

## CHAPTER 3

### Get Ready For Company© by Gary L. McIntosh I

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Whenever company is coming over to our house we go through a regular ritual called "Getting Ready for Company."

For us this involves such things as cleaning the bathrooms, emptying the trash, vacuuming the floor, dusting the counters and, most important, changing the cat litter boxes.

All our effort is expended in preparation for our guests. We want our house to look the best it can and we spare no amount of effort to see that it is ready. No doubt you can identify with this experience.

In a similar way, growing churches spend a significant amount of time getting ready for their company -- guests. They know that . . . .

It takes guests to grow. No church grows unless guests visit. As a general rule of thumb a church needs to average between 4 - 5% of its worship attendance as first time guests before significant growth occurs.

Some guests must return. Growing churches create an atmosphere where guests want to return for another visit. As a general rule of thumb at least two out of every ten first time guests must return a second time for a church to experience numerical growth.

Guests make quick decisions. Most guests form an early opinion of a church as they drive into the parking lot and within 30 seconds of entering the front door. If their first opinion is negative, it will be difficult to change their minds later on.

Preparing for Company. The following are seven key areas a church should address as it prepares for company.

## 1. Beautify your property.

Guests begin forming an opinion about a church as they drive toward it. They notice the landscaping, the parking lot, the color of the building and the general appearance of the entire church property.

To get ready for company . . .

repaint the exterior every three to five years;

redecorate the interior every five years to keep the colors, styles and overall look up-to-date;

maintain landscaping via a weekly lawn care service;

hire a professional landscaping firm to review the exterior look every three years;

clean the entire church weekly;

replace carpet and drapes every five to ten years.

## 2. Upgrade your child care.

There is a new wave of children coming to our churches and their parents are astute child care shoppers. Parents expect a church's nursery to be comparable to their baby's room at home. They look for a church nursery to provide the same quality care they would find at the best week day care centers.

To get ready for company . . .

redecorate the nursery every other year;

sanitize the nursery each week;

keep the ratio of workers to children at 1:3;

provide a hazard free environment;

train all nursery workers;

maintain the same workers for familiarity.

### 3. Give people directions.

The number one question asked at places like Disneyland is "Where are the restrooms?" Your guests also need directions to key areas such as the auditorium and child care.

To get ready for company . . .

- prepare a one page map showing all important locations for newcomers;
- provide leaflets describing each major area of ministry, their locations, and whom to contact for further information;
- install clear directional signs at eye level pointing the way to key areas of the church;
- train hosts to greet and direct newcomers to important areas.

### 4. Welcome guests graciously.

Enter the door of a Wal Mart store and you'll be greeted by a friendly person who offers you a shopping cart. Wal Mart understands the need to greet guests graciously and their success has prompted competitors such as Target and K-Mart to follow suit.

To get ready for company . . .

- give a positive welcome to people driving into the parking lot through the use of parking attendants;
- extend a warm greeting to new guests as they approach the church building through trained greeters;
- provide relevant information about the church with an attractive and accessible information table or welcome center;
- establish meaningful connections between new guests and the people of the church by introducing members to guests;
- provide refreshments for guests before and after the worship service through a hospitality table;
- insure the seating and comfort of guests during the service with friendly ushers.

## 5. Enhance your worship service.

People in our society are attuned to well planned and executed programs. While a worship service is certainly more than a mere performance, worship needs to be done well to get most guests to return a second and third time.

## 6. Preach relational messages.

Blended families, single parent families, codependency situations, physical, mental, sexual and substance abuse have created a people who are hurting. Guests visit a church not to be scolded or spanked but to be uplifted.

To get ready for company . . .

- understand the felt needs of people;
- provide biblical answers to their needs;
- illustrate messages from today's life and times;
- tell stories of real people who have experienced similar needs and found answers in Christ;
- remove physical obstacles such as modesty rails, large pulpits and furniture;
- preach without notes;
- share your own story.

## 7. Follow-up appropriately.

Traditionally churches follow-up on guests with a letter from the pastor and an immediate visit to the home of the guest by a visitation team. With the rise of crime and the cocooning of people, today it's a whole new ball game.

To get ready for company . . .

- express your friendship through a personal phone call within two days of a guest's visit;
- thank each guest for coming with a personal letter or card during the week;
- inform guests of upcoming events and items of interest through a regular newsletter;

give a gift of cookies or candy to those who visit a second time;

ask all third time guests to a by-invitation-only dessert hosted by the senior pastor.

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