

The Single Greatest Sacrifice You Can Make for a Guest

August kicks off "Guest Experience Month" on Auxano's content platforms, and there's no better way to get an early start than with a guest post from Jason Young, Director of Guest Experience at Buckhead Church and Northpoint Ministries.

A single mother came into our services looking for a seat. She requested a seat at the end of a row so she could quickly slip out in the event that her child needed attention during the service. I found a row where this might be possible and asked a woman who was already seated, "Ma'am, would it be possible for you to scoot down? This lady needs an aisle seat this morning."

The woman in the seat looked down, then back up and said, "She can walk around me."

I apologetically looked at my guest, walked her away from the seat, and said, "I'm sorry ma'am. If you would like to sit in an aisle seat, we don't have to sit there because that doesn't feel like the most enjoyable place to sit." Then I escorted her to another seating area.

If I had said nothing or seated her next to the inconsiderate lady, I would have left my guest feeling the embarrassment and shame of the situation. But because I acknowledged the situation and protected my guest, she felt empowered again. She felt comfortable and respected.

We're all familiar with the idea of a bodyguard. In fact, you've probably seen a dramatic scene in a movie where a gunshot rings out. The film speed slows down as the brave bodyguard hurls himself in front of the person he's protecting. His body inches in front of the bullet where it makes its impact. The film speeds up, chaos ensues, and you see the relief on the protected person's face. The bodyguard saved their life by taking the bullet. The brave protector considered the life of their client more important than their own.

While my story isn't quite as dramatic as that, that's essentially what I was trying to do for the single mother who attended our service. I was a bodyguard for her. I took the bad experience on myself so she didn't have to experience it.

That's the single greatest sacrifice we can make for our guests:

Brokering bad moments so they don't have to experience them.

There are many ways we can do this for a guest. Jonathan Malm and I offer quite a few ideas in our new book, [The Come Back Effect](#). Some simple ways, though, are things like:

- The guest doesn't have to feel lost when they can't find their car. The parking lot attendant takes that emotion on themselves and finds it for them.
- The guest doesn't have to feel embarrassed when their child throws up in the children's room. The childcare worker takes that emotion on themselves and cleans it up.
- The guest doesn't have to feel confused when they're trying to find out the time of a support group that meets at the church. The greeter takes that feeling, absorbs it, and does the legwork to find out for the guest.

Brokering the experience for the guest is about sheltering them from the emotion. It's jumping in front of the uncomfortable bullet and absorbing that so the guest doesn't have to experience it.

When we acknowledge what they're feeling and work to protect them from that, we make a guest feel truly honored.

In fact, you can even use language like that. It disarms a guest when you say something like:

- "I'll keep you from feeling embarrassed."
- "I don't want you to feel lost."
- "You got here at the perfect time!"

We never want to reinforce a guest's insecurities. Instead, we want to reinforce their security. Their comfort. Their confidence. Those emotions are memorable and will stick with the guest long after their visit is over.

Think through your service right now—through things a typical first-time guest has to experience. What negative emotions might they feel, regardless of whether or not they're your fault or not? Now look for ways you and your team can broker the experience so they don't have to go through that. It's one of the greatest acts of love you can do for the guests who attend your services.

check out [The Come Back Effect](#), by Jason Young and Jonathan Malm.
