

Do You Understand Your Unchurched Friends?

Summarized and posted by Bob Young

Following are sixteen statements about the unchurched. These have been collected from various sources, or generated by observation and thinking about the implications of surveys and studies of the unchurched. What additional statements would you add?

When unchurched people reject the church, it does not necessarily mean they have rejected God.

Many unchurched people (approximately half, according to surveys) have had a bad experience with church in the past.

Many unchurched people recognize that they are drifting through life, and secretly want a more anchored and secure life, even though they may find it difficult to admit it.

Unchurched people often resist rules but will respond to relationships and reasons (in that order).

A majority of unchurched people do not have a good understanding of Christianity, even though they may claim not to believe in it or to have rejected it for valid reasons. This is due in part to the fact that many of the unchurched are one or more generations removed from active church involvement.

Misunderstanding or lack of knowledge contributes to a situation in which the unchurched have legitimate questions about spiritual matters but do not expect to receive adequate answers from Christians.

Many of the unchurched do not want to know if Christianity is true, but whether Christianity works.

Many of the unchurched do not want a knowledge-based church or Christianity, but rather something they can experience and live out.

The unchurched do not want to be someone's project—they want to be someone's friend.

While the unchurched often distrust spiritual authority (partially as a result of the Christian leaders in our society who have fallen), they tend to be receptive to authentic biblical leadership.

The unchurched who begin to attend church seldom continue because of loyalty to denominations or doctrines, but instead are attracted to places where needs are met and the Christian experience "feels" valid.

The unchurched are often slow adopters and may not be “joiners”, despite the fact that they want to be connected to a cause. Traditional understandings of church membership and involvement may not appeal to them.

Even if the unchurched are not personally interested in church, many want their children to receive quality moral training. Churches that appeal to the unchurched must address moral concerns, especially in children’s and teen’s Bible classes.

The unchurched are often confused about relationships and roles—between friends, in families, or in the workplace, and do not recognize that the Bible provides guidance in relationships between men and women—families, spouses, parents, children, friends, and co-workers.

The unchurched may be quite tolerant of different faiths (even non-Christian faiths), and may make such tolerance a point of pride, thus appearing judgmental toward Christians who may be viewed as narrow-minded.

The unchurched would usually be willing to visit a church if someone they consider a trusted friend would invite them.