

5 THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT THE UNCHURCHED

By Bob Smietana

1. Going to church is harder than it looks.

Joining a new church can be like going on a date or finding someone to marry. It's not easy to find the right match. Finding a church home may take months, and the search can be time-consuming, frustrating, and lonely.

2. Be friendly, but not pushy.

Unchurched visitors want to be acknowledged but not overwhelmed. Feel free to smile or say hello. But be careful when pressing for details or asking for more information. That can be a big turnoff.

3. It's not about you.

When people come to a church for the first time, they bring their whole life history with them. Perhaps they've moved and are grieving their old church or missing friends. Or they feel out of place because the songs and style of services are different. They may have had bad experiences with church in the past and are skittish about getting involved. Those who have never been to church in their lives may feel the whole experience is awkward. It may take some time for unchurched guests to feel comfortable.

4. Make it easy for new people to connect.

Think about having low-key, easy entry points for newcomers, especially those who have been away from church for a while. Invite new people or unchurched neighbours to take part in a community service event, sports or exercise program, neighbourhood get-together, or social gathering.

5. Unchurched folks often believe in Jesus.

Don't assume folks who skip church are unbelievers. They may be disciples who needed a break from church due to life circumstances. Or they could be so-called "Dones"— those who believe in Jesus but have left the church because of past frustrations.