

John 6:24-35  
August 5, 2018 – 11<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## A New Attitude Toward Food and Drink

✠ **Perishable** (vv.24-27)

✠ **Enduring** (vv.28-35)

In the Name of Jesus, God's glorious "Bread of Life," dear children of the heavenly Father:

If you were coming to church for the first time, you might have some questions of which the "church people" would not have a clue. For instance: 1. *Is the roof going to cave in on me?* 2. *Is anyone going to acknowledge me?* 3. *Are my kids going to be safe?* 4. *Is the message going to be boring or confusing?* 5. *Am I going to be dressed right?* 6. *Will I know where to go?* 7. *Of whom can I ask a question?* 8. *Are they going to do anything weird?* 9. *Am I going to have to sing or clap?* Most importantly: 10. *Is there any hope?* New guests are secretly wondering if there is hope for them. They're praying that second chances are real. They're hoping that God really can fix broken hearts and homes.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways we struggle to know the needs of neighbors and guests. But God's Son came down from heaven to experience all this personally. He wanted to experience the struggles we go through and what it takes to bring us safely home to heaven. Jesus is our living Hope with practical lessons all the way to this: **A New Attitude Toward Food and Drink**. We're surrounded by the...

✠ **Perishable** (vv.24-27)

If you sometimes feel confused coming to church, you're in good company. This long sixth chapter of John's Gospel has only one individual besides Jesus who seems to understand. Surprisingly it's the young boy who had the foresight to pack a lunch. 5,000 men plus women and children came unprepared. And when Jesus' disciples asked the boy for his five loaves of bread and two small fish, he did not seem to react the way most of us would: "Are you kidding me? This is all I have? Why would you take this away? And how far with that go among so many?" (6:9) The disciples asked...the boy gave...Jesus blessed and broke and satisfied them all! A miracle is when God bends His rules of nature and does the impossible. The crowd's reaction? Make Jesus king – by force if we have to! (6:15) The disciples? Afraid of ghosts when Jesus comes walking on the water and stills the storm. (6:16-21; Mark 6:49) Now the crowds demand a miraculous sign, totally ignoring Jesus' many miracles so far.

That's why Jesus says they practically did not see the miraculous signs He had already given them. They just want food for their stomachs. Jesus' advice is still good: ***"Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."***<sup>2</sup>

How hard it is for us to recognize that we are looking in the mirror. Who of us does not want more miracles in our lives? As long as they are physical, financial, relational, we think we will be happy. So Jesus kindly points us to the one thing we really need from Him, God's Word and the gift of faith to believe it. God works this miracle in our hearts by the living Bread from heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord.

First, notice how **perishable** our physical food supply is and all who rely on it. If you come back from overseas, the airport shows many Americans are losing "the battle of the bulge." And yet one of the ancient church fathers pointed out that our earthly ideal of tall and thin could be the opposite of heaven. Maybe short and round is the perfect form. What do we really know? Epidemic "Da-Betees," as my kids

<sup>1</sup> <https://ministrytodaymag.com/life/relationships/21593-10-questions-first-time-church-guests-might-ask>

<sup>2</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>). NPH, © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; Amazon-Kindle.

called it, high blood pressure and heart disease – is there something wrong with our food supply? Nutritionists argue with government food “experts.” Follow the money trail? Still one thing is certain. The statistics are ultimately the same. Even if you knew exactly what to eat...If you could afford a chef for the best food...If you never messed up with junk food – still you and I cannot escape God’s Word to Adam: **“Dust you are and to dust you will return.”** (Genesis 3:19 NIV84) We are as **perishable** as our food.

You might not need to come to church for that, but to face it and overcome it? Hope is a miracle gift God wants to give you from these words of God’s Word-in-the-flesh Son. Jesus is our living hope, not like, “I hope I win the lottery.” This sure and certain hope cannot disappoint because it’s God’s plan and God’s power. Jesus took our guilt on Himself. God gives you hope like the Bread of Life...

### ✠ **Enduring (vv.28-35)**

Outreach experts who study newcomers see how hard it is to come through the doors the first time. Coming back again depends so much on that first impression. But would you be surprised that of all the people who drop out of church, 82% leave in their first year? Six months and twelve months spike departures. Interviews indicate unanswered questions not always clear even to those who are asking.

*The First Six Months* new members are asking: 1. *“Can I make friends in this church?”* That goes beyond a “friendly church” to **enduring** here. A quick welcome without that “friendship factor” leaves connections missing and the back door open. 2. *“Is there a place I can fit in?”* – is more about *acceptance*, isn’t it? The “entry paths” that help new members say, “This is *my* church,” are that important. 3. *“Does this church really want me?”* – is more about *personal value*. Can they participate and feel their opinion is valued? Or does everyone go about business as usual, ignoring them?

*The Second Six Months* bring more questions: 1. *“Are my new friends as good as my old ones?”* – not just quantity but quality of friends. New believers especially need that depth of new relationships in church. 2. *“Does the group meet my needs?”* – Seven to twelve months in it’s natural to question whether it’s worth the cost of time, inconvenience and social discomfort in this new setting. 3. *“Is my contribution important?”* – not just involvement, but of significance, helping change people’s lives.”

Love in Christ makes us concerned about the experience people are having in their first year at our church. Are they finding acceptance, community and significance? How can we help these questions?<sup>3</sup>

Yet here again our loving Lord Jesus goes deeper than personal relationships with fellow members. He wants to make it all about your relationship with Him. Jesus’ fellow Jews asked the key question: **“What should we do to carry out the works of God?”** These were church people who grew up in the synagogue. But they had it backwards. They thought their work would heal their broken relationships with God and each other. **Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.”** Later on Jesus will say, **“No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”** (John 6:65 NIV84) Faith is **“the work of God”** like a concert He wrote where He plays all the instruments. God works faith in us – both the desire and the ability to do His will. And **“without faith it is impossible to please God.”** (Hebrews 11:6) The **Bread of Life** from heaven feeds faith.

See how vital is it to keep coming? One layman on the mission board used to say, “You need to come regularly at least three years before you really get it.” If earthly disciplines and academia need four years for a bachelor’s degree, four more for a master’s and more for a PhD, why would you expect to be a doctor of letters on God’s Word in a week? Or a month? Or a year? The infinite God is boundless in wisdom and love for you. Manna in the desert with Moses picture better **Food and Drink** from the One who says, **“I am the Bread of Life....The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”** Be patient with yourself and God. Give yourself time to eat, grow, mature. You can’t eat the whole warehouse in a day. Hope keeps **enduring** with Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/3824-6-questions-from-newcomers.html>

## 10 Questions First-Time Church Guests Might Ask

8:00AM EST 3/2/2015 [BRIAN MOSS](#)

- 1. Is the roof going to cave in on me?** Or sometimes stated, "Am I going to get struck by lightning?" Many of our guests are feeling the incredible contrast between their current lifestyle and what they know God wants from them. Because of this, they think that God and them are on the outs and that He's probably ticked off at them.
- 2. Is anyone going to acknowledge me?** This is human nature. Whether we are visiting a church or a restaurant or a store. When we enter walk into an organization we believe to be customer-driven, we expect someone to speak to us. In fact, we get weirded out if NO ONE even tries to acknowledge our presence.
- 3. Are my kids going to be safe?** For many of them, their most frequent exposure to churches and children has been news stories of pedophiles violating kids. They've taught their kids all their life to be wary of strangers and now they're not only completely surrounded by them, but you're asking them to "trust" you.
- 4. Is the message going to be boring or confusing?** Most of the unchurched do have some church background. For the vast majority their only exposure to preaching was a negative one. They think of the Bible as totally irrelevant to normal people and preaching as either a remedy for insomnia or some ranting lunatic who thinks volume is a motivational tool.
- 5. Am I going to be dressed right?** Have you ever gone to an event either overdressed or under-dressed? Nothing can be more embarrassing and uncomfortable. Since church attendance is not a routine in their life, it only stands to reason that they probably do not know what the dress code is and they're looking around to see if they stand out.
- 6. Will I know where to go?** Do you remember your first day of middle/high school or college? You're given a class schedule but almost never a map. That's the time when you figure out that clear signage can be a lifesaver! After a few weeks, you never even glance at those signs again, but the first timer views them as life or death!
- 7. Of whom can I ask a question?** Even the clearest signage doesn't answer all your questions. There are some things you just need to get from someone in the know. A first time guest is too scared to just start randomly interrogating people. They need to be able to easily identify someone who seem to be a designated question answerer.
- 8. Are they going to do anything weird?** Going to church for most visitors is like visiting a foreign country. The culture is so different that I don't know what's going to happen and I'm terrified I'll be put in an uncomfortable situation. They know Christians are different, they're just hoping they're not psycho!
- 9. Am I going to have to sing or clap?** How many environments does the average American go to that they're asked to sing out loud and clap along with? Exactly! It's funny that we like to measure worship by crowd participation, but then we neglect to measure our evangelistic effectiveness by the *lack* of crowd participation. Just saying.
- 10. Is there any hope?** Finally, and most importantly, they are secretly wondering if there is hope for them. They're praying that second chances are real. They're hoping that God really can fix broken hearts and homes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://ministrytodaymag.com/life/relationships/21593-10-questions-first-time-church-guests-might-ask>

# 6 QUESTIONS NEWCOMERS ARE ASKING ABOUT YOUR CHURCH

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By Charles Arn • January 15, 2018

Of all the people who drop out of church, our studies indicate that a whopping 82 percent leave in their first year. Like a new baby entering the world, that first year is critical to the survival of the new believer and new member.

Further study indicates that people do not leave at random times throughout that first year. Rather, we see two definite “spikes” at which time an inordinate number of newcomers simply stop coming. We interviewed 36 people who had stopped attending after six months, then another 36 who had stopped attending after a year. “What happened?” we asked. “Could you tell us your story?”

As they talked, we listened for common themes and discovered certain questions newcomers are asking in the first 12 months of their church involvement. Often, they are not even aware of their actual concerns. But in these “post-mortem” conversations, the issues became readily apparent.

## ***The First Six Months***

### **1. “Can I make friends in this church?”**

This is a question of *belonging*. Other studies tell us that newcomers who stay make an average of seven new friends in the church during the first six months; those who drop out make less than two. While it’s true that the first impressions of being a “friendly church” have much to do with a first-time visitor returning, the question has now changed from “Are they friendly?” to “Can I make friends?” I’m impressed that the “friendship factor”—more than any other ingredient in the connections and retention mix—is key. To put it simply: Those who make friends, stay; those who don’t, don’t.

### **2. “Is there a place I can fit in?”**

This is a question of *acceptance*. Churches with a variety of affinity groups (common interests, age, gender, marital and family status, concerns, needs, dreams) have a much higher retention rate than churches without such “entry paths.” And the more characteristics group members share in common, the better the fit and stronger the glue that will keep them connected.

### **3. “Does this church really want me?”**

This is a question of *personal value*. After the initial words of welcome, are these newcomers actively invited to participate in the roles and ministries of the church? Is their opinion sought on policy and vision decisions? Unfortunately, churches have a tendency to go on with business as usual and ignore the creative ideas and new energy bubbling just under the surface in newcomers.

If the answers are, “Yes, I have made some friends in this church,” and “Yes, there is a group I’m feeling comfortable in,” and “Yes, these people really do seem to be glad I’m here,” then newcomers generally stay. If, after five to six months, their answers are “No,” they often decide there are other things they could be doing.

If their answers are “Yes,” however, newcomers are still asking questions. The jury is still out.

## ***The Second Six Months***

### **1. “Are my new friends as good as my old ones?”**

The issue is now not so much quantity of friends as quality of friends. New believers, in particular, feel more and more uncomfortable with their old behaviors, old habits and old friends. That’s good. But they are also unconsciously assessing the value and depth of their new relationships in the church.

### **2. “Does the group meet my needs?”**

They may have found a young singles group, a senior adult class or a home Bible study of people like them (see the First Six Months questions above). But seven to 12 months later, they’re now asking whether the benefit of involvement is worth the cost of time, inconvenience and social discomfort in this new setting.

### **3. “Is my contribution important?”**

The question now is not one of involvement, but of significance. Are they doing busy work or kingdom work? “I wanted to help change people’s lives,” one person told us. “But all they asked me to do was set up chairs for the all-church dinner.” People want to connect with something that matters. The hope of many newcomers is that they can find that through the church. It takes them less than a year to decide.

What experience are people having in that first critical year at your church? Are they finding acceptance, community and significance? What could you do to come alongside them as they ask these questions? <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/3824-6-questions-from-newcomers.html>