

Guest Readiness

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Guest Readiness

If people visit your church once or twice but don't return, you may have a "guest readiness" issue.

Often, we go to great lengths to welcome people in our homes. The same should be true as we welcome new guests to the church.

*"Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it."
- Hebrews 13:2*

There's a difference between being friendly and being hospitable. Churches usually consider themselves friendly. Often that means members are nice with one another. Hospitality is extended to people we don't know. It's the deep, meaningful engagement to people we meet for the first time.

In this, episode three of a four-part Church Growth podcast series, we focus on what it means to be guest ready.

- Episode 1: Is your church ready for growth?
- Episode 2: Plan outreach events that build relationships and growth

We've all experienced amazing hospitality at some point of our life. Think about those experiences and work to see how it can fit within the context of the church. Are we willing to go the extra mile to make people feel at home and welcomed?

Churches can have bad hospitality habits. Sometimes "passing the peace" can turn into a moment when members talk to their friends and ignore first-time guests. The longer the greeting lasts, the more awkward it is for your guests.

Hospitality happens...

- When processes are put in place to engage with first-time guests from the moment they enter the parking lot until they leave — as well as how you engage with them afterward.
- If volunteers are trained to engage with guests.
- There's a change in mindset and guests are more important than people in the pews.

Put yourself in your visitor's shoes and see the entire church experience with fresh eyes (and the rest of your senses).

What happens to you?

Do you know what to do?

What are your first impressions of the interior/exterior of the church building?

Do you know where to go?

Do my kids feel welcome?

Do I know about "what's going on" outside of Sunday worship in the church?

Do I know how to get involved?

What could make your experience easier?

Focus on low-hanging fruit

- Add signage
- Remove clutter
- Solicit honest feedback
- Remove dated items
- Provide training
- Put processes and people in place
- Get help

Most importantly, be honest with yourselves about the experiences a first-time visitor has at your church. Look critically at every aspect of the new guest experience, and be willing to make the changes necessary to reach new people for Christ.