**Guest Follow Up**

Visitors to your church make up 100% of your congregation’s growth potential. This simple statement should underscore the importance of intentional guest follow up. Each guest in our church service has gone to great lengths to come and participate, including adjusting their schedule, facing unfamiliar people and surroundings, risking rejection, and more. While their immediate experience in the service will factor greatly in their likelihood to return, they will likely be more impacted by your care of them after their visit.

Churches who are successful in retaining guests are intentional about with their follow up approach. In fact, a successful approach to retention will include a repeatable system, ensuring that each guest is adequately cared for and encouraged to take a next step.

Of course, a follow up plan is only as good as the information gathered from your guest. For this reason, it is VITAL that each individual that visits your church is asked for at least minimal contact information. This can be as simple as their name, mailing address and phone number. Without this vital information, we are robbing them from the ability to receive much-needed encouragement and appreciation.

When considering your guest follow up system, it’s important to plan what should happen for each guest within the hours, days and weeks after their visit. Essentially, what steps should you follow to move a first-time guest to a second-time guest, a second-time guest to a third-time guest, and then to a regular attender?

For example, within the first 48 hours, a first-time guest to your church may receive a hand-written letter from the pastor thanking them for coming, and inviting them to connect after service the following week. Depending on your community’s culture, you may also follow up with a personal phone-call or text message.

A second-time guest would be given a different approach, since they have chosen not only to come once, but were drawn back for more. An example follow-up would include a face-to-face personal invitation, before they leave, to a home Bible study. Within the 24 hours following, they would receive an email, text or phone call expressing appreciation for their return visit. By the second day, a letter is in the mail from a church leader thanking them for returning, and inviting them to a lunch or dinner with the church staff. It could also describe various ways they can discover more about your church and to become involved.

While the steps for guest follow up may be different for your church or ministry, one thing is true for everyone… follow-up must be intentional and systematic, ensuring that every guest is adequately cared for.

**Exercise:**

Create a simple guest follow up system that could be implemented in your ministry immediately. Work through the following plan to determine how you can, and will follow up on guests.

**1st Time Guests**

 **First 24 hours**

*(Suggestions: let them leave w/ something; contact them on social media, text them, drop off a gift at their home w/ no intrusion)*

What is my plan?

 **Within 1st week**

*(Suggestions: hand-written note, email, phone call)*

*We recommend that you present some ‘next step’ for them. A path to become a part of the church… ex.- pastor’s brunch, membership class, small group, opportunity for connection*

What is my plan?

**2nd Time Guests**

 **First 24 hours**

*(Suggestions: invite out for lunch, a short personal visit, ask for prayer needs, a more formal letter, a Bible study invite)*

What is my plan?

 **Within 1st week**

*(Suggestions: Have another staff or volunteer contact them, send longer letter w/ ministries of church)*

**Repeat Guests**

 **First 24 hours**

*(Suggestions: Sign them up for newsletters, emails, etc; Connect them w/ a small group, give an opportunity for involvement in an appropriate manner)*

What is my plan?

Note: Don’t forget the ‘slippers’… those who have slipped away. Incorporate a method to take attendance by name, especially as you grow. If you have classes, instruct the teacher to take a roll. Appoint someone to count heads. However it works for you, do it… but do it. This is the only way you can review attendance history, and followup on everyone, ensuring no one falls through the cracks.

There are multiple software applications and apps for tracking guests. You can even get by with a notebook and a pen. But you must be intentional, consistent, and passionate about your follow up program.