

## Where Do New Converts Come From?

A recent survey of several churches of Christ turned up some interesting statistics about the people who are being converted to Christ. This information is extremely important for our analysis because it gives us direction in our effort to spread the gospel. Some statistical areas did not differ from the general makeup of the United States. For example, there were about equal numbers of men and women who became Christians, and the percentages of people converted from different races did not differ significantly from the general population.

The age of new converts showed an interesting trend. The highest percentages were among men and women from 20 to 40 years old. And among these, the highest numbers were for married people. This should tell us that we ought to be especially targeting young married people with the gospel message. Most congregations in growing areas have a great abundance of these kind of prospects. They should be encouraged to visit our services again and members should endeavor to study the Bible with them on a personal level.

The second largest age group for converts was for those under 20 years old. Most of these were children of existing members. This is an extremely important group, and we should never fail to pay special attention to the conversion of our "own" children. Sometimes we almost subconsciously "forget" about our own children because it is just a given they will obey the gospel. However, that attitude is disastrous because we lull ourselves into a false sense of security while our children slip off into the world.

Without a doubt, the most strikingly obvious statistic is that new converts are, by far, most often among people who are friends or relatives of those who are already Christians. In fact, a look at the numbers shows that fully 80% of conversions are among those that we already know. Only 4% were reached by advertising efforts, and just 1% contacted by door-to-door work. Sometimes we feel as if everyone we know has already been approached, but that is far from the truth. Success in spreading the gospel greatly depends upon building a trust with others and then talking to them about deeper spiritual matters.

What does this tell us? It is clear that we need to be working hard to teach and convert our own family members, our friends and co-workers, our neighbors, and other acquaintances. Four out of every five conversions are likely to come from these folks who are already known to us. And yet we continue to target people we do not know with ads and door knocking. Let

us change that! Let us be more efficient! Let us work energetically to teach and convert as many as we can -- especially those we already know!

Greg Gwin