



## **7 Secrets to Effective Church Hospitality**

**Don't forget to save to your local hard drive.**

Copyright © 2017 by EvangelismCoach.org

The organization and presentation of this material is aimed at suggesting areas where your church or hospitality committee might want to focus its development in the next few months.

Have a question? Ask at <https://www.evangelismcoach.org/contact/> or via twitter (@EvangelismCoach).



## **Secret #1 Hospitality Ministries flow out of the vision to grow your church**

You must have a vision for your church to grow its impact. Not just numbers.

What would your church look like if it was growing?

What measurements would you use?

I suggest "Adult Baptisms" as the measure of church growth. Adult baptisms are a sign of conversion growth, rather than transfer growth, or organic growth through births.

Adult baptisms are a sign that your church is reaching new people for Christ. This may be the outcome of intentional evangelism training, or stepped up community engagement or missional outreach into the church neighborhood.

Depending on your faith tradition in the body of Christ, you may choose to mark other forms of measuring growth.

To accomplish this vision, you'll begin to see your church visitor differently.

They are your guest. Your visitors are a gift of God.

They are men, women, and children that God might bring to your church so that your church can make a Kingdom impact.

Some might be believers and followers of Christ. They look for a place where they can serve, use their gifts and talents, and participate in the life and mission of the church to bless its community.

Some might be on their journey to discover Christ. Whether they are intentionally seeking because of a pressing felt need, or simply responded to



ongoing invitations of your church members, or even choosing to come because of your church's mission, they are attending your church and hearing elements of the good news.

Your church can impact the life of all your guests. Your church can impact a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation if they bring children who grow up in your church and stay around for grandchildren to arrive.

But if your guests don't come back for a second visit, your church will have little effect on their life. If they do come back for a few visits, but can't make any new friendships in just a matter of months, they'll move on.

These guests won't become part of your church family. They won't contribute their gifts and talents. They might find faith in Christ from somewhere else, which we celebrate as the most desired outcome.

Hospitality ministries help your church visitors decide to return. Hospitality ministries help your guests organically develop new relationships within your congregation.

Good hospitality practices remove three types of barriers

1. The barrier to entry to your congregation.
2. The barriers to return, and
3. The barriers to developing new friendships.

Good hospitality practices seek to honor your church visitor as a guest, not as an intruder.

Without the honoring of your guests through awesome red carpet hospitality, your church will not fulfill its vision of transforming lives for Jesus Christ.

Your church's vision and your church's hospitality practices are closely related.



## Secret #2 Awesome Volunteers

Hospitality ministries are labor intensive. There are many volunteer opportunities.

Depending on the size of your church, the size of your facilities, the number of campuses your church occupies, you'll have a few to a few hundred volunteers. Just imagine:

- Ushers
- Greeters
- Welcome Center
- Parking Lot Attendants
- Administrative Support
- Hospitality Committee Members
- Roving Greeters who look for visitors who might need guidance.

Depending on the size of your teams and how you organize them, there may be rotating pool of volunteers who tackle a particular Sunday or a particular month.

Your hospitality ministry runs on awesome volunteers. You want volunteers who love their work, who do their work with diligence and honor. You want volunteers who love to honor the guest the Lord brings you.

One of the biggest challenges to your hospitality ministry is this:

Volunteers who do not understand their importance in the welcome mission of your church.

These are the volunteers who do a job versus do a ministry. These are the volunteers who don't show up, don't really care, and don't find a last minute replacement.



If you are the leader of the volunteers in the area of hospitality ministry, it falls on you to recruit, cast vision, provide regular training, and say thank you to your team of volunteers.

You'll need to remind your volunteers regularly about the importance of the work they do.

Share stories with them of families who get involved in your church because of a great welcome they received.

And then, don't forget to say thank you. Find ways to say thanks in a manner that our volunteers will receive it. Some like public thanks, others prefer to be thanked in private.



### **Secret #3 A building that is clean and well maintained**

Several surveys, at least in a North American context, indicate that your visitor places an importance on the condition of your building.

For example, in one survey of adult converts to Christianity, over 50% said that the condition of the building influenced their decision to return or not.

You should spend some time doing a hospitality audit of your building. I've written one that is nearly 14 pages and is free to download. Visit [this link for the most recent version](#) of the free download

One possible outcome of doing the audit is developing a checklist of repairs that need to be made. For example:

- Do all the light bulbs work?
- Is the bulletin board up to date?
- Do all stall doors in bathrooms latch shut?
- Is the junk room really hidden away, or quite visible?

Some clean-up and repairs can be made on a small budget. Others will require a capital investment. Organize a small work day and connect the workday to the hospitality vision.

One church used the hospitality audit about the same time they received a capital gift. They used it to redo the paneled walls of their sanctuary, update their carpet, and upgrade their lighting.

Other churches used the audit to discover quick fixes like broken latches, missing toilet paper holders, loose door knobs, and a few light bulbs that needed to be replaced.



## Secret #4 Effective Systems

Your marketing systems help get people in the door to your church. That might be via personal invitation, direct marketing in its various forms, or social networking that brings the occasional visitor.

Your hospitality system focuses on the experience of the visitor and members at your central worship service.

Your follow up system focuses on helping people come back and begin to organically develop new friendships with existing members of your church.

In particular, your hospitality system will have some or all of the following components:

- Building review (see secret #3)
- Greeter Team
- Usher Team
- Security team
- Administrative team
- Guest Contact information and use.
- Post Service reception or visiting space.

Your hospitality committee can focus on some of the systems. I talk about them in my ebook, *How to Welcome Church Visitors*, as well as the DVD set, *Break the Unseen Barriers*. (see more at the end)

The risk that many committees run is that they will focus on the system, to the neglect of the guest making their first visit. I regularly warn hospitality committees that their job is to facilitate ministry, not process people through scripted techniques.



There are some things your church can do to improve their systems, but the most important thing is to focus on the people.

My focus on systems is to find ways reduce friction. Friction is anything that our building, worship service, or volunteers might do to create social awkwardness, confusion, embarrassment, or even pain in our guest.

Let me give an example of friction. I recently gave a workshop at a historic church. They believed that everybody knew where the restrooms were. No sign was needed. However, I needed to locate one and found myself in the position of having to ask. For some people, asking directions is not a social challenge. For others, asking directions is an embarrassment.

Some people look for signs. Some people look for a host who can answer their question. Provide both and you'll make the visitor feel comfortable.



## **Secret # 5 A Wow Experience**

Your guests will arrive with a variety of backgrounds and experiences that will shape their opinion of your church.

Some things are beyond your control.

They may have theological filters that would prevent your guest from being part of your church.

Your guests may be comparing their visit with you to prior churches they have visited, or maybe even to the faith experiences of their childhood.

However, you can have an influence over the welcome they receive. You can train your greeters to provide a meaningful hello. You can train your volunteers to expect, look for, and meet common needs of your church guest.

You can make it easy for your guest to find their way to the seat by removing all the unnecessary barriers that might get in the way.

You can make it easy for guests to know they are honored and appreciated as guests in the choice of gifts you might choose to give them, or the cookies you might drop off at their house after service.

You can make it easy for guests to feel love and accepted by volunteers who love and serve your visitors, as well as members.

You can make it easy for your visitors to hear about next steps they can take to build friendships in church, how they are invited to join in the mission of the church, how they are invited to take the next step of growth in their faith.

Your hospitality committee can look over the elements of the worship service to find what might cause friction and then discuss ways to remove that friction.



For example, one church started doing video announcements, inviting people to participate in events. Without fail, each video finished with “See Bob” for more information.

As a church visitor, I wanted to join in, but didn’t know who to see. We didn’t know Bob. That left us choosing not to participate. A simple fix to remove friction would have been to put Bob’s picture in the video announcement.

One effective practice is to regularly review the welcome experience of your church to identify friction and create wow moments. Take some time in the next few weeks and do a review of your worship service experience.



## Secret #6 Effective Follow-up

The most important task to starting your follow-up is getting contact information from your guests. There are a few different ways churches are doing this, but the connection card is the best practice.

I visited a church that asked me to fill out a card, and then gave me specific directions as to what to do with it. Take it to the welcome center and receive a free gift – a book that the church would give me. I turned in the card, but turned down the book, as I didn't need that particular one.

I returned the second week, and once again filled out a visitor card. I obediently turned it in. I even marked "second time visitor."

However, here is where their system fell apart. There was no follow-up contact from anyone. No phone call, no email, no letter, and no visit.

This is where churches fall down. Once you get the visitor contact information, the important step is to make some form of contact that appreciates your guest, and shows them a simple and low commitment next step they can take to make new friends.

Your follow up doesn't have to be elaborate. It simply needs to be intentional and directing people towards a simple next step. Do not overwhelm your visitor with all the volunteer needs in your congregation, nor recruit them for nursery duty on the second week.

Instead focus on ways that they can start to build relationships with church members. That might be through a small group, or through a church supper program. It might be through a community service project that is coming up.

The possibilities are endless. Your focus should be on identifying and promoting that simple low commitment next step.



## Secret #7 Prayer

Hospitality is a ministry. Each and every ministry of the church should be undergirded in prayer.

You can pray that God would increase the relational warmth in your congregation, that members would catch the vision of your church hospitality. You can pray that your volunteers would rise to the occasion and love your guests by showing them honor.

You can even spend time praying for your guests. Pray for them before they come. Pray that they would see or feel the need that would bring them to church, that the Spirit of God would draw them.

Pray that they would experience God's presence during your worship service. Pray that they would experience God's love through the hospitality of your team.

Pray that God's love and your love would overcome any mistakes or blunders that happen in your hospitality ministry. God's love can overcome a rude greeter. God's presence can sooth a heart that's bent out of shape because of the awkwardness of being ignored.

You can even pray with your guests. Perhaps you have talked with your guests after the service and heard them express a need. You can offer to pray with them before they leave, which can give God the opportunity to reveal Himself in answer to prayer. I've seen a few occasions where that leads to further faith sharing conversations.



## Discuss

Share personal experiences of a good hospitality experience in another church. Be respectful and honoring in your description.

What might be a practice that you can adapt to your church from your experience?

Share personal experience of a not-so-good hospitality experience in another church. Be respectful in your description, and leave church name out.

What might be a practice that you need to fix in your church based out of this experience?



## What's Next?

Over the next few days, you'll receive some additional materials related to this report. You'll get one every few days

You'll learn

- Additional Greeter Tips
- The 10 most important minutes to assimilation
- How to get an honest impression of your guest services (For Free)

## Join the conversation

I invite you to email me your questions about your particular situation. I answer each question personally and love to interact with each of you. Email me directly with your question, or fill out our contact form: <http://www.evangelismcoach.org/contact/>



## How to Welcome Church Visitors

*How to Welcome Church Visitors* takes about 50 of the extremely popular articles from EvangelismCoach.org and compiles them into one download ebook (after purchase).

Perhaps you were recently recruited to serve on your church's hospitality committee. Perhaps you were asked to **start your church's hospitality ministry**. Perhaps you've been asked to **train your church hospitality team**. Perhaps you've been appointed by your pastor to figure out how to **warm up your church's welcome**. You don't need to recreate the wheel. You just need to **somewhere to start**. You just need a refresher to help you get a great overview of your system.



The details on the Ebook, How to Welcome Church Visitors are

<https://store.evangelismcoach.org/shop/ebook-how-to-welcome-church-visitors/-welcome-church-visitors/>

*We have been giving church hospitality workshops for over 15 years and of the 25 or more books we have used in the past, yours is by far the best contribution to the field with all its nuts and bolts practicality.*

*We've been photocopying the cover and telling our client churches that if they want to start improving their first impressions, they should start here with How To Welcome Church Visitors.*

*Bill and Gail Royster  
Church Hospitality Trainers  
The Welcome & Hospitality People  
Houston, TX*

## Greeter Training DVD Collection

Learn more here: <https://store.evangelismcoach.org/shop/church-greeter-training-webinars-2-pack/>

I've put a 2 hour Greeter Training together in one set of DVDs, or download them separately.

Have a question? Ask at <https://www.evangelismcoach.org/contact/> or via twitter (@EvangelismCoach).