

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Pre-Guest Church Engagement

Episode 110

Engaging Your Mission Field (Part 1)

Churches drift towards an insider-focus over time—more attention is given to discipleship of Christ followers than to effective outreach and evangelism. How do you fight that tendency? We've noted four steps that help churches open their "front door" wider. All four are critical—but we've found most churches only have strategies and structure to engage one or two of them.

In this four-part series, Tony and Amy unpack the key steps we see helping churches reach more new guests with the love of Jesus: 1) *Pre-Guest Engagement*, 2) *The First-Time Guest Experience*, (3) *First Steps Engagement*, and (4) *Next Steps Engagement*.

Equip People to Develop Meaningful Relationships

- One element of a church's pre-guest engagement strategy needs to include equipping people to develop relationships with their family, friends, co-workers and neighbors.
- If we're not intentional, we can find ourselves spending every moment of our lives with Christians—especially those of us in full-time ministry. That's not God's design for us.
- Last year health service company Cigna revealed the results of a [research study](#) that surveyed 20,000 adults 18 and older using a loneliness scale developed by UCLA. The findings? Nearly half of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone (46 percent) or left out (47 percent).
- Help your church learn to pray for the people in their lives, engage conversation and listen well, intentionally invest time and serve people. Equip them to share their stories and invite someone to take a step toward Christ, when the time is appropriate.
- There's no way to compel someone to take a step toward Christ outside of a relationship.

Be FOR Your Community

- How can your church demonstrate you're there *for* your community, not to take *from* it?
- Partnerships that invest time, financial resources, leadership resources, and voice to serve your community helps you develop relationships outside the church.

- It also helps you increase our “brand awareness” in your community: People will know your church because you are making a noticeable impact.
- The best model we’ve seen is from Gwinnett Church near Atlanta: Lead pastor Jeff Henderson kicked off the #ForGwinnett campaign in the community before the church even opened. Check out forgwinnett.org for some inspiration.

Content Marketing

- The third aspect of a pre-guest engagement strategy is about marketing, but not the type of marketing the church has done in the past. Newspaper ads, postcards, billboards... That’s traditional marketing. It aims to push our message out to our intended audience. People are ignoring that type of marketing. It’s just become noise.
- Whether you like it or not, you are no longer the pastor of a church. You are a missionary to a people group who is far from God. We need to start acting more like missionaries.
- Learn more about your mission field. Confirm who you are trying to reach. Research the questions they are asking.
- Create and distribute content that addresses their key questions. For example, one church we recently served identified some of the questions people in its community are asking: *Once you see my flaws, will you love me? Who am I? Am I parenting right? Why do I matter?*
- Start with Sunday messages; then slice it up to share nuggets of content through your website, email lists and social media. You don’t have to wait until Sunday, though. You can also start sharing content that addresses these key questions through written articles, podcasts, YouTube videos and so on.
- Become a trusted resource for the key questions people are asking. Help pre-guests see that Jesus and the Bible are relevant to each of our lives.

Next Steps

- Study the [The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14](#)
- With your team, ask a few critical questions you have to answer before you can ever hope to swing open the front door of your church:
 - Do we *really* know who we’re trying to reach? The questions that they’re asking?
 - Do we have an intentional strategy to engage people before they visit our church?
- **Could you use help clarifying who is in your mission field and how you’ll engage them?** We’re guiding church teams through these conversations every week. [Let’s talk.](#)

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