

“Becoming a Welcoming Church”

By Thom S. Rainer

Hebrews 13:2 “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

1 Peter 4:9 “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”

Treating others the way you desire to be treated is sometimes easier said than done. For many individuals, the first time visiting a church is similar to one’s first day at school. Although you can collect all of the information that you want, you still don’t know what to fully expect until you get there.

Let’s practice this exercise. How would you want to be treated if it were your first time attending a church?

A Few Things that Visitors don’t Like

- 1. The Stand-and-Greet time can be awkward for guests.*** Especially when members only talk to members or speak to guest because the Pastor asks them too. When visitors are greeted it should feel organic and normal.
- 2. Being ignored prior to and at the conclusion of the worship service.*** Visitors need to feel welcomed before the beginning of the service and afterwards. A visitor doesn’t feel welcomed when the benediction is given, and no one acknowledges them as they leave the sanctuary.
- 3. “Holy Huddles”*** are when members gather together with other members they are familiar with and are boxing out the guests.

Where is the Information

If a guest were to walk into Antioch, would they be able to find information about the church? The information center can be simple but attractive. It should have information about the church, Bibles to give away, and other gifts to give. What are items we could add and offer to guest in our foyer/welcome center?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Silent Killers

1. *Lighting and Sound* can play a significant role in visitors not returning to worship with us. If the lighting is too dim it can make guest feel uncomfortable. If the sound is too loud, too soft, or not clear it can create an unpleasant worship experience. A church's PA system is a necessity to the worship experience.

2. *Church Temperature*. It may seem insignificant, but the temperature of the church also plays a role in helping the members and the visitors feel welcome. Preparations should be made so that the church can be at a proper temperature depending on the seasons so that those attending can feel comfortable during the worship service.

3. *Being too friendly.* Although we want our guest to feel welcome and wanted, too much of anything can kill you. Guest should feel welcomed without being overcrowded, made to feel uncomfortable, personal space violated, and without being pressured to join the church today.

4. *What's Next?* Potential members want to know if they join the church what's the next step to becoming a member, what's required of them, what ministries can they be a part of, and what ministries do we have in place for their children. When an individual considers joining the church, they are not just considering themselves, but they are also considering their family.

Many people join the church needing help in various areas of their lives. (*Marriage, singles, millennials, senior saints, collegiate, drug addiction, alcoholism, sex addicts, etc.*) The church needs to have different ministries in place to meet the various needs of peoples lives.

5. *No activities for Youth.* When an individual considers joining a church, they also want to know the church has activities for their family and their children. Parents want to know that their children are safe and will receive a good Christian education if they attend our church.

6. *Parking lot attendees.* Even the parking lot of a church can be a great place for ministry. It helps visitors to feel welcome when there is someone who can direct them to a parking spot and can also greet them when they arrive on the church grounds.

What new ministries do you feel Antioch should offer in the immediate future?

In what ways you could contribute to the new ministries that the church would offer?
