

Startling New Findings on How Churches Welcome Guests

Every church sends a message through how they welcome and treat guests. Those with no strategy send the loudest message: “What we believe has not impacted how we treat you.” Not to be hospitable is to prove the message of God’s grace hasn’t impacted the totality of the church.

Hospitality is the combination of two words: stranger and love. It literally means to show love to strangers and it is very biblical. God’s hospitality toward us is the foundation and motivation for our hospitality toward others. God loved us while we were still strangers. While we were His enemies, He pursued us. And now we are to accept others the way Christ has accepted us. Being hospitable is even a qualification for being a leader in the church (1 Timothy 3:2). Churches must have a plan for how they show love to those who are their guests.

So what are churches doing in terms of their hospitality toward guests? [LifeWay Research](#) interviewed more than 1,000 pastors on how their churches welcome guests, and here are a few points from [what the research revealed](#):

- Nearly 80% of the churches have a centralized location where guests can learn about the church.
- 40% of the churches gift some type of gift to first-time guests.
- Churches with less than 100 people in attendance are much more likely to ask guests to stand and be recognized than churches with more than 250 people in attendance.
- The vast majority of churches (96%) with more than 250 people in attendance ask guests to provide their information on cards the church provides.
- 85% of the churches with more than 250 people in attendance provide some type of informational class for new people to learn about the church. 50% of the churches with less than 50 people in attendance do.

The research is encouraging in that most churches have a plan for hospitality, for showing love to those who visit. When thinking about hospitality to guests who visit your church, it is helpful to think in terms of systems and culture. They feed off one another in that a church culture that values hospitality will ensure systems are in place, and systems will help reinforce a culture. Both are important.

Systems for hospitality include:

- A plan to ensure guests know where to park, where to bring their children, where the worship gathering takes place
- Signage and greeters placed at strategic places in a guest’s path (parking lot, doorways, etc.)
- A process to gather information from guests
- A plan for follow-up for those who have attended

But if you do not have joyful and loving people in your church, your systems won’t be able to

overcome the lack of hospitality from the people.

A culture of hospitality is based upon the following important principles:

- Ministry leaders must continually remind people that we were once strangers and God pursued us.
- Those serving as greeters, ushers, etc. must be friendly and joyful people who love the church.

Because this is such an important aspect of a local church's effectiveness, I am really excited about Dr. Rainer's new book, [Becoming a Welcoming Church](#). You can find more information about the book [here](#). I highly recommend it. It would be a great tool to give to people in your church to encourage and challenge them to help make your church a welcoming place.

> [Read more from Eric](#).

Learn more about the importance of how your church welcomes Guests - [start a conversation with Guest Experience Navigator Bob Adams](#).