

## RESEARCH REPORT

# Strengthening faith with recorded sermons

*How churchgoers use and share teachings between services*

## SUMMARY

A 2007 study conducted by The Barna Research Group explores US churchgoers' preferences for receiving, using and sharing church service recordings. Researchers polled a random sample of 754 self-identified Christians nationwide on the following issues:

- what percentage of churches provide sermon recordings, and how often churchgoers obtain them
- how recordings are offered, and what medium people prefer (going online or getting recordings at the church)
- preferences for sharing teachings and sermons with friends and family
- how long people are willing to wait after a worship service to get a recording

The study reveals key findings about how churchgoers want to use media between services:

- churchgoers want to take a recording with them shortly after a service
- people prefer to share a physical recording with someone in person
- directing friends and family to go online for sermons and teachings was far less preferable
- study participants have low awareness of whether their churches offer recordings, or how to get them

## RESEARCH DETAILS

### FINDING 1

#### **The majority of churchgoers want recordings right after a service**

61% of the churchgoers polled would prefer to get the recording at church directly after a service. Surprisingly, only about one in four churchgoers in the study would seek out the recording online after the service.

The study also indicates a desire for recordings to be available within about 10 minutes of a service. Acceptable wait times stretched to 20 and 30 minutes for some respondents, and as far out as one hour for a small minority of respondents.

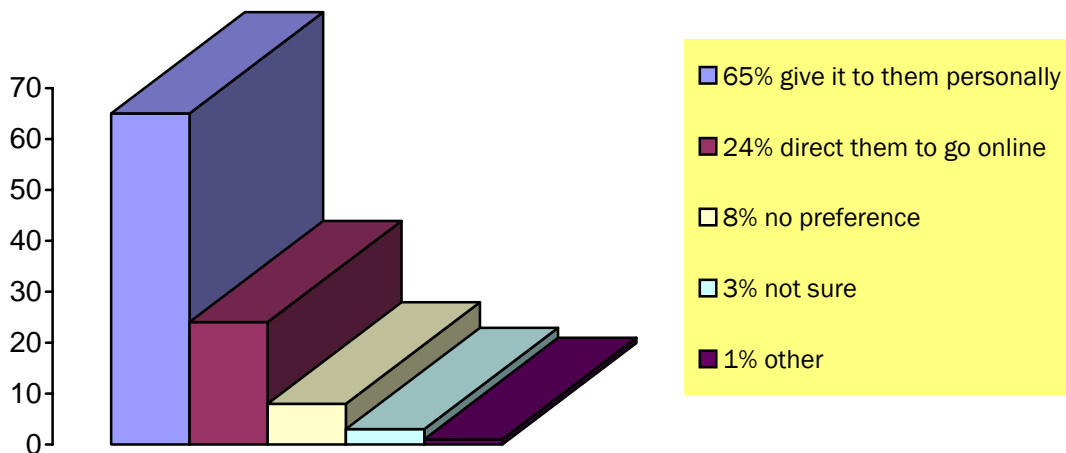
## FINDING 2

### People prefer recordings they can hand to friends and family

Recorded teachings offer an opportunity to bolster a congregation's active faith and evangelism. 65% of respondents prefer to share a teaching with someone by giving it to them personally. Physical media (such as compact discs) are strongly preferred by those who actively share teachings with others.

Only about a quarter of the survey respondents would direct someone online to download a sermon recording.

**Churchgoers prefer to share recordings in person**



## FINDING 3

### Survey revealed low awareness about recordings in churches

About a quarter of respondents don't know whether their church provides recordings. Among those who do know, about a quarter of those churchgoers are not sure if recordings are available at the church, online, or both.

These data suggest that churches considering—or currently offering—take-home recordings should more clearly promote their availability.

#### Highlights:

- 3 in 4 churchgoers have never gotten a recording from church
- 1 in 4 does not know if the church offers recordings
- 1 in 4 is not sure how to get them, if offered
- 1 in 4 doesn't know if they are available only at church, online, or both

## SOLUTION RECOMMENDATIONS

### SOLUTION 1

#### **Produce and distribute recordings on-site, within 10 minutes**

The following chart indicates the type of equipment needed to produce and duplicate CDs in various church sizes. Each combination will yield its first batch of duplicated, printed CDs beginning 10 minutes after the recording has been captured. Actual quantity needs for blank disc stock and cases may vary by church and type of service.

CDs remain the medium of choice for many churches, because American households have multiple ways of playing them back: portable players or boom boxes, home stereo systems, desktop and laptop computers, car audio systems and DVD players with music-only playback capability.

Overall, CD players are the most readily available home playback device in use today.

#### **Equipment guidelines for recording, reproducing and printing CDs**

Church size	100	250	500	1000
<b>Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital audio CD recorder</li> <li>▪ Thermal disc printer</li> <li>▪ 3-drive CD/DVD duplicator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-grade CD recorder</li> <li>▪ Inkjet disc printer</li> <li>▪ 5-drive CD/DVD duplicator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-grade CD recorder</li> <li>▪ 50-disc auto inkjet disc printer</li> <li>▪ 9-drive CD/DVD duplicator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-grade CD recorder</li> <li>▪ 100-disc auto inkjet disc printer</li> <li>▪ 9-drive CD/DVD duplicator</li> </ul>
<b>CDs ready in 10 minutes</b>	12	20	36	45

*“We made our first recordings here on cassettes. Today we offer CD and DVD, as well as MP3 and Microsoft Word transcripts through our Web site.*

*People who visit and attend our weekend services want the messages for several reasons: they feel as though the Pastor is talking directly to them, that the message would really help someone they know, or they simply like the story line.*

*Besides serving our members and their families with messages they can go back to, we are also a resource to ministry leaders and pastors all over our island state, our nation and the world.”*

— L. Adaro New Hope Christian Fellowship | O'ahu, HI

## SOLUTION 2

### Produce recordings in a portable medium to promote sharing

Today's churches are providing the same program in multiple formats: transcripts, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, podcasts and downloadable files posted on their Web sites. In general, the recommended distribution method will depend on the type of program being recorded—whether it is musical, highly visual, or mostly spoken-word.

Churches should offer media formats that best fit their goals. To sustain the momentum of a particular program into outreach or at-home study, speed and portability should remain a priority.

#### Choosing a distribution method: speed and portability factors

	Wait time	Portability and usability
<b>Compact disc</b>	Master CD: 1 minute Duplicates: 3-4 minutes	Highly portable
<b>Podcast</b>	24-48 hours	Portable, but user must have an MP3 player that can receive and play back the file
<b>Web-hosted</b>	24-48 hours	Can be shared via e-mail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ link to the program location online</li><li>▪ attach the file to an e-mail.</li></ul> Becomes more portable if user saves the recorded sermon to CD after downloading

*“The principal goal of our media ministry is outreach. Through hard media like cassettes and CDs, and through MP3s and live streaming, we make the weekly teachings available to people all over the world. We also produce daily radio programs and a weekly TV program—all in house.*

*Our media program benefits our congregation, as they can share the Word with family and friends and dig deeper themselves through repeated listening.”*

**-A. Kerbey** Calvary Community Church | Phoenix, AZ

## SOLUTION 3

### Publicize recorded media availability

#### Seven promotion methods used by successful media ministries

1. Place instructions on how and where to get recordings in every issue of printed bulletins and newsletters.
2. Announce availability from the pulpit before the sermon.
3. Create a dedicated physical area for distributing current and past recordings: booths, tables, bookstore or media room.
4. Post signage and banners to call attention to physical distribution areas. Consider all possible high-traffic areas for signs and flyers: restrooms, classrooms, next to vending machines.
5. Create an online bookstore or media section of church Web site: use it to list information about recordings available for pick-up at the church, or provide complete ordering capability.
6. Send regular e-mail reminders to congregational e-mail list, complete with links to online bookstore or media area.
7. Offer recordings at low or no cost to congregation.

*“We want to do what we can to get the Word out. When we have new series or popular services available, our lead pastor will give them away in services also letting people know where they can find them.*

*We include mention in our video announcements, and we’ve set up booths throughout our building so that people can find them anywhere they look. We also have an online resources page and promote heavily on our Web site.*

*We print nice art on the disc and put them in small plastic cases that can fit in a pocket or purse. Make it attractive and low-cost and nothing should get in the way of people wanting them.”*

– **S. Maddox** James River Assembly | Ozark, MO

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Barna Research Group provides primary research services to organizations focused on enhancing people’s spiritual lives. It conducts qualitative and quantitative research on a commissioned basis, as well as developing self-initiated studies of the spiritual landscape of the nation.

This study utilized the OmniPoll<sup>sm</sup> computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. It included 1005 telephone interviews conducted among a representative sample of adults over age 18 within the 48 continental United States. The questions were asked among U.S. adults who identified themselves as “Christian.” That group was further

reduced by eliminating individuals associated with non-Christian denominations. Overall, 754 respondents qualified.

The survey was conducted between December 3 and December 10, 2007. The sampling error (derived from the 754 people who completed the survey) is plus or minus three percentage points, at the 95% confidence level.

This study was commissioned by CCI Solutions, Inc. an audio-visual consulting, equipment, recording media, technical systems and installation company in Olympia, Washington. CCI Solutions is a national leader in church-based technology and media, and is mission-driven to help clients build faith, fellowship and outreach in participatory ways.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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