



ACTS 1:8 MISSIONS EXPERIENCE

G. PREPARING FOR GUESTS THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY

The Sundays following Serve Local present opportunities to have many guests in your worship services. The Sunday immediately following offers a natural bridge from the connections at Serve Local to attendance within the church building. As follow-up begins and invitations to attend are issued, you may have more guests attend than any time in the recent past. As you prepare for your day of ministry, think ahead to the Sundays following contact with your community and anticipate the arrival of guests.

Generally, you will connect with two kinds of people through Serve Local: those with some church background and those with little-to-none. The first type has some expectation of what attending a service will be like. The second goes by rumors, TV shows, and, often, negative word-of-mouth. How we engage guests—especially first-time guests—can determine not only whether they will return, but also whether they will judge us as genuinely interested in them.

Evaluate your online presence.

Before attending in person, potential guests first turn to the internet and social media to learn about the church. Up-to-date information, service

times, driving directions, a facility map, childcare information, and contact information are all vital components.

Consider the outside appearance of your facilities.

Most people decide whether or not to return to your church within their first ten minutes of arriving on your campus. Often, their first impression is based on your parking lot and the outside appearance of your facilities. These speak volumes to first-time guests!

Clean up nursery and children's areas.

Many of the service projects in Serve Local will engage children or young families. If your nursery and children's areas have not been used recently, they will probably need some TLC before welcoming new children.

Mobilize greeters.

Entering an unfamiliar place can be frightening for some guests. Address those fear by placing people in the parking lot, outside the main entrances, and inside the building who are outgoing, willing to initiate conversation, and able to offer assistance.

Consider positioning people at the parking lot entrances with signs reading, “Welcome” or “Glad You Are Here.” This goes a long way toward showing guests that they matter and that you expected them.

Have available seats in the back.

The most sought-after seats in a Baptist church are in the back. When a guest enters a room and has walk to the front, in plain view of everyone, they do not feel welcomed and may conclude that no one really expected them. In the weeks preceding Serve Local, as you talk about reaching the unchurched, train your people to move to the front in anticipation of guests.

Be friendly.

A smile and warm words may be what causes a first-time guest to return the following week. Encourage your people to slow down, look around, and engage in conversation with those they do not know.

When guests arrive it's too late to prepare. Training and encouraging your church to follow these simple steps prior to Serve Local can help you prepare for guests before they arrive and perhaps lead first-time guests into becoming followers of Jesus. Yes, developing a culture in your church that anticipates and welcomes guests takes both time and intentionality, but the results are worth the investment.