

Poll finds family, not Jesus' birth, at heart of Christmas

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

December 21, 2010

(RNS) While nearly all Americans celebrate Christmas, most focus more on family than religious traditions, a new survey shows.

Out of a list of 14 things people do at Christmas, the most common activity -- at 89 percent -- was giving gifts to family members, reports LifeWay Research. More than 75 percent also gather with family or friends for a Christmas meal, put up a Christmas tree, listen to Christmas music and decorate their homes.

"For many in our culture, the season is disconnected from the reason," said Ed Stetzer, president of the Southern Baptist-affiliated LifeWay Research, in releasing the findings on Monday (Dec. 20).

"For many of those, family is the reason for the season."

Almost half of households attend Christmas Eve or Christmas Eve services, but just 28 percent of Americans read or tell the Christmas story from the Bible.

Christians are among the most likely to enjoy aspects of the Christmas season unrelated to Jesus' birth, with two-thirds saying they watch fictional Christmas movies.

The LifeWay online survey, conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 1, included a representative sample of 2,110 U.S. adults.

A recent poll conducted by Public Religion Research Institute in partnership with Religion News Service found that slightly more Americans (43 percent) read " 'Twas the Night Before Christmas" than read a biblical Christmas story (40 percent).