

10 Commandments to Help Deliver a Guest-Friendly Culture

I travel a lot and spend a lot of time in different churches. I have had a church consulting firm that did “guest” visits as part of our services. Sadly, many times I do not feel welcome as a guest when I visit churches.

The Bible is replete with admonitions of hospitality and servanthood. I just wish our church members understood that the servant-like spirit should also be manifest when we gather to worship. Guests are often uncomfortable, if not intimidated, when they visit a church. We are to be gracious and sacrificial servants to them.

In response to this need for more guest-friendly church members, I have devised the ten greatest needs, at least from my perspective. I will reticently call them “commandments” and throw in a little King James English for effect.

1. **Thou shalt pray for people in the services whom you don’t recognize.** They are likely guests who feel uncomfortable and uncertain.
2. **Thou shalt smile.** You only have to do so for about an hour. Guests feel welcome when they see smiling people. You can resume your somber expressions when you get home.
3. **Thou shalt not sit on the ends of the rows.** Move to the middle so guests don’t have to walk over you. You’ll survive in your new precarious position.
4. **Thou shalt not fill up the back rows first.** Move to the front so guests don’t have to walk in front of everyone if they get there late.
5. **Thou shalt have ushers to help seat the guests.** Ushers should have clearly-marked badges or shirts so that the guests know who can help them.
6. **Thou shalt offer assistance to guests.** If someone looks like they don’t know where to go, then they probably don’t know where to go. Get out of your comfort zone and ask them if you can help.
7. **Thou shalt not gather too long in your holy huddles.** Sure, it’s okay to talk to fellow members; but don’t stay there so long that you are not speaking to guests.
8. **Thou shalt offer your seats to guests.** I know that this move is a great sacrifice, but that family of four can’t fit in the three vacant seats next to you. Give it a try. You might actually feel good about your efforts.
9. **Thou shalt not save seats.** I know you want to have room for all of your friends and family, but do you know how a guest feels when he or she sees the vacant seats next to you occupied by three hymnals, one Bible, two coats, and an umbrella? You might as well put a “Do Not Trespass” sign on the seats.
10. **Thou shalt greet someone you don’t know.** Yes, it’s risky. They may actually be members you don’t know. And you may get caught in a 45-second conversation. You’ll be okay; I promise.

What do you think of these commandments? What would you add?

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