

THE FAVORITE CHARITY:

Evangelical Giving Priorities

MAKING
A BETTER
WORLD

DONATE

2022



GREY MATTER
RESEARCH & CONSULTING

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WHAT THEY SAY ≠ WHAT THEY DO

What is your very favorite organization to support financially (excluding your church)?

It is a simple question, really, but one which reveals a wealth of information about what you prioritize in your giving.

We posed this question to a national sample of evangelical Protestants, which means we can tell you the **favorite ministries and charities of evangelicals**.

But by digging deeper, we can also tell you about the role of faith in their giving priorities, whether they prioritize supporting major brands, how organizational size factors into their giving, how different they are from American donors in general, and other things.

Would it surprise you to know that the vast majority of evangelicals say they prefer to support Christian organizations? Maybe not. But what if you learned that despite what they say, **only a minority of evangelicals actually name a faith-based organization as their favorite?** Hmm...

54%
of evangelicals name
a favorite organization
that is not faith-based

[Infinity Concepts](#) and [Grey Matter Research](#) partnered to study over 1,000 American evangelical Protestants. This is the eighth report in the series; the third to focus on the giving habits and preferences of the evangelical community.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** We asked evangelical Protestants who donate outside of their church (58% of them) to name their very favorite charity or ministry to support. Out of around 1.2 million options, just 19 different organizations accounted for the favorites of 53% of the evangelical donors we surveyed.
- 2** Of these 19 favorite brands among evangelicals, 12 of them are also among the very favorite brands of American donors in general. Just seven of the 19 favorite brands among evangelicals are faith-based or faith-related in any way.
- 3** Evangelicals, like donors in general, tend to favor very large organizations. The average annual revenue of all favorite organizations named in this study is \$1.07 billion, with a median of over \$700 million.
- 4** The primary causes of evangelicals' favorite organizations are pretty similar to when American donors in general choose their favorites: specific diseases such as cancer or diabetes (19%), international relief and development (18%), domestic poverty and homelessness (12%), and community support (11%).
- 5** Evangelicals are more likely than donors in general to prioritize domestic poverty/homelessness, youth, and missions/evangelism, and less likely than others to favor animals, overall health, and emergencies/disasters.
- 6** While many people talk about wanting to support organizations with really low overhead figures, just 14% of evangelical donors name a favorite organization with an overhead ratio below 10%. The average overhead ratio of evangelicals' favorite organizations is 18.5%, which is exactly the same as for American donors in general.
- 7** Just over half of evangelicals (52%) claim they prefer to support organizations "that have their Christian faith as a major part of the work they do," while another 32% claim to prefer "organizations that have a Christian background

or perspective, but are not necessarily conducting specifically Christian work.” So in total, 84% claim to prefer to support faith-based organizations.

8 The biggest reason for not favoring organizations where their faith is a major part of the work they do is the desire to help people regardless of their religious beliefs (66% of those who don’t favor overtly faith-related organizations).

9 While 84% say they prefer to support Christian organizations, just 46% actually have a favorite organization that is Christian. The majority (54%) favor supporting an entirely secular organization.

10 Out of about 59 million evangelical Protestants in the US, 25 million don’t give outside of church (or even inside of church, in the case of 11 million of them). Eighteen million give, but name a favorite organization that is not Christian. Only 16 million have a favorite organization that is Christian.

Evangelical: A Quick Definition

Researchers have defined “evangelical” in ways that have them representing 7%, 23%, and even 35% or more of American adults. For this study, we considered an evangelical to be someone who agrees strongly with all four of the following theological positions:

- The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe
- It is important for me to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior
- Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin
- Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation

Further, we limited our study to those who did not identify with a non-Protestant group, such as Mormon, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox. This is a study of American **evangelical Protestants**, a group representing **23% of American adults**, or about **59 million people**.

The Top Priority

In the Grey Matter Research/Infinity Concepts report [The Generosity Factor: Evangelicals and Giving](#), we learned that 58% of evangelical Protestants give to organizations or ministries outside of their church.

However, we asked both donors and non-donors to tell us the name of the one organization aside from their church that they would support above all others—their favorite organization, if you will.

We had hundreds of organizations named: Samaritan's Purse, Joyce Meyer Ministries, Pepperdine University, Voice of the Martyrs, The Carter Center, and many more. Well-known ministries such as World Vision, Compassion International, and The Salvation Army. Secular charities such as World Wildlife Fund, Operation Smile, and Wounded Warrior Project. Scores of small organizations such as the Kokomo Rescue Mission, Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz, and Olive Branch Mennonite Missions.

From this list, and from a couple of other questions we asked, we get a good picture of the **top giving priorities and preferences of evangelical Protestants**, including:

- Whether they are supporting famous brands or less-known organizations
- What types of work they prioritize
- Whether they are giving to large or small organizations
- Whether they prioritize faith in their giving (and whether they are honest with themselves about it)
- What their favorite organizations spend on overhead and administration

Keep in mind, this is not a picture of their *total* giving, but of their very top priority in giving. We also asked the question of non-donors, and we will break out those responses separately.

So what did we learn?

Brand Matters

In 2018, Grey Matter Research and Op4G joined forces for an extensive study of American donors. In the report [What America's Favorite Charities Have in Common](#), we asked a representative sample of donors to name their top organization, just as we did in this study among evangelicals.

Back in 2018, we learned that just 20 organizations account for 54% of the favorite organizations named. In fact, the top five brands account for over one-third of donors. Pretty amazing when you consider there are around 1.2 million nonprofits and ministries in the US (aside from churches).

Although the brand list differs somewhat, in this case, evangelicals are little different from other donors. Among evangelical donors, **just 19 different brands account for 53% of all evangelical donors naming a favorite**. Not only that, but **just five brands account for 34% of all the favorites**—almost the same numbers we saw among donors in general.

Who are the favorite brands of evangelical donors? The top five, each the favorite brand of at least 3% of evangelicals, are UNICEF (3%), Samaritan's Purse (4%), American Red Cross (4%), The Salvation Army (8%), and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (15%).

34%
of evangelicals'
favorite charities are
from just five brands



Some people believe evangelicals are completely different as donors from other Americans. As we will show in this report, there definitely are some differences. But in quite a few areas, **evangelical donors are not**

at all different from other donors—witness the favorite organizations of evangelical donors and all American donors.

Favorite Charitable Organizations

Evangelical Donors*	American Donors*
1. St. Jude	1. St. Jude
2. The Salvation Army	2. American Red Cross
3. American Red Cross	3. The Salvation Army
4. Samaritan's Purse**	4. American Cancer Society**
5. UNICEF	5. UNICEF
American Cancer Society**	American Heart Association
American Humane Society	American Humane Society
Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.	ASPCA
Catholic Charities	Disabled American Veterans
Compassion International	Doctors Without Borders
Feed the Children	Feed the Children
Feeding America	Feeding America
Goodwill Industries	Goodwill Industries
Habitat for Humanity	Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Joyce Meyer Ministries	Planned Parenthood
Shriner's Hospitals for Children	Samaritan's Purse**
United Way	Save the Children
World Vision	United Way
Wounded Warrior Project	World Wildlife Fund
	Wounded Warrior Project

**Top five organizations are in popularity order; the remainder are in alphabetical order.
Bold represents favorites of both evangelical and American donors.*

Amazingly, of the 19 favorite organizations of evangelicals, 12 of them are also among the 20 favorite organizations of American donors in general (indicated in **bold**). Four organizations are in the top five both for American donors and for evangelical donors and the two that differ still appear in the top 19 (indicated by **).

Only seven of the 19 favorites are unique to evangelicals, while eight others are favorites of donors in general but are not among evangelicals' favorites.



In other words, **evangelical donors are more similar than dissimilar to American donors in general in what organizations they favor.**

Part of the story here is not just that these are the favorite brands, but that **these very few organizations represent such a huge chunk of evangelical givers.** The top 19 brands represent the favorites for 53% of all evangelical donors, while all other charities and ministries combined represent the other 47%.

One other thing to note: **ten of the top 19 brands among evangelicals are completely secular organizations.** Two others have brief religious references (Feed the Children says, “Our values are founded on Christian principles” and Habitat for Humanity says, “We are a global nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization,” but both references to faith are buried in the About Us sections; there is little else in the communications that reference faith or Christianity for either organization.)

That leaves **only seven of the top 19 brands for evangelicals which are overtly faith-based**, and two of those also show up on the top 20 list for American donors in general. (We will have much more about faith-based preferences in a moment.)

Non-donors also have a list of favorites. The top four organizations are St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital (21%), The Salvation Army (12%), American Red Cross (6%), and Samaritan’s Purse (4%). Others named by non-donors include American Cancer Society, ASPCA, Feed the Children, the Humane Society, Tunnel 2 Towers, and United Way. The top four favorites for evangelical donors and non-donors are the same.

Size Matters

The total revenue of evangelicals' favorite organizations ranges from somewhere under \$50,000 (the exact amount unknown, as organizations that small are not required to file Form 990 with the IRS) to \$4.4 billion.

If that last number seems high, realize that ten separate organizations named by evangelicals had total revenue of \$1 billion or more for their most recently reported year.

The average revenue of evangelical donors' favorite organizations is \$1.07 billion. Now, mathematical averages can be skewed upwards by some very large numbers at one end of the scale, and \$4.4 billion is obviously a very large number. So we also looked at the median number (i.e., the point at which exactly half of all donors are above and half below). **The median revenue of favorite organizations is still over \$727,000,000.**

The average revenue
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organizations is
\$1.07
billion

If we evaluate the breakdown by size, 37% name a favorite organization with annual revenue of \$1 billion or more, and another 17% are in the \$500 million to \$1 billion range. On the other end of the spectrum, just 5% name a favorite organization with revenue below \$1 million, 12% are below \$10 million, and only 20% favor a charity with revenue anywhere under \$50 million.

In other words, **evangelical donors tend to favor very large organizations no matter which way we look at the numbers.**

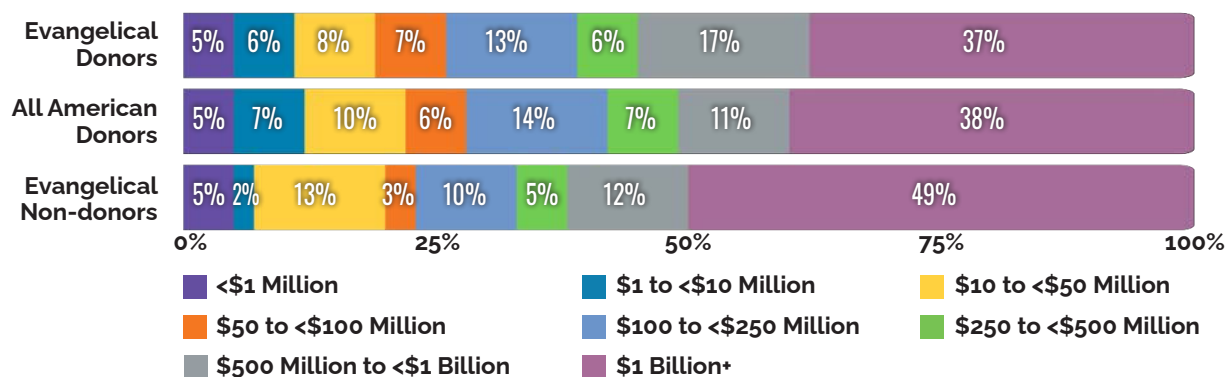
In this, they are no different from American donors in general. In 2018, we found the average revenue of Americans' favorite charities was \$1.1 billion, although the median was significantly lower, at \$399 million. Among all American donors, 38%

named a favorite organization that has \$1 billion or more in revenue, while 23% favored an organization of under \$50 million.

Non-donors tend even more toward the very largest organizations, as 49% of all evangelical non-donors name an organization with revenue of \$1 billion or more as the one they would support if they were giving money. This really is not surprising, as people who do not donate likely do not spend much of their time learning about charitable options. The organizations with greater public awareness are probably more likely to penetrate the awareness of non-donors—much like someone who is not a sports fan is probably still aware of huge brands like the Dallas Cowboys, New York Yankees, and Los Angeles Lakers, but not the Portland Trail Blazers, Cleveland Guardians, or Jacksonville Jaguars.

We should note here that estimating exact revenue can be tricky. The year of the most recent Form 990 (on which nonprofits report their finances to the IRS) can vary. Some organizations, such as the YWCA and Humane Societies, have a parent organization but also many individual local branches, and how those income figures are accounted for and rolled up can vary. And in the Christian world, some ministries such as The Navigators, Gideons International, and Joel Osteen Ministries are registered as churches, which means they do not have to file a Form 990 with the IRS. Some of those organizations still remain transparent, making audited financial information publicly available ... but some do not, and their finances remain a mystery.

Annual Revenue of Favorite Organizations



Some numbers (such as these) do not add to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Overhead Matters

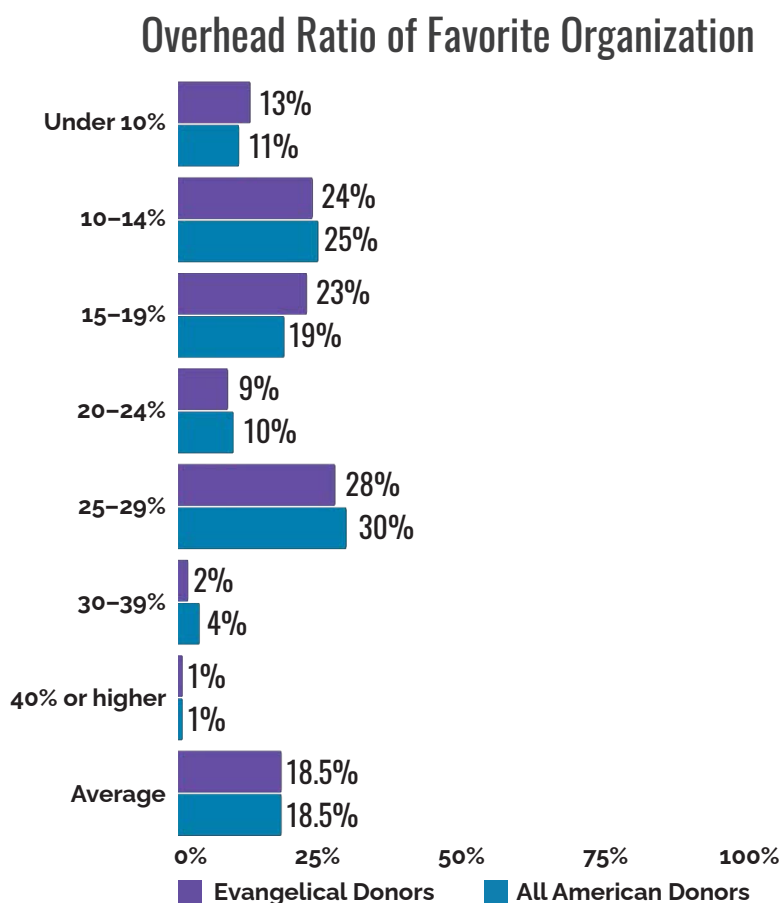
In the 2018 Grey Matter Research study [The Elephant in the Room](#), we learned nearly six out of ten American charitable donors believe nonprofits spend too much money on overhead, fundraising, and administration (the “overhead ratio”).

We also found that only about one out of every five donors could give any reasonably accurate estimation of their favorite charity’s actual overhead ratio.

While we did not go this in-depth into overhead ratios in our research among evangelicals, we did examine the overhead ratios of their favorite organizations. What we found is an evangelical donor population that looks almost exactly like the American donor population in general.

Just 13% of evangelical donors have a favorite organization with a very low overhead ratio (in the single digits). The vast majority name a favorite with an overhead ratio somewhere between 10% and 29%, just like American donors in general do.

The average overhead ratio of the favorite organizations of evangelical donors is 18.5%, which is exactly the same as for American donors overall (18.5%).



The Causes That Matter

Some people assume evangelicals are mostly supporting evangelism, missions, discipleship, teaching, and other specifically Christian work. That is absolutely not the case.

Evangelical donors are actually pretty similar to American donors in general regarding which causes they favor. The primary causes most popular among evangelicals are related to specific diseases such as cancer or diabetes (19%), international relief and development (18%), domestic poverty and homelessness (12%), and community support (11%—basically a variety of efforts to aid the community; the most common organizations in this category are The Salvation Army and The United Way).

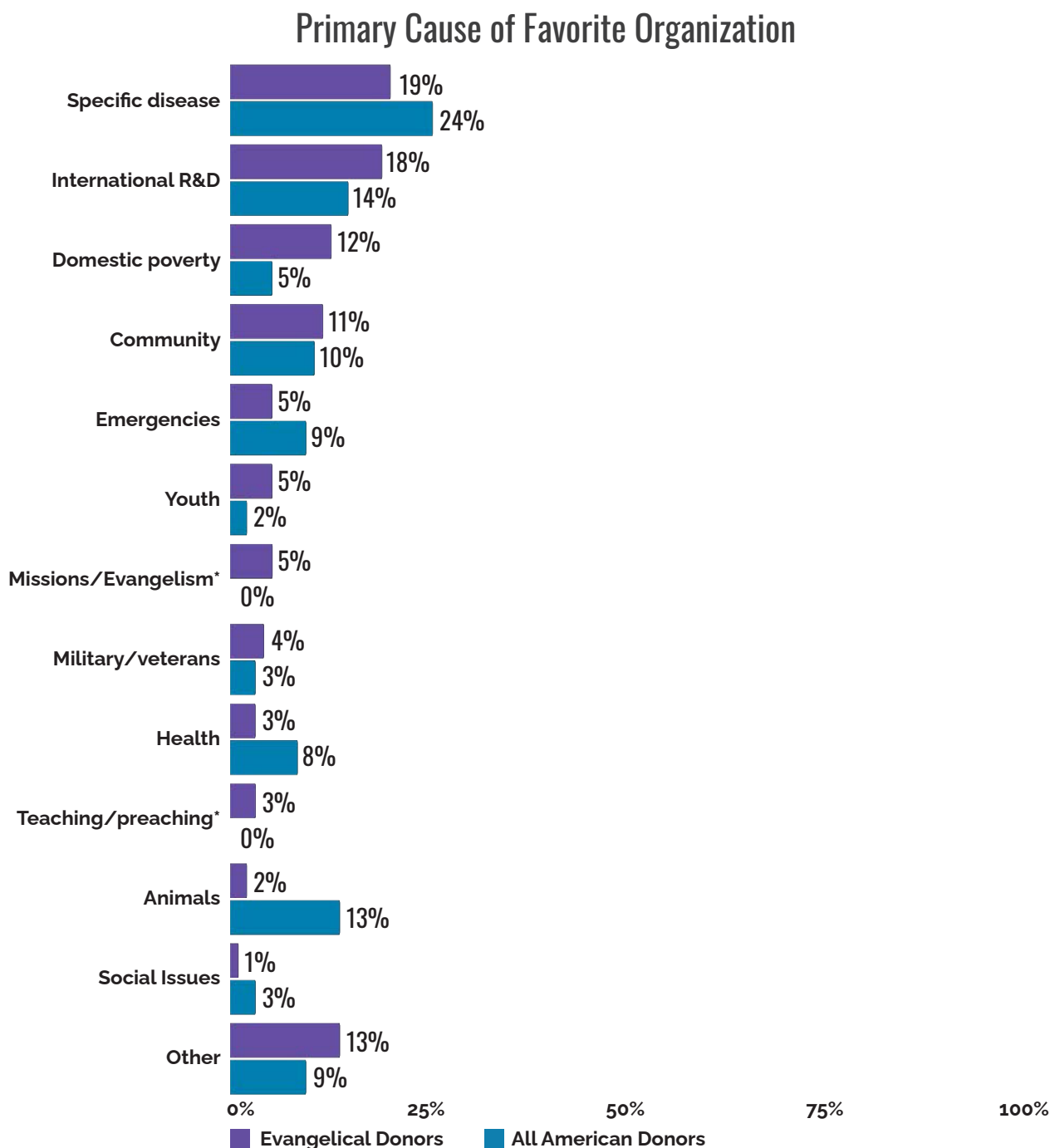
19%
of evangelicals give
toward diseases – the
most popular cause

Those are also among the most favored causes by the American public, although general donors add animals, emergencies/disasters, and overall health (e.g., a hospital) to their list.

Evangelical donors are less likely than general donors to prioritize supporting animals, emergencies/disaster relief, and health (both overall and specific diseases) through their favorite organization. **They are more likely to prioritize domestic poverty/homelessness, youth, and missions or evangelism**, although that last category still represents a very small proportion of their favorite organizations.

The causes that would be favored by evangelical non-donors are pretty similar to those evangelical donors are actually supporting. Non-donors rarely name evangelism as something they would prioritize, and they are less likely than evangelical donors to name an organization that focuses on international relief and development. Instead, they are more likely to prioritize animals or health.

Note that we attempted to define the *primary* cause of favored organizations. For instance, a rescue mission might provide job training, addictions help, mental health counseling, community education, public advocacy, and evangelism. But at their heart, rescue missions are generally addressing domestic poverty and homelessness, and so they are categorized as such in our research.



**All specifically religious causes such as evangelism, missions, or teaching/preaching were combined into "religious" for all American donors, and represented 2% of their favorite organizations.*



Many Christian organizations incorporate elements of evangelism in their work, but those drilling wells in Africa are categorized as international relief and development, while those providing emergency relief after earthquakes and hurricanes are classed as emergency/disaster relief.

These findings should not be interpreted as saying only 5% of evangelical donors support missions or evangelism. Many support missions and evangelism through feeding the homeless, drilling wells, or training single mothers for self-sufficiency. The data shows 5% of evangelical donors favor an organization with the **primary work** being missions/evangelism, such as crusade evangelism, Christian literature distribution, or sending missionaries.

In total, 12% of evangelical donors are favoring organizations where the primary cause is faith: Christian media, teaching/preaching organizations, missions, evangelism, etc. Thirty-four percent (34%) favor faith-based organizations that are doing other types of work, such as disaster relief, helping the homeless, or housing orphans. But the majority? We'll address that next ...

Faith Matters... Sort of

In Grey Matter's 2018 report [What America's Favorite Charities Have in Common](#), we learned only 15% of American donors name a faith-based organization as their favorite.

Since evangelical Protestants alone make up 23% of American adults, obviously many religious people of all types are not putting faith-based organizations at the top of their priority list. But with this study, we can dig deeper into how evangelicals treat faith in their giving.

What evangelicals say is that faith is very important in their giving. Only 3% of evangelical donors actively avoid supporting faith-based organizations, saying they “prefer to support organizations that have no particular religious background and do no religious work.” Another 13% tell us, “Religion is not something I consider when I select organizations to support.”

This leaves a majority of evangelical donors (52%) preferring “to support organizations that have their Christian faith as a major part of the work they do,” while another 32% “prefer to support organizations that have a Christian background or perspective, but are not necessarily conducting specifically Christian work.” **So altogether, 84% claim to prefer supporting faith-based organizations.**

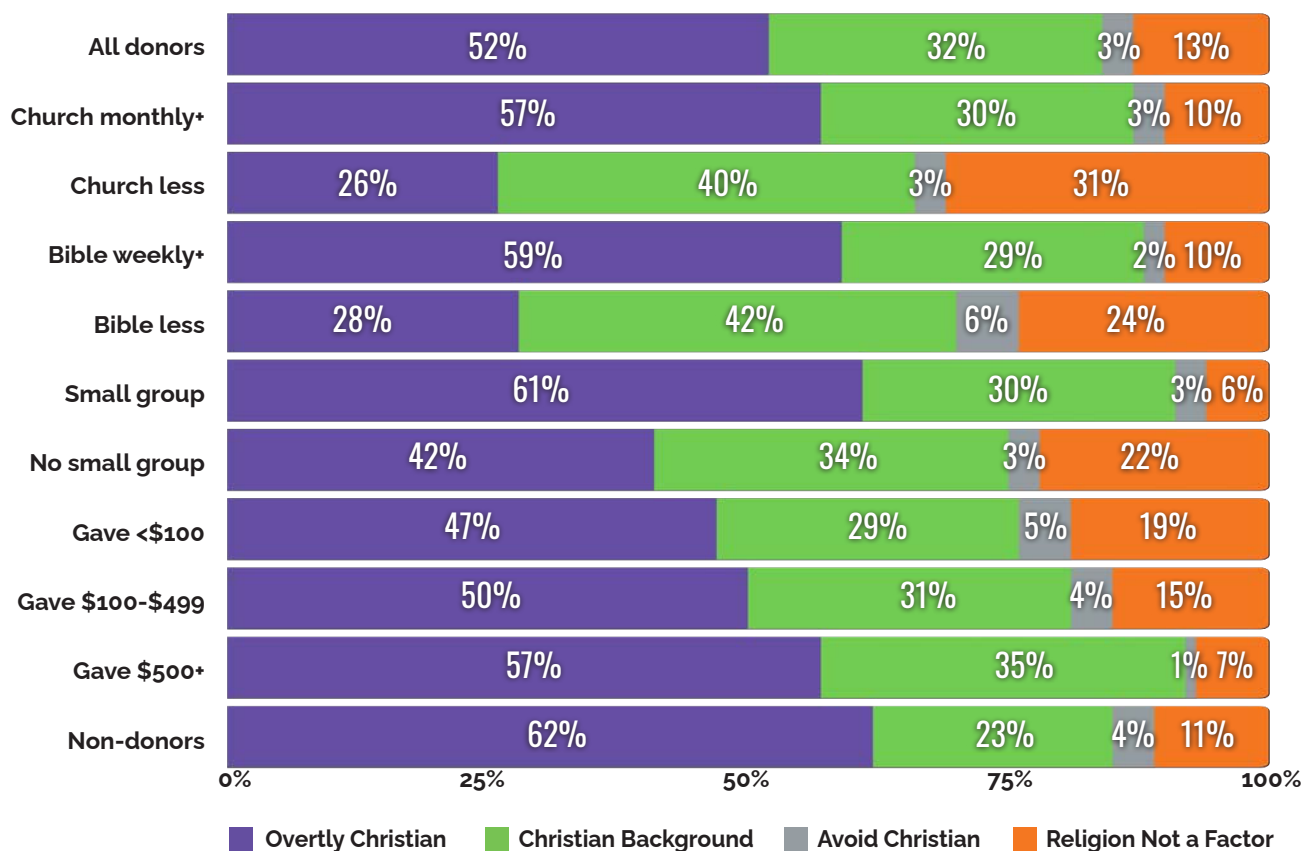
This perspective varies quite a bit according to how engaged evangelicals are in their faith. Donors who attend church at least once a month are more than twice as likely as others to want to support ministries that have their faith as a major part of everything they do (57% to 26%). Large gaps can also be seen according to whether people read the Bible once a week or more (59% to 28%) and whether they are part of a small group (61% to 42%).

Evangelicals who give more money are more likely to say they prioritize faith-based organizations. Among those who gave less than \$100 beyond their church in the last 12 months, 76% prefer to support Christian organizations, while 5% actively

avoid that, and 19% say religion is not something they consider in their giving. The proportion preferring Christian organizations rises to 81% among those giving \$100 to \$499, then to 92% among those giving \$500 or more.

Ironically, non-donors are actually the group most likely to say they would prefer to support organizations where their Christian faith is a major part of everything they do.

Faith-based Giving Preferences



Why do 48% of evangelical donors not hold a preference for ministries that have their Christian faith as a major part of everything they do? The biggest reason by far is that **they want to feel like they are helping people regardless of their religious beliefs** (66%). This is almost three times as common as the next reason, which is that some evangelical donors do not want to feel as though they are “forcing” Christianity on anyone.

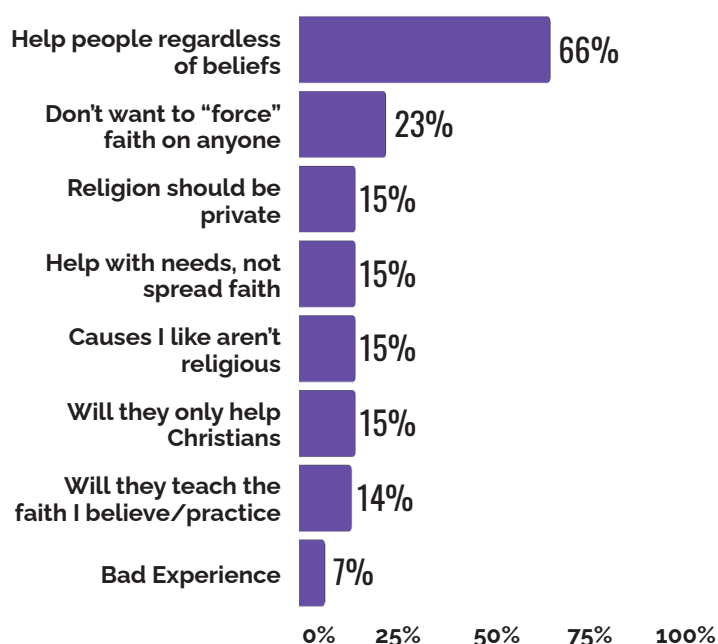
Other reasons for prioritizing organizations with less of a faith focus include:

- Preferring causes that do not really involve faith (examples would be cancer research or animal welfare) (15%)
- Feeling that religion should be a private matter (15%)
- Prioritizing helping people with their needs over spreading Christianity (15%)
- Concerns over whether someone would receive help from the organization if they are not Christian (15%)
- Concerns over whether overtly Christian organizations would teach Christianity in the same manner that the donor believes or practices it (14%)
- Previous bad experiences with Christian organizations (7%)

84%
of evangelical
donors say
they prefer to
support Christian
organizations

The good news here is that few evangelical donors—in fact, just 3% of them—have had a negative experience with a Christian organization that actually drove them away from wanting to support organizations where Christianity is a major part of everything they do.

Reasons for Not Favoring Overtly Christian Organizations*



*Organizations in which their Christian faith is a major part of the work they do.

The bad news is that **82%** of those who do not prefer to support organizations doing overtly Christian work have some **concerns about how the organizations would handle the mix of faith and charity**—they want to help people regardless of their religious beliefs, they worry non-Christians would not receive help, and/or they have concerns about “forcing” Christianity on people. This speaks to some basic level of distrust these evangelicals have for organizations that have their Christian faith as a major part of the work they do. Worse is that this level of mistrust

46%
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organization that
is Christian

exists among 39% of evangelical donors. These concerns apparently are built on perceptions rather than reality, as very few who hold these concerns actually report any negative experiences with Christian organizations.

In many things, what people say is very different from what they do. Matters of faith are no different. While 84% say they prefer supporting faith-based organizations, **only 46% of evangelical donors actually have a favorite organization that is faith-based.** The remaining 54% name a completely secular charity as their favorite.

There is definitely some correlation between what evangelical donors claim to prefer and the organizations they actually favor, but there is also a lot of room for saying one thing and doing another:

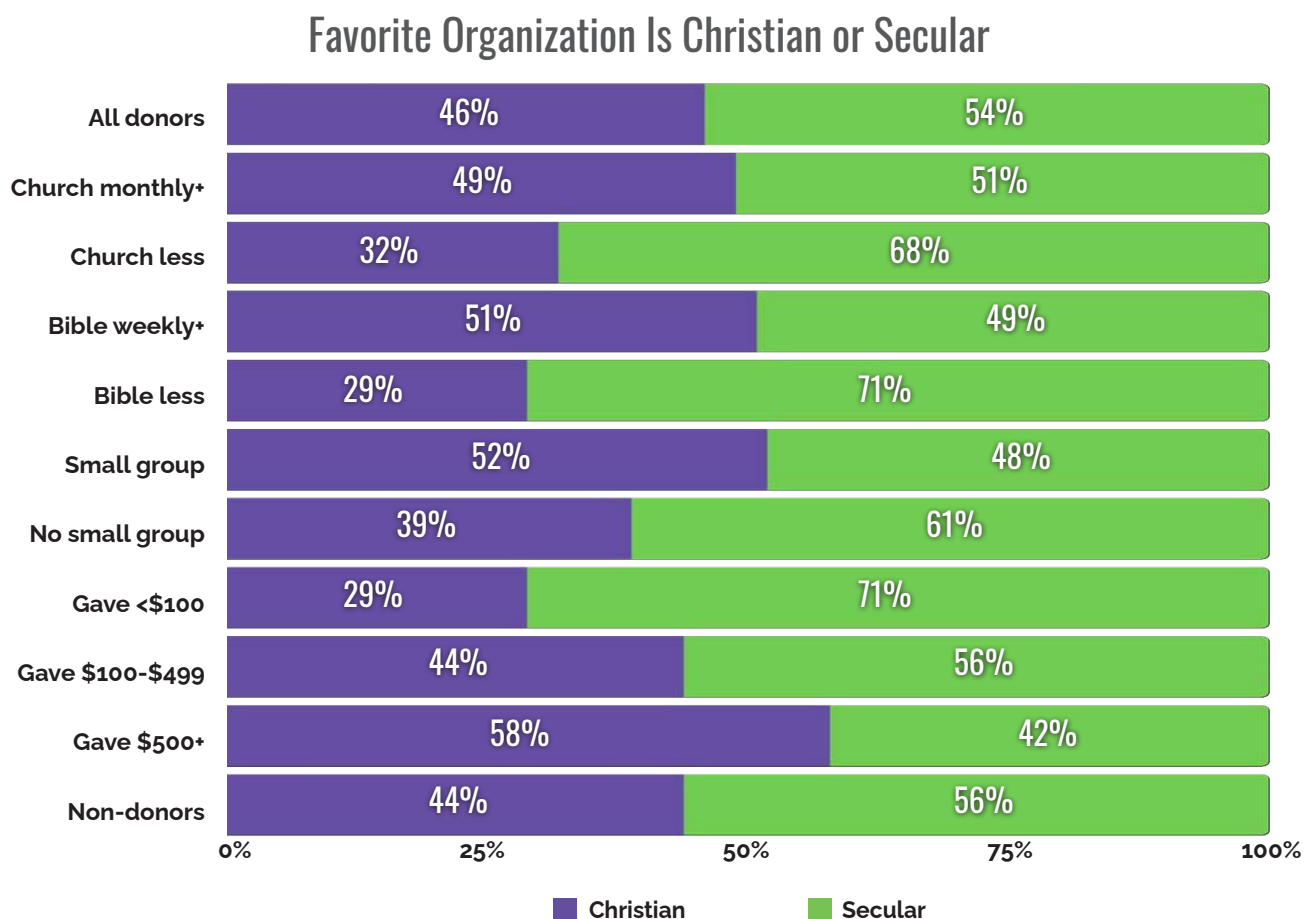
- Among the donors who claim they prefer supporting organizations that have their Christian faith as a major part of the work they do, 34% still name a completely secular organization as their favorite.
- Among those who say they prefer an organization with a Christian background but not necessarily focusing on specifically Christian work, 33% do favor a faith-based organization, but a whopping 67% actually name as their favorite an organization that does not have any Christian background or perspective.
- Among the evangelicals who avoid faith-based organizations or do not factor religion into their giving decisions, 11% actually name a faith-based organization as their favorite, although 89% prefer a secular organization.

In short, 45% of evangelical donors claim to prefer supporting a faith-based organization and actually name a faith-based organization as their top priority for giving. But **40% claim to prefer supporting a faith-based organization, while actually favoring one that has no Christian involvement.** The remainder do not claim to prefer supporting faith-based organizations.

Evangelical donors who are more engaged in their faith are the ones more likely to favor a faith-based ministry: attending church monthly or more (49% to 32%), reading the Bible weekly or more (51% to 29%), and/or participating in a small group (52% to 39%). Yet it is interesting that 51% of regular churchgoers, 49% of regular

Bible readers, and 48% of small group participants name a favorite organization that does no Christian work and does not even have a Christian background or commitment.

The commitment to ministry is also stronger among people who give more. Among those giving under \$100 outside of their church in the last year, just 29% name a faith-based organization as their favorite. This increases to 44% among those giving \$100 to under \$500, and 58% among those giving \$500 or more.

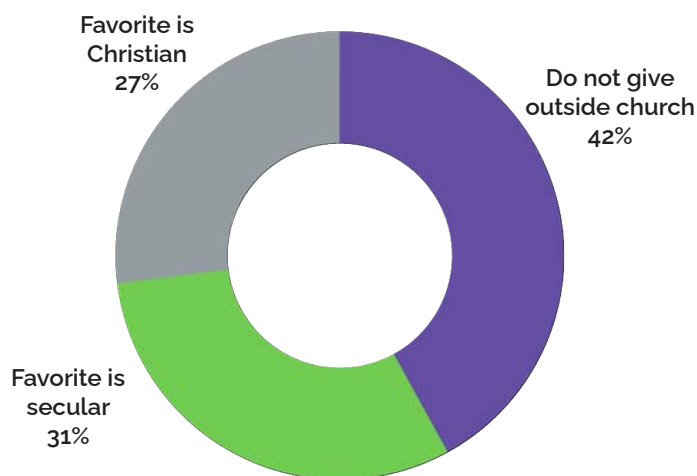


Evangelicals in this study named as their very favorite organizations PBS, the VFW, Black Lives Matter, Save the Children, United Way, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, UNICEF, Operation Smile, AARP, Make-A-Wish, NAACP, Arizona Humane Society, The Trevor Project, and dozens of others that have no Christian connection.

To be clear, we are *not* saying it is wrong for evangelicals to support or even favor secular organizations. Evangelicals can also value literacy, love animals, care for the environment, appreciate museums, seek to reduce racism, and want to see cancer cured.

What we *are* saying is this is a fact that needs to be fully understood by faith-based organizations. Out of about 59 million evangelical Protestants in the US, 25 million don't give to organizations at all outside of their church (and 11 million of those don't even give to a local church). **About 16 million evangelical donors name a faith-based organization as their favorite.**

What Evangelicals Favor in Giving



But approximately **18 million evangelical donors favor organizations that are not Christian**. Some of these are supporting organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association or the ASPCA, that really have no well-known Christian option. But others are giving to organizations such as Save the Children or UNICEF where there are well-established Christian ministries doing similar work.

We cannot state strongly enough how critical it is that ministries understand this about evangelical donors. Both Grey Matter Research and Infinity Concepts have worked with scores of Christian ministries, and we too frequently hear ministry leaders talk about donors as though they really only support Christian organizations. We have encountered countless looks of surprise when we suggest learning from their donors not just what other ministries they support, but what other organizations in general—secular or faith-based.

What Does It All Mean?

Have you ever had a friend or colleague who talked a good game about eating healthy, but then every time the two of you go to lunch, the suggestion is fast food?

Many evangelicals (like many people in general) have this same problem when it comes to giving. They talk a good game about wanting to support Christian ministries, but then in reality **they prioritize supporting organizations that have no Christian involvement** at all.

Various Christian leaders debate just what believers should do with their money. Some encourage Christians to support their own local church first, and then outside organizations as a secondary priority (often described as “tithes and offerings”—tithes to the church, and offerings beyond that). But since only about 13% of evangelicals come anywhere close to tithing, this perspective obviously has gained relatively little traction among the evangelical population.

Others teach that anyone doing God’s work is a fertile field worthy of being sown. But this raises the question of **just what is “God’s work”**? Certainly sending a missionary to Guatemala or supporting the suffering Church in a closed country fit this description. But what about researching a cure for cystic fibrosis, building a new college dorm, or sheltering abandoned animals?

In short, what *should* evangelicals be prioritizing in their giving?

We will leave this debate to others. What is incredibly important is for leaders to understand what evangelicals actually *are* prioritizing in their giving. And despite what many evangelicals claim to prefer, the reality is that more often than not, it’s not Christian ministry of any type.

In the three reports on giving that Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research have produced, we see a variety of troubling signs about evangelical giving:

- **Eleven million evangelicals do not give a penny** to church or charity.
- **Fourteen million evangelicals give to church, but nothing outside of church.** Given the fact that even prior to the pandemic the majority of Protestant churches had under 100 people in attendance and many churches are struggling just to keep the doors open, this obviously means the vast majority of the money these people give is limited to supporting what is happening inside their own congregation.
- Among the 34 million who do give outside of church, **the average is only 1.4% of their income goes to charity.** This might be impressive if they were giving a lot to church, but the average is only 3.2% going to church (among those who actually support a church).
- Despite what they say, **a majority of those 34 million donors favor supporting organizations that have no Christian background and do no Christian work,** including situations in which there are excellent Christian ministries doing the same type of work as the secular organizations evangelicals favor.
- Four out of ten evangelical donors do not prefer supporting organizations where their Christian faith is a major part of the work they do, because they express **concerns about how the organizations would handle the mix of faith and charity.** Will they help people regardless of their religious beliefs? Will they “force” faith on people? This signals that many evangelicals do not fully trust Christian organizations to handle this mix appropriately, even though very few say they have actually had a bad experience with a Christian organization.

All of these concerns are important for leaders to understand. Right or wrong, they are part of the environment in which ministry leaders need to raise funds for their work.

Evangelical donors as a whole simply are not that different from non-evangelical donors. They prioritize fairly similar causes. They favor similarly sized organizations

with identical overhead spending. In fact, they prioritize many of the exact same brands as other donors.

Where we do see differences—and this has been a consistent theme throughout our evangelical research, even on topics completely unrelated to giving—is that **the more spiritually engaged evangelicals are, the more they behave differently from the non-evangelical population.**

In this case, the more evangelicals attend church, read the Bible, and/or participate in a small group, the more likely they are to give, the more generous they are in their giving, and the more likely they are to favor a Christian ministry in their giving. Faith engagement is inextricably correlated with behaviors that most Christian leaders would see as desirable or even expected for an evangelical.

So what can ministry leaders learn from all of this data? First and foremost, **do not expect evangelicals to favor you just because you are a Christian organization.** Your “competition” for the donor dollar is not just other ministries, but organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Boys & Girls Clubs. Evaluate what those organizations are doing to raise funds, because obviously their approaches are having a significant impact on evangelicals as well.

This leads to our second point. **What can ministry leaders say or do to help more evangelicals prioritize faith in their giving?** Again, we need to be clear that we are not saying it is unacceptable for a believer to support cancer research or fight Amazon deforestation. But it is somewhat troubling that so many evangelicals have causes like that as their *very top giving priority*, particularly since most of them claim their preference is to support faith-based organizations. There is a disconnect happening somewhere for many evangelical donors. Part of addressing that disconnect might include focusing on the importance of using their treasure to support their faith in action.

Third, what can you say or do that will **help dubious evangelical donors feel confident that you will be sensitive to non-believers** in the work you do? A significant minority of evangelical donors do not want to prioritize supporting organizations that have their Christian faith playing a major role in all their work,

largely due to concerns like this. It may be that there are just too many perceptual remnants of the old “Welcome to our rescue mission—you can have a sandwich and a shower after you listen to our sermon” approach still around for many evangelical donors.

Fourth, evangelicals, like other Americans, are largely captured by massive brands (which is not really a surprise; otherwise those brands would not be massive).

Whatever smaller organizations can say, those **large brands can afford to say it louder, more frequently, and often more effectively**. This means if your message and approach are largely the same as a \$1 billion organization, they have a substantial advantage over you just due to size and brand awareness.

So what makes you different? The success of any brand is in its differences.

What can you do or say that much larger organizations can't or don't? You will not stand out against huge brands by doing the same things they are, any more than a high school football team can compete against the Pittsburgh Steelers. How can you own a piece of the public's consciousness that they do not?

Grey Matter conducts a lot of research to help clients understand brand and message differentiation, and Infinity Concepts does a lot of branding, communications, and fundraising work with organizations like this (shameless plug). We both recognize the importance of creating a memorable brand that is clear, compelling, and unique.

Finally, this is the eighth in a series of reports about evangelical Protestants. Consistently one of the top differences we see in behavior and perspectives about all of the topics we have explored is the substantial gap between those who are more engaged in very basic spiritual disciplines of worship attendance and Bible readership and those who are less engaged or entirely disengaged in these practices.

Given how many evangelicals are not part of a small group, are not regularly reading the Bible, and are not even regularly attending worship services, it seems to us that **a major focus of Christian teaching needs to be basic Christian formation and disciplines**. If someone is not regularly spending time in the Word, it will be tough to convince them they need to change their behaviors because the Word says they should.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS

from Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research

If you found this report beneficial, Grey Matter Research and Infinity Concepts also offer seven other reports on evangelical Protestants:

- **The Ripple Effect: Congregations, COVID, and the Future of Church Life**
A study on how evangelicals worshipped during the pandemic, and how this has affected their feelings about church going forward.
- **The Generosity Factor: Evangelicals and Giving**
Research on how and where evangelicals give money. The study also reveals significant age differences in giving, and points to some long-term concerns for donor-supported organizations.
- **The Jewish Connection: Evangelicals and Israel**
There are many evangelicals who financially support Christian organizations that serve Israel and the Jewish people, as well as many Jewish and Israeli charities. Without evangelical support, many of these organizations would struggle to survive.
- **The Congregational Scorecard: What Evangelicals Want in a Church**
Evangelical Christians are largely satisfied with the church they attend most often. However, eight out of ten still would like to see at least one change to their church.
- **The Generation Gap: Evangelical Giving Preferences**
While the median age of American adults is a little under 46, it is very common for donor-supported ministries and charities to maintain a donor base that is considerably older. Many organizations are concerned about their long-term viability as their donors age, and eventually die off.
- **The Holy Land Journey: Evangelicals and Israel Travel**
The types of evangelicals especially interested in visiting Israel are those who are more engaged in their faith, those who believe that the Jews are still God's chosen people today, and Pentecostal or charismatic evangelicals. In addition, the younger they are, the more likely evangelicals are to be extremely interested in travel to Israel.
- **Media Matters: Evangelicals and the Media**
As newer forms of media have emerged, such as podcasts and streaming video, the evangelical population (like the general population) has varied considerably in their willingness to adopt new media. And now that we have an explosion of choices, evangelicals are taking advantage of this, varying their preferences according to what they are using the media for.

ABOUT GREY MATTER RESEARCH



What do you wish you knew about the people you are trying to reach: donors, potential donors, customers, or the general public? And what could you accomplish if you knew the answers to those questions? **That is where we help you make a difference.**

Grey Matter Research helps our clients make wiser decisions with **valuable, relevant consumer insights**. We specialize in serving **Christian organizations**, although we have partnered with many secular charities and for-profit companies, from professional sports teams to vehicle manufacturers to branding, marketing, and fundraising agencies.

Our motivation is to **partner with our clients**, which is why we have been working with some of the same organizations **for over two decades**. Whether we are helping a client discover how consumers perceive their brand, learn what the donor experience is like, develop new messaging, or any other topic, we have **A Passion for Research That Makes a Difference**.

Just a Few Clients We Have Served

American Bible Society • National Christian Foundation • World Vision
National Association of Evangelicals • Young Life • Duke University
The Coca-Cola Company • Joyce Meyer Ministries • The American Legion
Bethesda Lutheran Communities • Covenant House • Northwest University
General Motors • The Christian and Missionary Alliance • Focus on the Family
The Assemblies of God • Children's Mercy Hospital • Catholic Relief Services
Prison Fellowship • Compassion International • Paralyzed Veterans of America
Moody Global Ministries • BMW • Cancer Treatment Centers of America

Our work has been **covered by the international media**, (MSNBC, Christianity Today, NPR, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Fast Company, Harvard Business Review, NonProfit Times, many others), translated into multiple languages, used in US Senate panel hearings, and included as part of the curriculum at universities in the US and Italy.

You can learn more about how we help clients, as well as check out a variety of available research reports, on our website: www.greymatterresearch.com.

Company president Ron Sellers would be delighted to chat with you. Call him at **1-602-684-6294**, or meet him digitally at ron@greymatterresearch.com.

ABOUT INFINITY CONCEPTS



Infinity Concepts is an integrated marketing-communications agency focused on inspiring people of faith to action. We specialize in the following:

- **Consulting:** We help you think more strategically and lead more effectively.
- **Branding:** We help determine your Brand Essence, define your Brand Promise, develop Brand Alignment, and create your Brand Image.
- **Creative:** We provide effective and memorable creative. We offer superior quality graphic design, copywriting, website development, logo design, and much more.
- **Fundraising:** We help you build a loyal and generous donor base that embraces your organization and supports your vision.
- **Public Relations:** Through proven strategies, effective communication, and media relationships, we will put your organization on center stage and let the world see the great things you are doing.
- **Media:** We will help maximize your media investment through optimized media planning, placement, management, and reporting.
- **Digital:** We create high-impact, cohesive messages to reach and motivate your audience through multiple digital and social media platforms.

For 20 years, Infinity Concepts has helped its clients *think more strategically, operate more efficiently, and communicate more effectively.*

Just a Few Clients We Have Served

American Friends of Magen David Adom • Cancer Treatment Centers of America
Cornerstone Television Network • Church of God of Prophecy • Evangelical Press Association
Faithful Central Bible Church • Faith Life Now • Friends of the IDF • Saving Moses
Holocaust Remembrance Association • Total Living Network (TLN) • Metro World Child
Israel Ministry of Tourism • The Jewish Agency for Israel • Marilyn Hickey Ministries
NRBTV • One Voice Ministries • ZOE International • Foursquare Missions International

You can learn more about Infinity Concepts and how our team of experts can help you make a bigger impact. If you are looking for an agency to be your thoughtful strategic partner and impassioned advocate, Infinity Concepts may be for you: www.infinityconcepts.com

Infinity Concepts President, Mark Dreistadt, and Chief Growth Officer, Darrell Law, can be reached at 724-733-1200 or by email at Mark@infinityconcepts.com and Darrell@infinityconcepts.com.

Additional Resources from Grey Matter Research

In addition to our custom research work for clients, we offer a variety of exclusive reports.

A small selection is below; [click here](#) for information on all of them.

■ What America's Favorite Charities Have in Common

Donors often claim they like to support small, local organizations. The reality is they generally favor massive global brands. And most people of faith do not favor supporting faith-based organizations. Learn what sets America's favorite charities apart in the minds of donors. [Click here.](#)

■ Lost Opportunities: Faith, Giving, and Social Media

Learn how donors and people of faith use social media to interact with nonprofit organizations and congregations. [Click here.](#)

■ Charitable Overhead Ratios and Donor Decisions

Donors often believe ministries and charities spend more on fundraising and administration than they should. Because of this, many organizations think donors will not support organizations with expense ratios exceeding a certain threshold. We find that is often not true—and in fact, donors frequently do not have a clue what their favorite organization's overhead ratio really is. [Click here.](#)

■ Charity Watchdogs: Ignore Them at Your Own Risk

How many donors actually use charity watchdogs to research organizations they might support? [Click here.](#)

■ How Much Mail and Email Donors Receive and Read

Donors report receiving more prospecting messages than messages from organizations they already support. And very few just toss or delete everything they receive—your messages have the opportunity to get read. [Click here.](#)

■ Six Ways Your Survey Research May Be Misleading You

The only thing worse than no research is bad research, and there are many ways you can unintentionally receive misleading data from your surveys—even when they are conducted by professionals. [Click here.](#)

Additional Resources from Infinity Concepts

■ **CAPTIVATE Magazine**

Get the latest news and guidance on branding, church growth, fundraising, leadership, digital marketing, podcasting, media buying, and much more by accessing the latest edition of **CAPTIVATE** magazine. [Click here.](#)

■ **Donor Trend Analysis**

Every nonprofit should have a clear understanding of what is happening with its donors by measuring key performance metrics to monitor the health of its donor file. The **Donor Trend Analysis** gives insights into your donor retention rate, average lifetime donor value, donation frequency, number of multi-gift donors, average gift amount, new donor acquisition trends, lapsed donor trends, and much more.

This Donor Trend Analysis is valued at \$800. However, you may qualify to receive this valuable report for FREE! [Click here](#) to complete your application to see if you qualify for a FREE **Donor Trend Analysis** for your church, ministry, or nonprofit.

■ **Digital Assessment**

Your digital presence matters, now more than ever! What does a donor experience when they give to your organization online? Are you posting too little or too much on social media? Does your website effectively communicate your story and impact? How well do you engage with your followers through social media?

Infinity Concepts provides a FREE **Digital Assessment** to qualified churches, ministries, and nonprofits. This analysis will help you improve the way you communicate and engage with people and donors online. [Reach out](#) to see if your organization qualifies for a FREE **Digital Assessment** by the experts at Infinity Concepts.

■ **Strategic Solutions Newsletter and Blog**

Tap into a wealth of insights, tips, and information on a variety of topics from our seasoned team of experts through our *Strategic Solutions* newsletter and blog.

- [Click here](#) to check out the insights from our experts on our blog.
- [Click here](#) to have *Strategic Solutions* delivered to your in-box each week.



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