

# SG

Your group matters.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Icebreaker -

What are some of you and/or your family's favorite summer traditions or events that are "must dos" every year?

1. What's a statistic about the church that you have heard, believed, or even quoted, that turned out to be less than 100% accurate?
2. What are some things that you can do to make sure that you don't pass along false information about the church?
3. While divorce rates speak about what's already happened, how are you honoring your God-designed marriage now to minimize the chance that you'll end up as part of the 20% of Jesus followers who end up divorced? Intentionality matters! ([Matthew 19:3-6](#); [1 Corinthians 7:10-11](#); [Hebrews 13:4](#))
4. Pastor Tom shared some very encouraging stats about young people and their actual state of faith. What steps can you take this week as a young person, parent or grandparent to engage with Jesus and His church and help others do the same? ([John 15:4](#), [14:26-27](#))
5. Next Steps: What and where are some ways and places that you can talk about the good news you've learned about the church instead of negative things that aren't even real?

Day One: [Psalm 24](#)

Day Two: [Proverbs 24](#)

Day Three: [Joshua 24](#)

Day Four: [Isaiah 24](#)

Day Five: [Acts 24](#)

This Personal Guide has been adapted from Professor Grant Horner's Bible Reading System.

## PERSONAL GUIDE



# RIVERSIDE CHURCH



## Your story matters.

### GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

## MYTHUNDERSTANDING

PASTOR TOM LUNDEEN

MAY 15, 2022

## MYRC.CHURCH



# "GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT"

Pastor Tom Lundeen

Repeat a \_\_\_\_\_ often enough, and it becomes truth.  
When wrong data is being used, wrong \_\_\_\_\_ will be reached.

It's bad enough when \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian faith/Church/Jesus followers make untrue allegations based on bad statistics; but it's even more painful when pastors/leaders/just normal Jesus followers make statements/claims/posts on social media that are always doom and gloom, but are based on bad data and paint a false picture of \_\_\_\_\_.

Dr. Bradley R.E. Wright (Professor of Sociology at University of Connecticut... *Christians are Hate-Filled Hypocrites...and Other \_\_\_\_\_ You've Been Told*)

## 1. Christians \_\_\_\_\_ at the Same Rate as Non-Believers

For years we have been told that the overall divorce rate in the USA for everyone is \_\_\_\_%.  
*The Good News About Marriage* by Shaunti Feldhahn = data shows the actual divorce rate is about \_\_\_\_% (some other studies show at the high end \_\_\_\_% at most).

When determining the divorce rate for genuine Jesus followers (not \_\_\_\_\_), the divorce rate was between \_\_\_\_%-\_\_\_\_% lower than for non-churchgoers.

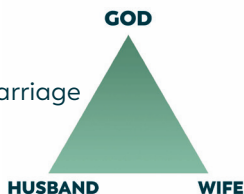
Dr. Brad Wilcox (Director of National Marriage Project) = genuine Jesus followers are \_\_\_\_% less likely to divorce as those with no religious connection.  
Feldhahn = \_\_\_\_% of all married people are still married to their first spouse, and \_\_\_\_ out of 5 are happy!

So the actual divorce rate...is \_\_\_\_%-\_\_\_\_%.  
And for practicing, committed Jesus followers the divorce rate is closer to \_\_\_\_%.

It's because Jesus followers \_\_\_\_\_ God's institution of marriage (note [Matthew 19:3-6](#); [1 Corinthians 7:10-11](#); [Hebrews 13:4](#)).

Note [Ephesians 5:22, 25, 33](#)

GOD'S LOVE TRIANGLE



## 2. Christian Young People are Leaving the Christian Faith in \_\_\_\_\_ Numbers

- (Stanton) - It depends on what churches we're talking about. Yes:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Churches. Young people are running for the exits, just like adults.
- Church attendance always slows at college age. Young adults have

slowed (not abandoned) their attendance in young adulthood since the \_\_\_\_\_ (new independence, college life, etc.). They return to regular attendance after this stage, when they marry and have kids. No:

- **Solid Bible-teaching Churches.** These are growing \_\_\_\_\_, even among young adults.
- **High Faith Continuity.** Kids raised in faithful, believing, practicing home - even \_\_\_\_\_ so - are highly likely to retain the faith of their parents. This is evidenced in two large, longitudinal academic studies (conducted at UNC and USC).
- Pew reports that only \_\_\_\_% of young adults who left the faith said they had a strong faith as a child. The other \_\_\_\_% reported no real faith.
- **Switching Lanes, Not \_\_\_\_\_:** Much "leaving" is found among youth simply changing faith lanes, typically from mainline or their family tradition to their own identities such as non-denominational or even more liturgical Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox communities. This is a normal part of maturing. Pew explains that nondenominational churches gain \_\_\_\_ members for each \_\_\_\_\_ it loses through switching. \_\_\_\_\_ is moving toward biblically serious churches.
- **Nones:** Those claiming no religious identity - the nones - are indeed growing. But the vast majority of these are not abandoning a meaningful faith. They are simply identifying themselves differently. Most of these are merely \_\_\_\_\_ Christians, people who identify with a particular faith due to family identity. They are just no longer using that identity which meant little to them anyway. As Ed Stetzer says, "It doesn't mark a change as much as a \_\_\_\_\_." This growth of nones does not so much represent a new, growing category of disbelief.
- **The Sky is Not Falling:** Christian Smith of Notre Dame, the uncontested leader in this field, reports an overall stability of young peoples' faith through the last decades. He explains that "...emerging adults today appear no less religious than those of \_\_\_\_\_...when it comes to daily prayer, Bible beliefs and strong religious affiliation."
- More young adults attend biblically faithful churches today than attended 50 years ago. According to some of the best sociological data, the percentage of young adults regularly attending evangelical and nondenominational churches has roughly \_\_\_\_\_ between 1972 & today.

Note [Daniel 1:3-4a, 6](#); [Jeremiah 1:6](#); [1 Timothy 4:12](#)

### MYTHUNDERSTANDING:

- People don't want to embrace genuine data because we are more attracted to \_\_\_\_\_ news...
- ...and people point out \_\_\_\_\_
- Understand that most church "statistics" are *bad and can only survive because they are \_\_\_\_\_*. (Wright)
- Let's not be \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus followers...

**Tell someone about the next step you took today in your spiritual journey!**  
Let us know, too - fill out a connect card (digital\* or hard copy).  
\*Text **riverside** to **94000**



# "GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT"

Pastor Tom Lundeen

Repeat a lie often enough, and it becomes truth.

When wrong data is being used, wrong conclusions will be reached.

It's bad enough when critics of the Christian faith/Church/Jesus followers make untrue allegations based on bad statistics; but it's even more painful when pastors/leaders/just normal Jesus followers make statements/claims/posts on social media that are always doom and gloom, but are based on bad data and paint a false picture of reality.

Dr. Bradley R.E. Wright (Professor of Sociology at University of Connecticut... *Christians are Hate-Filled Hypocrites...and Other Lies You've Been Told*)

## 1. Christians Divorce at the Same Rate as Non-Believers

For years we have been told that the overall divorce rate in the USA for everyone is 50%.

*The Good News About Marriage* by Shaunti Feldhahn = data shows the actual divorce rate is about 33% (some other studies show at the high end 40% at most).

When determining the divorce rate for genuine Jesus followers (not nominal...), the divorce rate was between 27%-50% lower than for non-churchgoers.

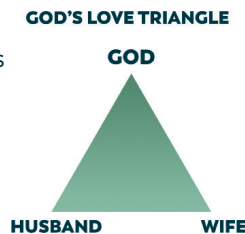
Dr. Brad Wilcox (Director of National Marriage Project) = genuine Jesus followers are 35% less likely to divorce as those with no religious connection. Feldhahn = 72% of all married people are still married to their first spouse, and 4 out of 5 are happy!

So the actual divorce rate...is 33%-40%.

And for practicing, committed Jesus followers the divorce rate is closer to 20%.

It's because Jesus followers honor God's institution of marriage (note [Matthew 19:3-6](#); [1 Corinthians 7:10-11](#); [Hebrews 13:4](#)).

Note [Ephesians 5:22, 25, 33](#)



## 2. Christian Young People are Leaving the Christian Faith in Record Numbers

- (Stanton) - It depends on what churches we're talking about. Yes:
- Mainline Churches. Young people are running for the exits, just like adults.
- Church attendance always slows at college age. Young adults have slowed (not abandoned) their attendance in young adulthood since the 1950s (new

independence, college life, etc.). They return to regular attendance after this stage, when they marry and have kids. No:

- **Solid Bible-teaching Churches**. These are growing slightly, even among young adults.
- **High Faith Continuity**. Kids raised in faithful, believing, practicing home - even imperfectly so - are highly likely to retain the faith of their parents. This is evidenced in two large, longitudinal academic studies (conducted at UNC and USC).
- Pew reports that only 11% of young adults who left the faith said they had a strong faith as a child. The other 89% reported no real faith.
- **Switching Lanes, Not Exiting**: Much "leaving" is found among youth simply changing faith lanes, typically from mainline or their family tradition to their own identities such as non-denominational or even more liturgical Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox communities. This is a normal part of maturing. Pew explains that nondenominational churches gain 5 members for each one it loses through switching. Traffic is moving toward biblically serious churches.
- **Nones**: Those claiming no religious identity - the nones - are indeed growing. But the vast majority of these are not abandoning a meaningful faith. They are simply identifying themselves differently. Most of these are merely cultural Christians, people who identify with a particular faith due to family identity. They are just no longer using that identity which meant little to them anyway. As Ed Stetzer says, "It doesn't mark a change as much as a clarification." This growth of nones does not so much represent a new, growing category of disbelief.
- **The Sky is Not Falling**: Christian Smith of Notre Dame, the uncontested leader in this field, reports an overall stability of young peoples' faith through the last decades. He explains that "...emerging adults today appear no less religious than those of previous decades...when it comes to daily prayer, Bible beliefs and strong religious affiliation."
- More young adults attend biblically faithful churches today than attended 50 years ago. According to some of the best sociological data, the percentage of young adults regularly attending evangelical and nondenominational churches has roughly doubled between 1972 and today.

Note [Daniel 1:3-4a, 6](#); [Jeremiah 1:6](#); [1 Timothy 4:12](#)

### MYTHUNDERSTANDING:

- People don't want to embrace genuine data because we are more attracted to bad news...
- ...and people point out exceptions...
- Understand that most church "statistics" are *bad and can only survive because they are outrageous*. (Wright)
- Let's not be Chicken Little Jesus followers...

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