

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# *4 Sure Signs*

**YOUR CHURCH NEEDS MORE  
FIRST-TIME GUESTS**

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**Why isn't your church growing?** So many church leaders are wrestling with that question. They are looking at the dynamics of what's happening in their church and trying to sort out where the "problem" is.

Is it that your church doesn't have enough first-time guests coming through the front door? Or is it that people are falling through the cracks and not sticking & staying at your church? **Diagnosing the issue doesn't need to be complex and convoluted.** This is an answerable question!

As I've worked with churches across the country pondering over these issues (and more importantly trying to find a solution to it), **I've bumped into these sure signs that are evident in churches that aren't seeing enough first-time guests arriving at their church.** Is your church seeing these dynamics at play in your church?

### **You Don't Have More Guests than the Average Attendance in a Year**

Gary McIntosh and Charles Arn in their book [What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church](#) share this key insight: If the church is growing, **you'll need more guests each year than you have people in your total average attendance.** In other words, a growing church of 500 will need more than 500 guests in a year.

Do you know how many "first-time" guests you have at your church? Getting a clear understanding of this aspect is the starting point in understanding if your church needs to "open the front door wider" and attract more guests. **One proven way to do this is to offer your guests a gift in exchange for their contact information.** ([Here's a post with a lot of ideas for gifts for your first-time guests.](#))

**You need to track this information for at least 4 to 6 months before you can get a sense of where it's landing.** As you keep a closer eye on this over time, you will start to see where the trend is landing. Below is a quick reference table to help you see what your "new here" guests weekly average should be based on the size of your church:

If your church is averaging this size...	...you should be averaging these many guests weekly.
100	2
200	4
500	10
800	15
1,000	20

## Christmas Eve Attendance Doesn't Double Your Average Attendance

This is a persistent trend that I've seen time and again in growing churches. **Prevailing churches typically see at least twice as many people on "big days" such as Christmas Eve or Easter Sunday.** If your church isn't attracting those sorts of audiences, then you might be missing an opportunity to impact your community.



Big days are important to your outreach strategy because they represent a unique opportunity in that your people are more likely to invite their friends, and their friends are more likely to attend. **There are just some weekends when people are more in the mindset to attend a church like yours** and you need to leverage those opportunities to see people connected with your church.

I used to look down my nose at churches that went out of their way to do something "flashy" on these Sundays. **I falsely thought that those churches were just trying to boost their numbers. I was so wrong!** I missed out on the opportunity to see people get connected with the teachings of Jesus! Don't miss this opportunity in your community!

## "Messy People" Aren't Showing Up in Your Pastoral Care

Churches that are making a dent in their community and seeing "unchurched" people come into their community will see an increase in the pastoral care demands. The fact is, as you reach out to impact your city there will be people who need more support.

**It's not that the "unchurched" folks are more "messy" than the "church people", it's just that they are often not as preoccupied with hiding their "mess" as the church people.**

I've seen this impact in the churches that I've served. As the church grows, not only does the total number of people needing "help" increase but the complexity of the issues that bubble up increases as well. The need for robust pastoral care scales exponentially as a church grows. **It's a mistake to think that a large growing church doesn't "care" for people, but it's actually the opposite - your church won't grow large if you don't care for people.**



In his book [Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth](#), Samuel Chand said, **"You'll grow only to the threshold of your pain"**, and this applies deeply to your church. Your church's capacity to hold and care for people in the midst of a painful life situation will be the defining mark.

## Inbound Communication Channels are Shrinking

The metrics that are generated through your podcasts, web traffic, social media channels, and other online sources can be more than just vanity metrics. **All those numbers can give you a "leading indicator" of the reach of your church.** If you notice a trend of losing traction as a whole across many of these digital channels, it's time to look at how you are reaching out to new people.

**First-time guests are going to check out your website before they darken the door of your church.** [ref] Ensuring that your church is "findable" on Google is as important today as being on "the main drag" was 30 years ago. Some aspects of "search engine optimization" can be mysterious but

even focusing on some widely held best practices can make a difference for your church. For instance, there are still church websites that aren't "mobile-friendly" even though Google has been abundantly clear about how important that is. ([Check out this simple tool for seeing if your site is mobile-friendly.](#))



Increasingly, having a vibrant and active online social media presence is vitally important for churches. **Prevailing churches are putting time, effort, and energy into these networks because their people are on them and their friends are just one "like, comment, or share" away!** (I know ... your people aren't on Facebook. It's just not true! 2 billion people a day are on Facebook and everyone on there is just 3.4 relationships away from everyone else. [ref] Let that statistic sink in for a minute.)

### Yes, I want your church to grow.

Let me be totally clear. I think your church should be growing; in fact, we need your church to grow. 94% churches in the country are losing ground against the growth of the communities they serve [ref]. I want every church to help us turn that statistics around because I believe we have the most important message to spread. It's really at the heart of what we "do" here at [unSeminary](#).

Here are some podcast suggestions that might help your church:

- [Carl George & Warren Bird on How Your Church Can Break Growth Barriers](#)
- [Kent Jacobs on Demystifying Church Growth in a Culture Where Churches Don't Grow](#)
- [Shaun Nepstad on Plateaued to 10x Church Growth](#)

And some articles to help stir conversations with your leadership team:

- [5 Simple Changes to Make Your Church More Unchurched Friendly](#)
- [3 Done-For-You "Wow! Weekends" to Help Your Church Grow](#)
- [7 Pivots Churches Make to Break the 1,000 Barrier](#)
- [U2 vs. Star Wars: Lessons for our Churches](#)
- [5 Dangerous Ways Churches Convince Themselves They're Growing](#)

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