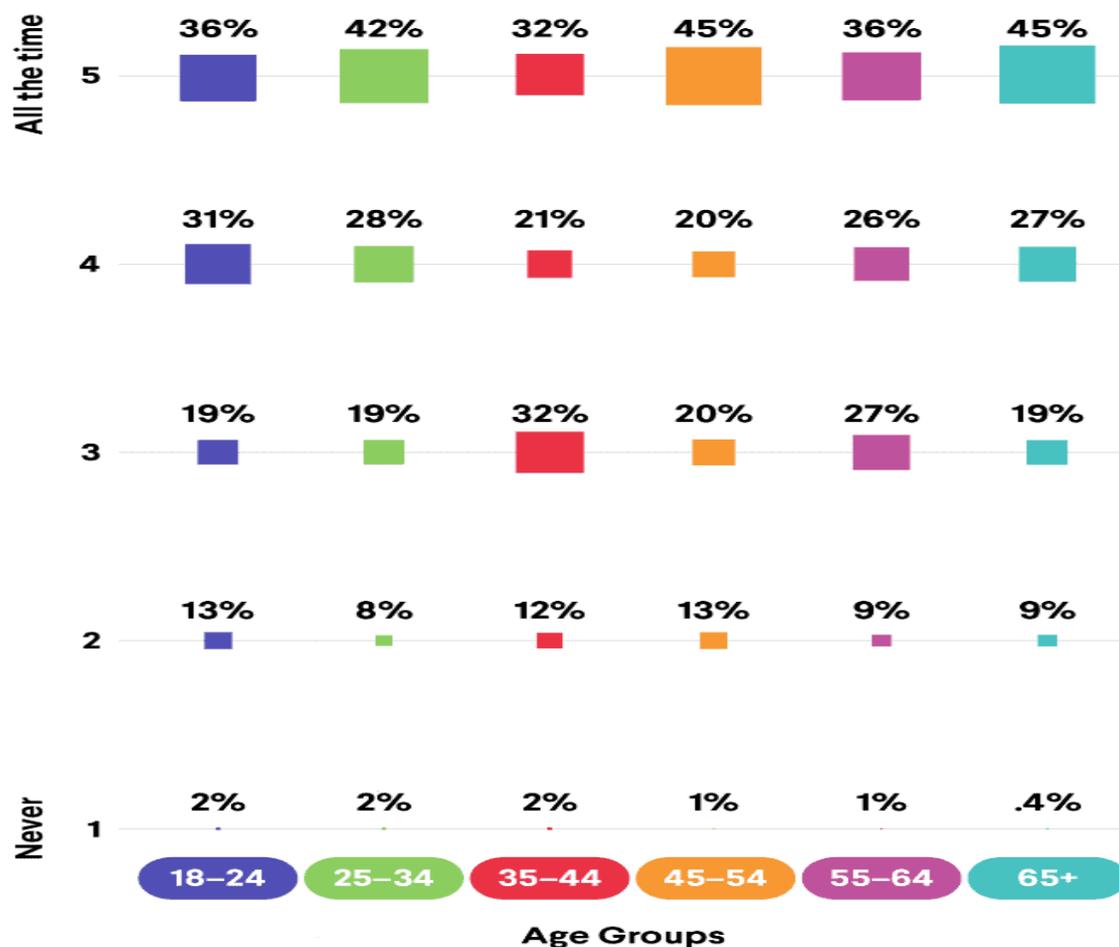
- How do you share your faith with others?
- How important is it that you share your faith with other people?
- How often do you talk about spiritual matters with the following type(s) of people?
 - People who share your beliefs?
 - People who know you well, regardless of their beliefs?
 - People who seem open to spiritual dialogue but might not share your beliefs?
 - People who voice beliefs that you do not agree with?

NOTE 3 – Let us consider together the results of their 1,600-person survey. I think said results are quite insightful. In a spirit of full disclosure, much of what we will discuss this morning will spill over into next Sunday morning. We will touch upon too many complex issues and raise too many questions to satisfactorily handle in one mtng.

DELVING IN

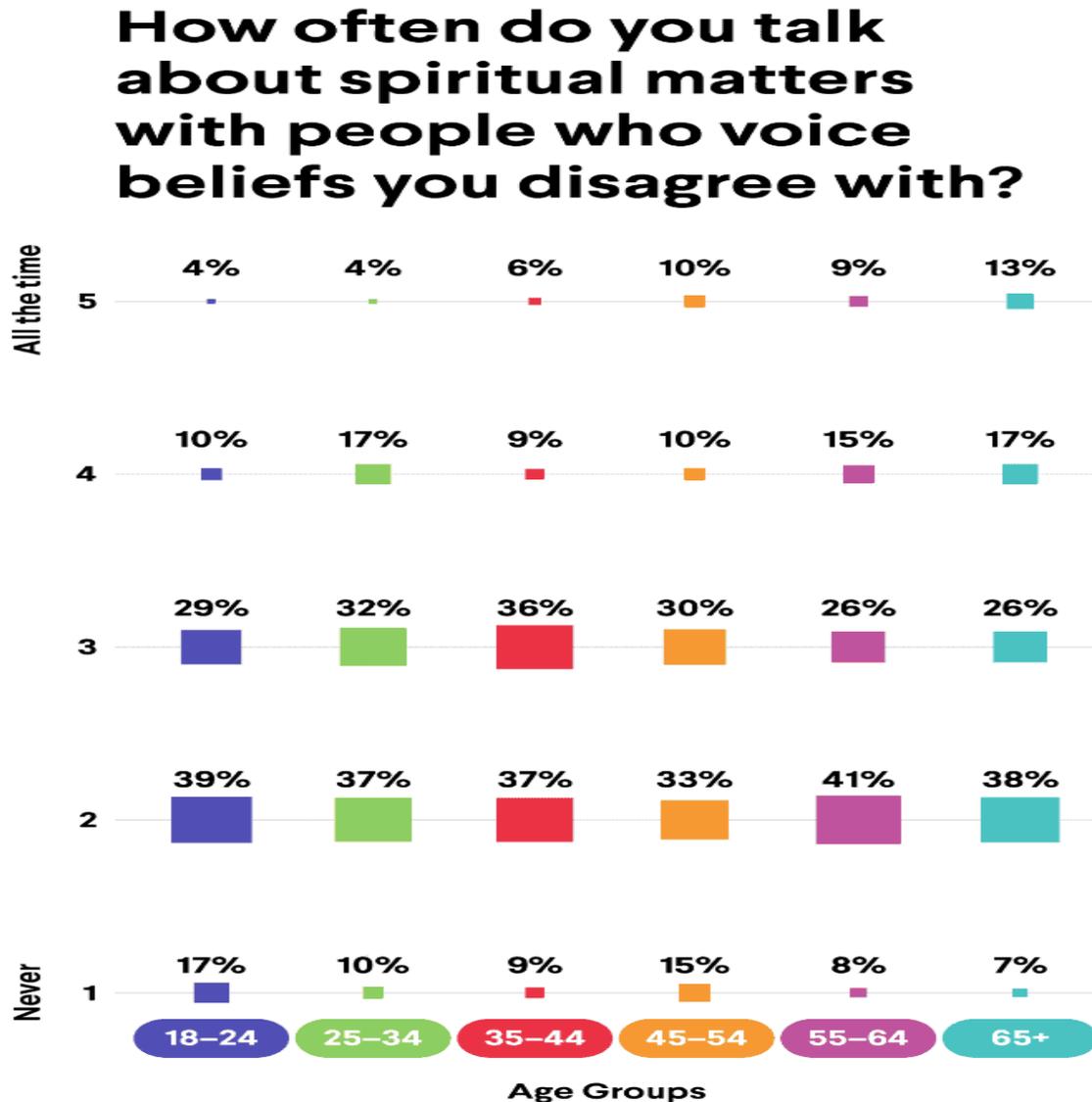
NOTE 1 – Unsurprisingly, the research indicated that Christians were much more likely to talk about their beliefs with those who shared them than those who did not. Therefore, we come to see results like the following (**SLIDE**):

How often do you talk about spiritual matters with people who seem to share your beliefs?



- 86% of young people (18–24) were inclined to openly discuss their faith with fellow believers (3–5)
- 89% of young adults (25–34) were inclined to openly discuss their faith with fellow believers (3–5)
- 85% of adults (ages 35–44) were inclined to openly discuss their faith with fellow believers (3–5)
- 85% of adults (ages 45–54) were inclined to openly discuss their faith with fellow Christians (3–5)
- 89% of adults (ages 55–64) were inclined to openly discuss their faith with fellow Christians (3–5)
- 91% of senior adults (65+) were inclined to openly discuss their faith in Christ with Christians (3–5)
- On average, less than 13% of ALL age-ranges were inclined to remain silent amongst believers (1–2)

NOTE 2 – Inversely, when it came to talking about spiritual matters with those who might disagree, respondents in every age-group noted that they seldom broached the subject. Let us note the following (**SLIDE**):



- 43% of young people (18–24) were inclined to openly discuss their faith amidst non-believers (3–5) v. 86%
- 53% of young adults (25–34) were inclined to openly discuss their faith amidst non-believers (3–5) v. 89%
- 51% of adults (ages 35–44) were inclined to openly discuss their faith amidst non-believers (3–5) v. 85%
- 50% of adults (ages 45–54) were inclined to openly discuss their faith amidst non-believers (3–5) v. 85%
- 50% of adults (ages 55–64) were inclined to openly discuss their faith amidst non-believers (3–5) v. 89%
- 56% of senior adults (65+) were inclined to openly discuss their belief amidst non-Christians (3–5) v. 91%
- Ultimately, on average 49% of all age-ranges were inclined to remain silent amongst non-Christians (1–2)

Q. What does this begin to reveal?

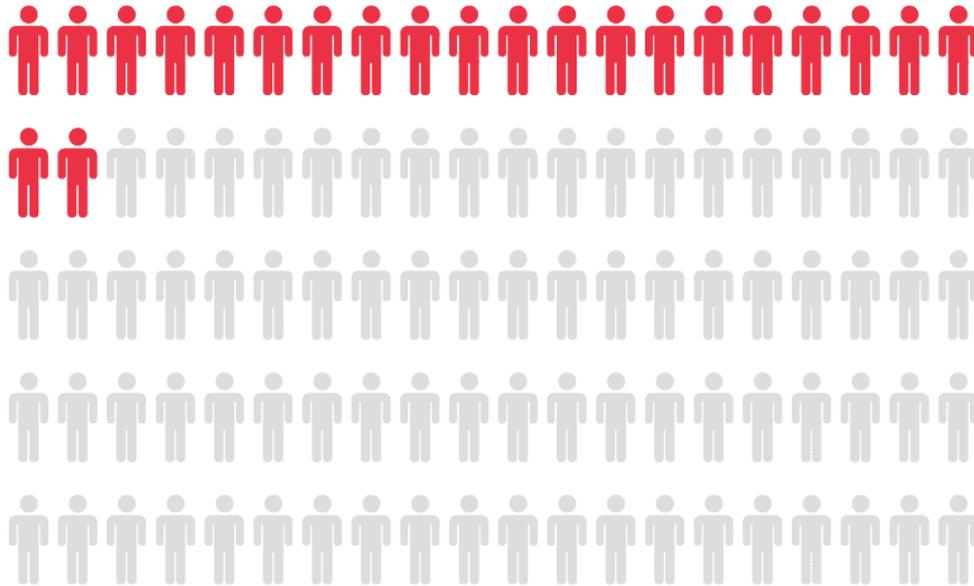
A. Christians tend to go silent around the very people they are called to reach (cf. Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15)!

DELVING DEEPER

KEY – Some of the most revealing information came from the question, “What prevents you from talking about Christ with other people?” The study allowed respondents to share their own reasons as to why they shied away from personal evangelism. Let us take the time to examine the results of their findings (i.e., heavy hitters). Note:

NOTE 1 – 22% of respondents listed fear as the primary or driving hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

I’m afraid to share my faith: 22%

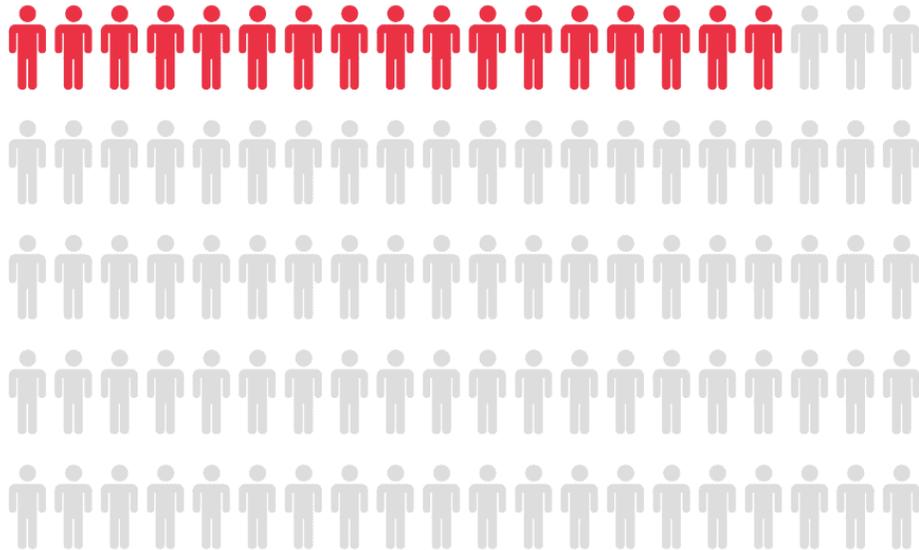


“When it came to talking to other people about the gospel, fear was far and away the most significant deterrent. People communicated that they were afraid of losing valuable relationships and wanted to avoid the tensions that accompanied these kinds of discussions Others felt entirely ill-equipped. They’d like to share more, but they are scared that they will end up fielding questions and/or dealing with objections too uncomfortable to navigate.

Fear is the common thread that weaves together many of the different responses to this survey. Respondents often used words like ‘fear,’ ‘scared,’ or ‘afraid’ to describe their feelings about other reasons they do not talk about spiritual matters. For example, many responses came in along the lines of ‘fear of rejection,’ or ‘I’m afraid I’ll come across as pushy,’ or ‘I’m scared to start an argument.’”

NOTE 2 – 17% noted the lack of opportunities to share their faith as the primary hindrance in evangelism (**SLIDE**):

I don't have opportunities to share my faith: 17%



“Many people responded that the ideal moment seldom presents itself. For some, physical hardships make it difficult to get out and interact with others. Most communicated that the circumstances just never seem right.”

NOTE 3 – However, another 17% noted that they felt no hindrance in the matter of personal evangelism (**SLIDE**):

Nothing stops me from sharing my faith: 17%



Q. What does this reveal about the Church of Christ and its relationship with the Great Commission?

A. This reveals that only some 17% of the Church of Christ feels at liberty to make Christ known to the lost!

NOTE 4 – 10% of respondents cited feeling “ill-equipped” as the primary hindrance in sharing their faith (**SLIDE**):

I don't feel equipped to share my faith: 10%



“Every tenth respondent in our survey indicated that they did not feel equipped to [properly] share their faith. They stated that they worried about fielding questions they could not answer or not having the required biblical knowledge.”

NOTE 5 – 9% of respondents cited the disinterest of others as the driving hindrance in sharing their faith (**SLIDE**):

Others aren't interested in hearing about my faith: 9%



NOTE 6 – 8% of respondents cited fear of rejection as the primary hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

I'm afraid of rejection for sharing my faith: 8%



NOTE 7 – 8% of respondents cited fear of hostility as the primary hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

I'm afraid of hostility for sharing my faith: 8%



NOTE 8 – 8% of respondents cited a packed schedule as the driving hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

I'm too busy to share my faith: 8%



“A [large number] of people responded that they just didn’t have the necessary time it takes to share the gospel. In their mind, evangelism is potentially time-consuming, and their lives are busy enough as it is.”

NOTE 9 – 4% of respondents cited personal shyness as the driving hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

I'm too shy to share my faith: 4%



NOTE 10 – 4% cited the lack of appropriate time(s) as the driving hindrance in the sharing of their faith (**SLIDE**):

It’s not always an appropriate time to share my faith: 4%



“Many people communicated that they did not share their faith because it felt inappropriate [to do so]. Some people didn’t want to share their faith at work, or they didn’t feel like relationships were in a healthy enough place to talk about Jesus.”

NOTE 11 – 4% cited the difficulty in broaching the topic of faith as the primary hindrance in evangelism (**SLIDE**):

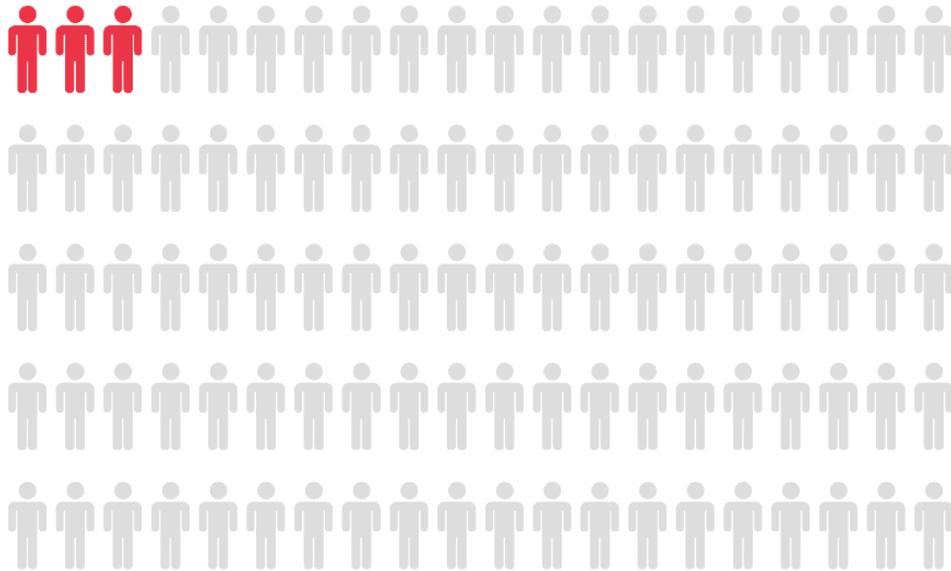
It’s not always easy to bring up my faith: 4%



“How do I steer a conversation toward Jesus? That’s the question many people struggle with. It can feel tricky to segue a discussion toward faith issues without making it feel forced and awkward. If you don’t know how to do it well, witnessing can be very uncomfortable.”

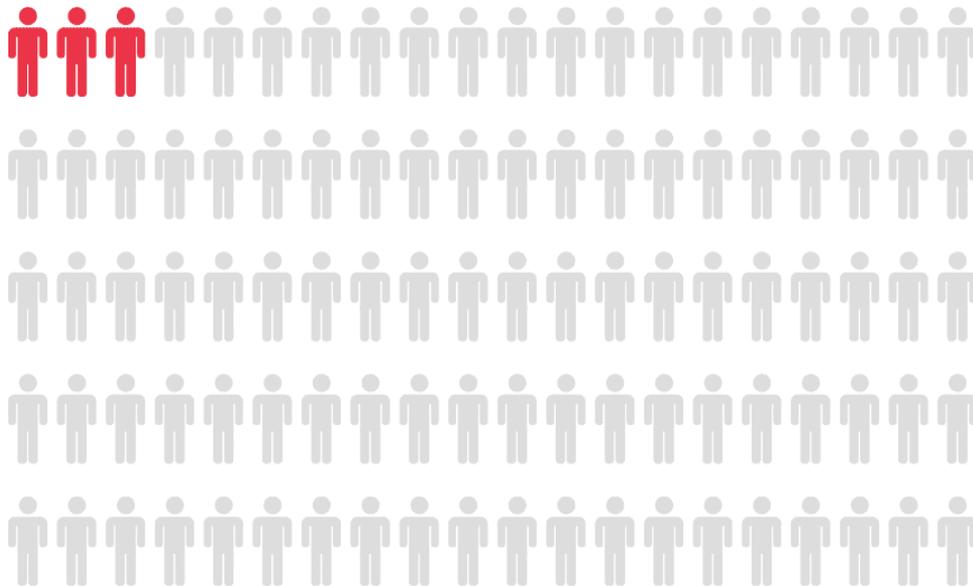
NOTE 12 – 3% noted they did not share their faith in Christ primarily for fear of appearing overly pushy (**SLIDE**):

I don't want to seem pushy by sharing my faith: 3%



NOTE 13 – 3% noted they did not share their faith in Christ primarily due to the fear of offending others (**SLIDE**):

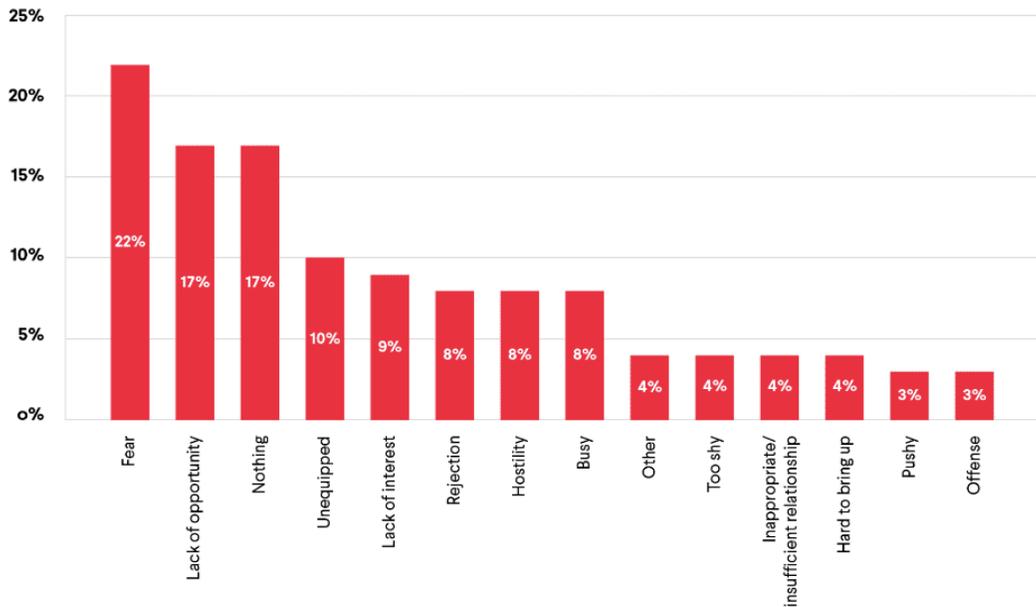
I don't want to offend people by sharing my faith: 3%



FYI – The research indicated a number of other factors that people cited as hindrances to personal evangelism. However, the numbers were so small they were not included in the overall results of the 1,600-person study. They include: **a)** fear of making Christianity look bad; **b)** no prompting from the Holy Spirit; **c)** a lack of faith; **d)** language barriers; **e)** sharing would put me in danger; and **f)** laziness and/or apathy. As we move to a close:

NOTE 14 – For the sake of review, here is the final breakdown of the varying hindrances noted this AM (**SLIDE**):

What prevents you from sharing your faith?



TAKEAWAYS

NOTE 1 – Before we close I am quite happy to entertain any comments, questions or takeaways you may have.

NOTE 2 – Next Sunday I would like to take the time to provide biblical response(s) to each of these justifications.

NOTE 3 – For homework I would ask you to consider the following questions. Do not be afraid of such moments.

Q1. Which justification do I tend to most align with? What hinders me amidst my evangelism?

Q2. Is such a justification warranted in light of the work, Commission and purpose of Jesus Christ?

Q3. To what degree am I willing to lay aside personal excuses to take up the cause of Christ this day?

NOTE 4 – You see, over and against all that we have noted re: justifications, the call of Christ Jesus yet remains:

Matthew 28:19b–20a

19 “. . . go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Mark 16:15b–16

15 “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM; WM; CYC).

NOTE 2 – I would call you to worship the Lord through your giving. Feel free to give online or in person.

NOTE 3 – We will not host Potluck Supper today following Service (i.e., in light of the funeral at the Barre Cross).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The LORD bless you
and keep you;

25 the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.