JULY 2026

Visionary

"Ye Shall Be Witnesses Unto Me..." Acts 1:8

6 Steps to Eliminate Confusion for Unchurched in Your Worship Services

[This article is reprinted with permission. It was originally published on LifewayResearch.com and can be found at: https://research.lifeway.com/2026/06/04/6-steps-to-eliminate-confusion-for-unchurched-in-your-worship-services/]

Our worship services often bring unnecessary confusion to non-Christians. Here's how to communicate more clearly and effectively.
By Aaron Earls

We almost can't help ourselves. When we gather with a group of friends or people who share something in common, we often start talking in a way that excludes others.

We don't mean to leave others out, but if someone else happened to hear our conversation, they'd likely have no idea what we were talking about.

If we wanted to invite them into the discussion, we'd work to explain ourselves and try to make it all understandable. We might start with the basics, using common words and phrases. We'd simplify everything and try to correct any large misunderstandings they may have.

That's an issue with Christianity in the U.S. People have assumptions about what we believe in the church, but those outside our congregations often have no way to know the truth because they can't understand us.

Even if they were to visit our services, they're likely to leave just as confused as when they walked in or possibly even more so.

In the recent **Lifeway Research study of religiously unaffiliated Americans**, many said they didn't understand how Christians speak or what we mean by what we say in church.

More than 2 in 5 (42%) American nones, those who select "none of the above" on religious identification surveys, say they don't understand the language of most churches, including 16% who strongly agree. Fewer (37%) disagree, while 9% aren't sure and 11% say they haven't heard what churches say.

Additionally, most unaffiliated Americans (57%) say the language Christians use about their beliefs doesn't relate to things they care about, including 26% who strongly agree. Around a quarter disagree (26%), and 17% aren't sure.

Essentially, many people whom churches are trying to reach with the gospel say they don't understand what churches are trying to say. And even when they do understand some, they don't believe the message is relevant to them.

6 steps to eliminate confusion
Here are six steps you can take to eliminate confusion for unchurched Americans who enter your worship services.

1. Assume non-Christians are listening
Maybe someone is new to town and thought about giving church a try. They could stumble across your livestream and be looking for hope.

You don't have to plan everything around the possibility that a non-Christian would hear it. But start with the general assumption: There's someone listening who doesn't know Jesus or what any of this church stuff is about.

2. Listen to your service with a lost person in mind
Once you've made that assumption, go back and evaluate your own service with that potential non-Christian in mind. What might intrigue them? What might be confusing?

If you have a friend or family member who isn't a Christian or even know a Christian from a different denominational tradition than your own, ask them if they would be willing to give you their perspective.

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3. Limit your assumptions
We all make assumptions about what the people around us understand. I once made a passing mention to my Sunday School class about the ark of the covenant "melting the face off of a Nazi."

Most of my Gen X and older millennial class immediately understood the *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* reference, but one couple had no idea and were thoroughly confused.

When addressing the congregation, make as few assumptions about shared knowledge as possible. You don't want to alienate a first-time guest by assuming everyone listening understands all you're saying. The research says non-Christians don't.

4. Avoid unnecessary jargon
One of the easiest changes to make is clarifying our announcements. Don't assume everyone knows what your "Helping Hands" offering goes toward.

If you're speaking to the whole congregation, don't invite children to go to the "Growing With God Time." Ask if kids would like to go to a service especially designed for them. Skip the "Warriors for God" label and encourage men to come to your monthly men's ministry dinner.

During the children's service or the men's dinner, you can use your specific name, but don't confuse people with it during the primary worship service.

As an aside, keep the cute names off your signage. Visitors want to know where they can find the main worship center, the restrooms, and the children's and student areas. Don't make it hard for them by referring to those places by uncommon titles.

5. Explain key terms
Help your audience understand your terms, especially if they are key theological concepts.

That's not to say you never use words like "propitiation" or "sovereignty," but it does mean you take the time to define them.

It could be as simple as saying, "In the sermon today, we're going to talk about 'sanctification.' By that we mean, growing in your faith, maturing as a Christian, or becoming more like Jesus."

We want people to leave understanding as much as possible and recognizing how Jesus matters to them in this life and the next.

6. Preemptively answer potential questions
Hopefully, as non-Christians leave your service, they'll have lots to consider. But if you can publicly address some of the questions they may be asking privately, all the better.

Answer questions the sermon may have raised. "You might be wondering what this passage about the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness has to do with your life today…"

Help them know what they should do next. "Maybe you're curious about the next step you should take to get more information about this church. Meet me in the lobby after the service. I'd love to share that with you."

As you think through the service and the sermon through the eyes of a non-Christian visitor, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind questions that may pop up in their minds.

We want to communicate clearly and effectively so everyone who hears our services comes away with understanding. Let Christ be the stumbling block, not our communication style.

It's Time for Camp "I AM"

Please keep us in your prayers throughout the upcoming weeks! *(*See Camp Prayer Guide.)*

Our Junior camp for children just completing grades 1-3 is scheduled at the 7th Mile Farm on July 19-20.

Our Senior Camp for those just completing grades 4-6 is scheduled at the 7th Mile Farm on July 20-24.

Many things have changed, but this ministry still desires to reach these children with the love and truth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

News From Our Churches

FRIENDSHIP—**Wed., 7/1 - Wed., 7/29:** *Annual Truckloading!* Collection for our ministry partners at the Baxley Campus of the GA Baptist Children's Home. **See flyer.*

METTER FBC—Coming in August … PRESCHOOL … **See AD >>>>*

NEW LIFE—*(1)***Sun., 7/5 | 10:45 am:** *Star Spangled Sunday!* BBQ lunch, Games & Activities, plus a Cool Water Slide - An Independence Celebration - One Nation Under God - Psalm 33.12. *(2)***Sat., 8/8 | 6 pm:** *Tribute Quartet in Concert!* No tickets required, but a love offering will be taken. Come and bring a friend.

REGISTER—*(1)***Weekly:** *Early morning Bible study at 9am; Sunday School at 10am; Traditional service at 11am; Wednesday prayer meeting at 6pm & Wednesday Awana/youth at 6pm.*

Clinical Pastoral Education Fall Registration is open.

Do you feel emotionally and spiritually spent after counseling others?

Are you wanting to hone your counseling or pastoral care skills?

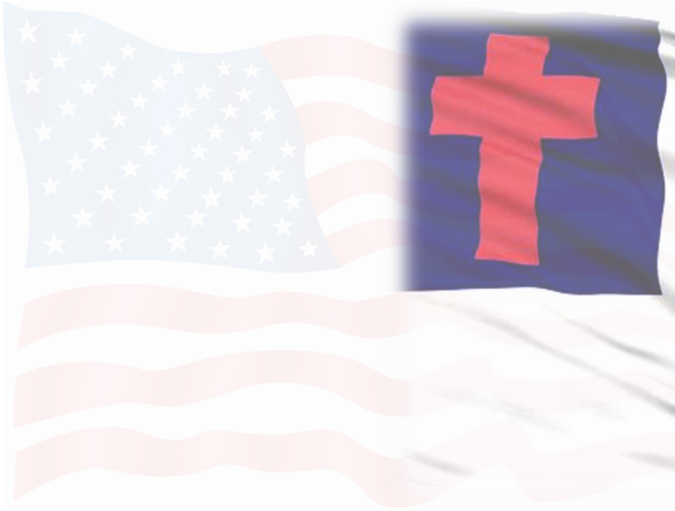
Do you feel ready to take your pastoral care and counseling to the next level with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)?

Register for CPE with CPEI. We offer all four levels of certification training in CPE. CPE provides a reflective and relational learning environment that fosters growth, personal and pastoral development. We meet in groups training session environments which involve mutual trust, respect, openness, challenge, and confrontation in a respectful and caring manner. Students are expected to be self-directed and explore one's theological framework as it applies and is integrated into one's abilities to practice compassionate pastoral care. Classes are conducted in a hybrid training environment.

Fall Semester dates to remember:
Registration Deadline: August 3rd, 2026.
Class start date: August 31, 2026
End date: December 20, 2026
Course fee is $1,375/semester. Military discount available. Veteran Educational Benefits accepted.
Minimum educational requirement is a high school diploma.

For more information about CPEI or CPE visit www.cpei.edu or www.communitychaplainnetwork.org .

Nick Spletstoser (MDiv, MSCC, BCC), serves as the Senior Chaplain with Ogeechee Area Hospice in Statesboro, GA and CPE Supervisor-Educator. He is an Army Chaplain with 24 years of experience as a Chaplain. He has over 33 years of service in the Army National Guard. He has a Master's in Divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a Master's of Science in Community Counseling (MFT) from Columbus State University. He is endorsed by the North American Mission Board. He has served as a Chaplain with Ogeechee Area Hospice since 2012.



OGEECHEE RIVER BAPTIST BAPTIST NETWORK

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July Birthdays

6 Michael Williams
14 Chris Fowler
17 Martha Brown
21 Joe Eason
22 Taek Goo Kang
28 Christie Berry

July Anniversaries

9 Mike & Debbie Marotte
9 Juan & Debbie Vallejo
14 Jody & Bobbie Jo Nasworthy
21 Ricky & Susan Allen
23 David & Tara Feldkamp

Member Churches & Missions

Agape
Bethel
Blitchton FBC
Brooklet FBC
Cedar Street
Christ
Clito
Eastern Heights
Eldora
Elmer
Emit Grove
Excelsior
Fletcher Memorial
Friendship
Iglesia Cristiana Hispana
Lawrence
Leefield
Lighthouse
Macedonia
Metter FBC
New Life
Oak Grove
Old Fellowship
Pine Grove
Portal FBC
Pulaski
Register
Salem
SonLight Community
Southbridge Community
Statesboro FBC
Statesboro Korean Mission
S'boro Mision Bautista
Bethel
Temple Hill
Trinity
Union

Calendar

Items in Black & Highlighted are Ogeechee River Baptist Network events.
Black - Holidays. *Blue - Southern Baptist Convention events.*
Orange - Georgia Baptist Mission Board events.

JULY *(Focus on Christian Citizenship)*
Camp Pinnacle, Pinnacle Retreat Center in Clayton, GA *[for dates go to camppinnacle.com]*
3 Independence Day observed, Office Closed
4 Independence Day
5 Religious Liberty Sunday
9 Network Administrative Team Meeting, ORBN Office, 9:00 a.m.
Network Exec. Council Budget/Calendar Meeting, ORBN Office, 10:00 a.m.
→ 19-20 Camp "I AM" Junior, 7th Mile Farm (on GA Hwy. 46)
→ 20-24 Camp "I AM" Senior, 7th Mile Farm (on GA Hwy. 46)

AUGUST *(Focus on Christian Service)*
2 Send Relief Sunday
9 SBC Serve Sunday
13 Network Administrative Team Meeting, ORBN Office, 9:00 a.m.
20 Third Thursday Roundtable, ORBN Office, 10:00 a.m.
23 Global Hunger Sunday

SEPTEMBER *(Focus on Next Generation Ministries)*
7 Labor Day, Office Closed
10 Network Administrative Team Meeting, ORBN Office, 9:00 a.m.
Network Executive Council Meeting, ORBN Office, 10:00 a.m.
17 Third Thursday Roundtable, ORBN Office, 10:00 a.m.
19 Children's Missions Day
27 Community-wide Youth Worship Night, TBA
Caring Well Sunday

21 Days of Prayer for Camp I AM

Day 1: Pray that Christ will be glorified in every aspect of camp. (Psalm 115:1; 1 Corinthians 10:31)

Day 2: Pray for wisdom, humility, and unity for camp leadership. (James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5–6)

Day 3: Pray that every staff member and volunteer will walk closely with Christ and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 15:4–5; Colossians 3:23–24)

Day 4: Pray that every detail of planning, preparation, and logistics will be directed by the Lord. (Proverbs 16:3)

Day 5: Pray that God will provide every financial need, resource, and supply for camp. (Philippians 4:19)

Day 6: Pray for participating churches to work together in unity for the sake of the Gospel. (Philippians 1:3–5)

Day 7: Pray that volunteers will serve with endurance, joy, and Christlike love. (1 Peter 4:10–11)

Day 8: Pray for parents to entrust their children to the Lord and continue discipling them at home. (Deuteronomy 6:6–7)

Day 9: Pray for every camper to arrive safely with an open heart to God's Word. (Mark 10:13–16)

Day 10: Pray that children who do not know Christ will repent and believe the Gospel. (Romans 10:9–10)

Day 11: Pray that believing campers will grow in their love for Christ and His Word. (2 Peter 3:18)

Day 12: Pray that every Bible study, worship service, and Gospel presentation will be faithful and Spirit-empowered. (Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 4:12)

Day 13: Pray that Christlike love, kindness, and unity will characterize every relationship at camp. (John 13:34–35)

Day 14: Pray for God's protection over travel, activities, health, weather, and the entire camp. (Psalm 121:7–8)

Day 15: Pray that recreation and activities will build friendships and reflect the joy of the Lord. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Day 16: Pray for physical strength, good health, and renewed energy for campers and staff. (Isaiah 40:29–31)

Day 17: Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict, comfort, transform, and produce lasting fruit. (John 16:8–13)

Day 18: Pray that every spiritual decision made at camp will result in lifelong faithfulness to Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

Day 19: Pray that churches and families will faithfully disciple campers after they return home. (Matthew 28:19–20)

Day 20: Pray that God will use Camp I AM to raise up future disciples, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Day 21: Give thanks for God's faithfulness and pray that every seed planted will bear eternal fruit. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Galatians 6:9)

ANNUAL TRUCKLOADING

benefitting

GEORGIA BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S HOMES
AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

The Ogeechee River Baptist Network is collecting:

- **BBQ Sauce**
- **Canned Chicken**
- **Canned Whole Potatoes**
- **Cooking Oil**
- **Aluminum Foil**
- **Dish Detergent**
- **Fabuloso Cleaner**
- **Laundry Supplies**
- **Non-Aerosol Cleaners**
- **Paper Products** ***(towels, bath-room tissue)***
- **Trash Bags**
- **Back-2-School supplies**

Gift Cards are Always Welcome!

Drop-Off Dates / Time & Location:

July 1-29, 2026

(Monday-Thursday, 10am-1pm)

Friendship Baptist Church
4025 Friendship Church Rd
Statesboro, GA 30458

Contact Info/Questions?