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How to Welcome Guests to Church So They Will Come Back Next Week

By Greg Pratt

When a guest comes to your church service for the first time it is important that they are welcomed into an environment that makes them feel comfortable and that provides them with the greatest opportunity to meet and experience Jesus as well as get connected in to the community. So what steps can you take to ensure this happens in your church? Here you will find some steps to effectively welcome guests to your church so they will come back next week.

STEP 1 - The Welcome

Have you ever thought about the fact that your guests first impressions of your church community come from the car park? Believe it or not, the car park is one of the bookends to making your first time guest feel welcome in your church community, so you need to ask the question. What do they think when they drive into your church premises? Are the church grounds clean and tidy? Are the lawns mowed? Is there adequate signage to show them where to go from the car park? Can they find an easy car park or are they all full? Are they directed to the easiest park? Are they welcomed by someone in the car park? This part of their worship experience can sometimes play the biggest part in the guest deciding if they will come back and it sets their attitude to your church for what is to come. Ask why do you have a greeter at the door? Are they standing there for members or for visitors? Do they stand out and are they noticeable or do they blend in with everyone else? A first time guest is looking for someone to get directions from and find get as much information as possible about your church. While every member likes to receive a warm welcome, the greeters main priority is to make our guests feel welcome and provide them with information and directions as they come in. How do you do this? The greatest way to welcome someone is by being yourself, don't put on a show, but rather with a smile welcome them to church. If it is their first time at church be sure to introduce them to someone else who may be in the foyer and lead them to where they need to go. Also provide them with information as to who you are and what you are going to do this morning as a church. Seek also to get their contact details for follow up and to send out email updates and other information during the week. Also another excellent idea is to give them an information pack which introduces them to the church and its activities.

It is also important that you ensure the facilities are in a neat and tidy condition, you need to purposely make sure that the 5 senses of the person are all positive experiences. This even includes the smell in the toilets, carpets in a clean condition and bins emptied. You want your guests to have a memorable experience and make them want to come back.

STEP 2 - Connect

Did you know that if a guest meets more than 5 people on their first visit to your church, they will more than likely return? What does this mean? That you and your church community need to intentionally seek out those who you don't know at church on Sabbath morning and get to know them. This really is the crunch part of making guests feel welcome and a part of our church community. Don't be over the top or pushy, just a gentle hello and handshake will do the trick and even a simple open ended question about the weather or similar can make a huge impact on that guests impressions of your church.

Along with the initial chat, another important part of giving a welcome is to use a connect card where they can fill in their contact details and be alerted to any offers (free is good) the church would like to give to guests. This might include a free copy of the Signs, Steps to Jesus, DVD or anything similar that can be delivered.

STEP 3 - Invitation

Don't leave a guest without an invitation to come to another event. Always have another group, social, event or worship service you can invite them to. Have the advertising cards or flyers with you. This might include a guest's lunch or a lunch at your house after the worship service, a church/small group social, midweek small group, mums and bubs play groups or whatever else may be happening. Try to think through what is the best way to get them connected with others in your church community and intentionally invite them to that event. For example, it is no use inviting an 80 year old grandma to playgroup but rather an over 60's outing would suit better. Be smart, be intentional and invite.

STEP 4 - Follow-up

The guest experience doesn't just finish on Saturday. You must also ensure that you have an effective follow up strategy that occurs within a few days of the visit to church or church event. This may include a letter, phone call, text message and even an invitation to catch up at Gloria Jeans or similar places for a chat. This again, really is a bookend to the whole experience and can have a lasting impression on a guest and their visit to church.

What the Weekly Guest Assimilation Process Should Look Like



It is so important that we take guests to our church seriously and intentionally seek to connect them into our church community by making them feel welcome, giving them the information they are looking for while also creating loving environments that will lead them to know and experience Jesus.