

What Visitors Want To Know

by
Carl MacMurray

Common sense as well as students of church growth will tell you that one of the greatest sources of potential members to a church are the visitors who attend to “check out” the services of a congregation. This is why these folks are worth some extra effort in welcoming them and making them feel comfortable.

If you'd like to know what these visitors are looking for however, so you can perhaps appeal to them in a way that meets their specific needs, pay close attention. They are usually looking for five things and those five questions are the major ones that need to be answered.

Acceptance – Do I fit in here? They are looking for folks in their own age group, having similar jobs, similar recreations, marital status, children of like age, etc. If you greet a visitor and pick up on any of these areas, it might be a good idea to “tip off” someone else in the group who has a common interest to make a special effort to meet this person.

Friendship – Does anybody want to know me? They are judging the warmth of the congregation here. Unfortunately, many groups fail in this area. Even though they are very close to each other, they may be slow to bring outsiders into their circle of friendships. I have walked into foyers before worship as a visitor and had folks turn and look at me, and then go back to talking among themselves. That simply won't work.

Value – Am I needed here? Everyone wants to feel as if they are needed and visitors, consciously and unconsciously, will size up a group and its observable efforts to see where they will fit in. This is why a church needs to make as many visible efforts possible to those who are visiting. This can be done in announcements, bulletins, welcome packets of information, etc.

Benefit – What is the advantage of being part of this fellowship? When the first three questions are answered clearly in a positive light and they are

combined with Biblical teaching that lovingly shows the difference between the Lord's church and the denominations of men, the benefits become clear. Both in a temporal sense and in an eternal view we should be leading people to see the advantage of being a member of the New Testament church.

Expectations – What is required of me? This is an unbelievable question to many, but it is the truth. True seekers do not really want to be “soft-soaped” into some faith. That is an easy way, but it is not very satisfying. Those who are serious minded want to be challenged to grow. They want to know and be shown from the scripture what God desires of them. They want a work program that they can give themselves and their finances to. And they want to see progress, in themselves, their children, and the efforts their money is going toward.

As we understand what visitors are looking for, we can better set about answering their questions in proper ways that will encourage them to return. The Lord's church is sufficient to fill the needs of men and women that are honestly seeking a better life with a firm grasp on eternity. We must make sure, however, that we are not confusing the seeker by obscuring the beauty of the church and Christ's gospel with our own attitudes and actions. God bless your soul winning efforts.

Editor's Note: I had the benefit of working with Mac in the beginning of my time as a preacher. He was working with the Northeast congregation in Gainesville, Florida. I was invited to be a trainee under Mac and was blessed to get to know him, his wife, Lorna, and their (at that time) young children. For about eighteen months I wrote articles, filled in the pulpit at Northeast and surrounding congregations, took part in personal work, and got to enjoy the good folks at Northeast. I always found Mac to be a good Bible student and logical with the scriptures. He has always respected the word of God but also was not afraid to “think outside the box.” His sermons had a purpose a point of application. On the last Sunday in September, Mac stepped down from being the full-time evangelist at the Anderson church of Christ in Anderson, IN. For many years he has been involved in spreading the Gospel in places like Russia and the Philippians. I am sure he plans on doing more in the Lord's kingdom and I wish him well. It was my hope to schedule Mac for a Gospel Meeting here but his health will not allow him to do so. Therefore, I want to share this article with you.)