

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

First-Time Guest Engagement

Episode 111

Engaging Your Mission Field (Part 2)

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*.

Challenge Your Church to Consistently Extend Invitations to Unchurched Neighbors and Co-workers

- Relationships are the best strategy to keep first-time guests coming back to your church.
- Data from churches shows time and time again that 75-90% of the people currently connected to a church were invited by someone who already attended the church.
- 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.
- 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.

Creating a Compelling Service and Kids' Environments

- If your service doesn't feel worth a guest's time, they won't come back.
- If the kids don't have fun and develop relationships or if the parents don't feel their kids are safe, they're not coming back.

Offer a Clear Invitation to Come Back

- Many churches are missing an invitation at the end of the service for new guests to return.
- One of the last things you communicate in the service should be a compelling reason people should come back the next weekend.
- Have volunteers in place to open the door for guests as they leave, thank them for coming, and invite them back the next weekend.
- If you're clear with guests that you want them to come back it obviously will increase the chance that they will return.

Implement Best Practices

- Leave guests with a positive surprise. Share an overwhelming sense of warmth and hospitality, or add something fun or humorous in the service.
- Welcome guests and put them at ease.
- Add value to your guests' lives.
- Provide guests with an opportunity to experience your services online.
- Consider using a texting service to connect with your online guests.

Next Steps

- With your team, ask some of the following critical questions about your first-time guest engagement strategy:
 - What tools can we provide to our church that will help people more consistently extend invitations to their unchurched neighbors and co-workers?
 - Is the length of our service conducive for first-time guests? How can we be more intentionally accommodating to people's busy pace of life?
 - Are kids excited about their experience at our church? How can we provide a fun, engaging and safe environment that kids love to attend?
 - Are we creating any unnecessary barriers that prevent first-time guests from coming back for a second visit?
 - How are we measuring our guest retention rate? Is the percentage of returning guests growing or declining? What next steps can we take to better understand whether or not we are winning in this area?
- **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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