

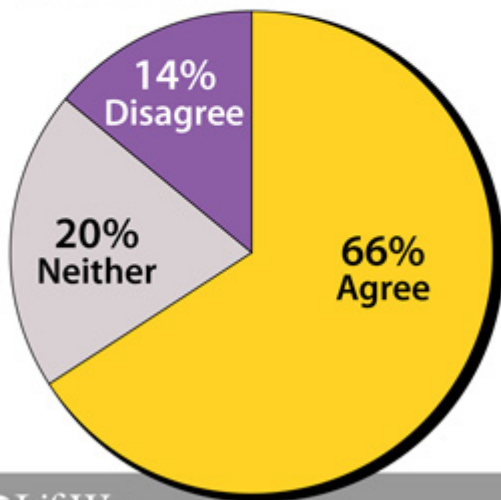
Ashamed of the gospel? Some struggle with it, survey shows

May 30, 2013

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Although the Apostle Paul was able to proclaim, “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” not all modern churchgoers are open about their faith, research reveals.



A Christian should obtain honest feedback about his/her spiritual life from other Christians.



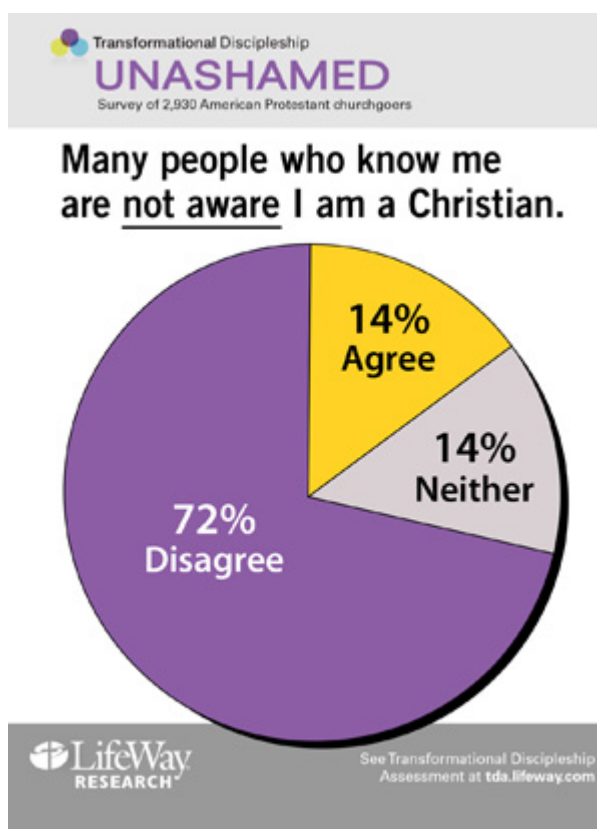
About three in 10 Christians acknowledge spiritual issues don't come up in everyday conversation with other believers, according to a [LifeWay Research](#) survey of Protestant churchgoers.

The survey identifies “Unashamed” as one of eight attributes of discipleship that consistently show up in the lives of maturing Christians. Being unashamed connotes a boldness to stand for one’s beliefs in conversation and lifestyle, explained Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research.

“There are two elements to this discipleship attribute—being unashamed of Jesus Christ around nonbelievers and showing transparency among other Christians,” he said. “This transparency is seen when a mature disciple is open to spiritual accountability and willing to share about challenges with other believers.”

When mature disciples of Christ are in contact with non-Christians, they demonstrate consistent character and identity, McConnell said.

According to the survey, 66 percent of American churchgoers agree Christians should seek out honest feedback about their spiritual life from other Christians.



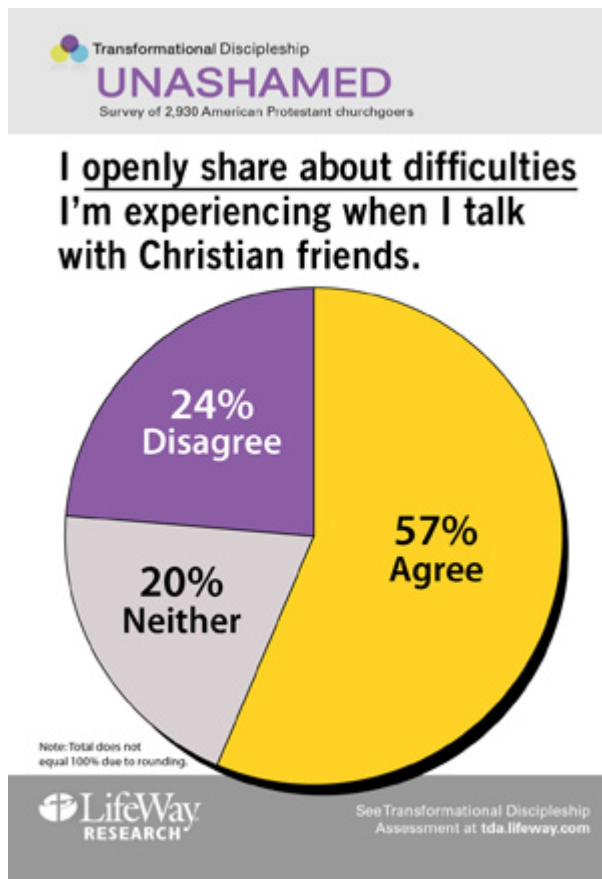
Churchgoers also seem to think they live out their faith in a manner evident to others. Just 14 percent of churchgoers agree with the statement: “Many people who know me are not aware I am a Christian,” while 72 percent disagree with the statement.

However, the survey also shows churchgoers often leave important elements of faith unspoken. More than one-fourth (29 percent) agree

“Spiritual matters do not tend to come up as a normal part of my daily conversations with other Christians,” while 50 percent disagree this is the case.

Still, the survey reveals 57 percent of churchgoers agree they openly share about difficulties they are experiencing when they talk with Christian friends, while 1 in 4 do not.

“It is easy for Christians to put their ‘church’ face on at church and pretend everything is fine,” McConnell said. “But without transparent interaction among followers of Christ, blind spots are left unattended and opportunities for change are unsupported.



“The other temptation for Christians is to pretend to be ‘not-too-religious’ when they are around neighbors and co-workers,” he said. “Yet, Scripture calls believers to not be ashamed of the gospel and its work in our lives.”

Research aligns with a familiar New Testament story—the Apostle Peter’s three denials of Christ—and the ever-present struggle and temptation

Christians face to hide their relationship with Christ, he said.

Research uncovers several characteristics that best predict being unashamed, including reading the Bible more often, he noted. Other actions that predict more spiritual maturity in being unashamed include sharing with someone how to become a Christian, being disciplined or mentored one-on-one by a more spiritually mature Christian, and having a habit of confessing sins to God.

Another action that predicts being less ashamed is praying for fellow Christians more often, the survey shows. Only 34 percent of churchgoers indicate they pray for fellow Christians they know every day. Ten percent say they do this “once a month” or “rarely/never.”

The survey of 2,930 American adults who attend a Protestant church once a month or more was conducted Oct. 14-22, 2011. A demographically balanced online panel was used for the interviews, and respondents could answer in English, Spanish or French. The sample provides 95 percent confidence the sampling error from the panel does not exceed plus or minus 1.81 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.