

# 9 Reasons You Should Make the Most of 'Big Days' for Growth

By [Rick Warren](#)

Easter is coming! And it will be one of the most well-attended Sundays for churches this year. Wise church leaders will take advantage of the opportunity to present the simple but profoundly hopeful message of Jesus' resurrection to all of the extra guests who come.

One of the secrets to Saddleback's growth over the years is *big days*. There are three holidays we've used powerfully - Easter, Christmas Eve, and Mother's Day – and then a few other weekends such as the kick-off or celebration of a big campaign. We plan for those days and we use them as an evangelism tool and as a stimulus to motivate our members on to growth for the rest of the year. These days are big high points and there are some real advantages to planning big days with a special emphasis, particularly around Easter.

Here are nine reasons why high attendance days can be so meaningful.

## 1. Big days build morale.

Without a doubt, people enjoy being a part of something big, something exciting. It develops unity and pride among our people. When people work together, there's just a sense of excitement. It's hard to motivate people consistently over the long haul but you can always get them up for a particular project or particular day. Big days create a "winning team" feeling.

## 2. Big days draw interest from the community.

No doubt at Pentecost having 3000 people saved was impressive. Often a big day will attract the attention of many people who would normally totally ignore your church. It says to the community, something is alive over there. It arouses curiosity.

## 3. Big days increase your prospect list.

Celebrating big days gives you names of people who are willing to have a conversation about spiritual things, as indicated by their attendance. It gives you names to add to your email or mailing list and it helps you to know for whom to be praying.

#### **4. Big days enlarge the vision of your members.**

What we try to do is give people a vision on Easter Sunday of what the church could be and then operate on that vision for the rest of the year and make that a goal. When I first started Saddleback we were running 25 in the home bible study at the maximum point and then we had 205 on Easter Sunday. Always after Easter you'll go back down in attendance. But we averaged 120 for the rest of that month. So we had 25, then 205, and then 120, which means we automatically picked up 100 people in one month as a result of a big day. I can consider that to be worthwhile.

You're not going to keep everybody from a big day. Don't worry about it! The growth of Saddleback looks like this: up, then down a little, up, then down a little, up, then down a little... You build in a pyramiding fashion so you never go all the way back down. Don't worry about that! Usually after Easter you will have a drop off every week for three weeks. You'll have less the week after Easter, then the week after that a little bit less and so on. But it will stabilize and then you get the core of people who stick with you, particularly if you plan a series of messages to start on a big day. Then you keep them coming back.

#### **5. Big days give focus to people's prayers.**

A big day gives your people something specific to pray about, and the result of more prayer is always greater power. God responds when His people call out to Him in a concerted plea for more people to meet Jesus.

#### **6. It stretches people's faith.**

When you set a goal and go for it, then it's specific. Many times we're afraid to set a goal because we're afraid we're not going to reach it. And remember, failure is not failing to reach your goal; failing is not setting a goal. Failing is not failing to reaching your dream; failing is not even attempting to reach it. As long as you're attempting something for the glory of God, you're successful.

Early in Saddleback's history, we celebrated our six month anniversary by having a big day and setting a goal of having 500 in attendance. We didn't have 500. We had 380 instead, but that was more than we'd ever had before! What do you do if you don't reach your goal? Set another one!

Working toward big days stretches people's faith and that's pleasing to God. Without faith it's impossible to please Him.

## **7. Big days give an opportunity for members to bring unbelieving relatives and friends.**

Big days are a great opportunity to make a first impression and to share the gospel with people who don't yet know Jesus and may never hear about Jesus at any other time.

## **8. Many people will be saved and many will come back.**

We somehow have the impression that a person must be part of a church for a long time before they come to know Jesus, but I can't tell you how many people we've seen making commitments to Christ on their very first visit and becoming a part of the church's life afterward.

## **9. Big days increase the pool of volunteer workers.**

A big day is a great way to mobilize volunteers. On Easter we need 150 greeters. We try to get lots of people to greet and then, as a result of that, all through the spring and summer, out of that pool of people who volunteered that Sunday, we ask them to come back and do it on a regular basis.

## **The Limitations of Big Days**

Do not confuse a crowd with a church. A crowd is not a church. When we have 50,000 people on Easter Sunday, we don't fool ourselves into thinking that we have a church of 50,000. We know that's a crowd. Many of those people are just checking things out. They're going to come one time and they're not going to come back. A crowd is not a church.

However, a crowd can be turned into a church. Don't confuse the two. If you get a big day, Great! Those people can be won to Christ, disciplined, brought into the membership of the church and you can turn them into a church. A big day is a good way to start.