

# The Handoff

(Psalm 78:1-8)

## Introduction

***A) There is a spiritual crisis in America. Here are the stats.***

"The new numbers are a sign that the denomination is in trouble, Baptist leaders say. "This is not a blip," said [Ed Stetzer](#), president of LifeWay. "This is a trend. And the trend is one of decline."

In 2010, Southern Baptists baptized 332,321 people, or 17,416 fewer than in 2009, according to a report released by Nashville-based LifeWay Research. This marks the eighth time in 10 years that baptisms have declined and the lowest number of baptisms since the 1950s.

Membership also dropped for the fourth year in a row, leaving the denomination with 16,136,044 members. Giving to overseas missionary also fell short.

Stetzer pointed to two factors for the baptism decline. Southern Baptists are getting older, meaning they have fewer children who are being raised in the faith. And, Southern Baptists have lost their enthusiasm for evangelism — the practice of bringing new people into the faith, Stetzer said.

**But it's not just Baptist. Here's what the Assemblies of God say.**

- Most of the statistics tell us that nearly 50% of Americans have no church home. In the 1980s, membership in the church had dropped almost 10%; then, in the 1990s, it worsened by another 12% drop—some denominations reporting a 40% drop in their membership. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we saw the figures drop even more

- Every year more than 4000 churches close their doors compared to just over 1000 new church starts!

- There were about 4,500 new churches started

between 1990 and 2000, with a twenty year average of nearly 1000 a year.

- Every year, 2.7 million church members fall into inactivity. This translates into the realization that people are leaving the church.

- From 1990 to 2000, the combined membership of all Protestant denominations in the USA declined by almost 5 million members (9.5 percent), while the US population increased by 24 million (11 percent).

- At the turn of the last century (1900), there was a ratio of 27 churches per 10,000 people, as compared to the close of this century (2000) where we have 11 churches per 10,000 people in America! What has happened?

- The United States now ranks third (3<sup>rd</sup>) following China and India in the number of people who are not professing Christians; in other words, the U.S. is becoming an ever increasing "un-reached people group."

## **B) Contextualize Psalm 78.**

(It is a Psalm of regret. The first eight (8) verses are really an introduction followed by a monologue of several proofs.)

# **I. The Keys to Handing-Off the Faith (v.1)**

## **A) Intentional (v 1-3)**

The handing-off of the faith occurs in the natural rhythms of life.

## **B) Genuine (v. 4)**

We must practice it. If we pass-on content and experience without heart, our children will deem us hypocrites and will not follow the faith.

## **C) Purposeful (v. 5-6)**

The goal is to know God, not just know about God.

**Illustration: (9-11, 12-17, 23-25 & 29-32, 42-56)**

## **II. The Result of Handing-Off The Faith**

- A) Confidence in God (v. 7)**
- B) Remember His Works (v.7)**
- C) Keep His Commandments (v. 7)**

## **III. The Urgency of Handing-Off The Faith**

- A) An attitude of rebellion (v. 8)**
- B) A heart that is disloyal (v. 8)**
- C) A spirit that is not faithful (v. 8)**

## **Conclusion**