

# The importance of printed media

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In my research how people come to the Lord in Thailand, I also looked at the role of the various media. That gave rise to some surprises.

30% of all new Christians said that no media played any role in their conversion. This shows that personal relationships are the driving force in evangelism, and that media can only play a supporting role.

10% said that radio (3%) or television (7%) played a role. This is remarkable for two reasons. First of all, it's a low percentage. And second, there is much more Christian radio than Christian television. Yet television is influencing more people.

The big surprise however was that 60% of the converts said that printed media played a role in their conversion. 17% mentioned an evangelistic tract. For every positive mention I ever heard about the evangelistic value of tracts, I am sure I heard at least ten negative ones in my life. Yet in Thailand evangelistic tracts were influential in the conversion of almost twice as many people as radio and television combined!

The other 43% mentioned a book. This consisted of three equally large subgroups. The first group meant the Bible. The second a Christian book. And the third group mentioned both the Bible and a Christian book.

Why would printed media be so much more effective in evangelism than broadcast media? Radio and television are much more intense, aren't they? I do not know what the answer is. But I have two pretty good guesses. First, radio and television are literally broadcast. But Christian books are precision casted. They are mainly given in interactions between people. So they are better suited to support evangelism in personal relationships– and that is the main way that the Gospel spreads.

Secondly, printed media offer the opportunity to re-read something that grabbed your attention. You can lay it down and come back to it later. That is another significant advantage while thinking about the important question whether or not to follow God. What an eye-opener! Even in a country like Thailand, where reading is not all that popular, printed media prove to be the most effective media in evangelism by far. It would be interesting to know how it is in other countries.

Does anybody know?