**Your Big Day: Follow-Up**

Fulfilling the Great Commission means teaching believers “to obey everything [Jesus] has commanded” (Matthew 28:20). That means we must follow up with those who are making a move toward Christ through either their profession of faith or their attendance in our church. Follow-up takes time and hard work, and therefore, it is often neglected. Below you will find suggestions for how to follow up with new believers and guests. God will honor the church that invests in the lives of unchurched people.

**New Believer Follow-Up:**

* The Goal: To quickly establish a relationship with the new believer in order both to help him begin his walk of faith and to connect him to the church.
* A Proposed Strategy (for the pastor, staff member or godly layperson):
  + Schedule a time to sit down with the new believer as soon after his decision as possible (24 to 48 hours max) so that you can develop or build upon that relationship and so that you can explain how he can begin living the life of faith.
    - Encourage the new believer to attend a Bible study with you at the church (Sunday School or other small group).
    - Try to schedule your next meeting time before the aforementioned meeting concludes (within the next seven days).
    - Pray for and with the new believer.
  + At the next meeting, bring a new Christian resource for the new believer to begin using. Discuss the possibility of working through the resource together.
    - Schedule your next meeting time.
  + Continue meeting and discipling until you feel comfortable about the new believer’s walk of faith. (It may take several weeks, but obedience to the Great Commission is well worth the time!)
* Additional Considerations:
  + In anticipation of decisions, you may wish to train your church members on how to teach/disciple new believers. This can be done on Sunday evenings, Wednesday evenings or at another special time.
  + It would be best to have some resources available at the church to give new believers immediately upon their decision to trust Christ in the event that they do not live close (*Living in Christ* by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association is a good resource for this).

**Guest Follow-Up:**

* The Goal: To do everything possible to make certain guests who have attended your church believe that your congregation genuinely wants them to return.
* NOTE: Gathering guests’ contact information is essential for following up effectively. Carefully consider how best to gather information from guests. There are a few options to consider:
  + *Everyone* in the service fills out and submits a registration card which can include prayer requests (guests will not want to be singled out by *not* filling out the card).
  + Place a clipboard on each pew for everyone sitting on that pew to sign (have a place for name and contact information).
  + Provide guest information cards in the pews which guest fill out and leave.
  + Additional Considerations:
    - It may be best to avoid saying “Fill out the card so that we can have a record of your visit.” Truth be told, guests probably do not care if we have record of it or not.
    - Assuring guests that you will not make an unannounced visit to their home may increase the likelihood that they will fill out their contact information. However, only promise that if no one in your church is going to break that promise by placing an unannounced visit.
* Three Proposed Strategies (depends on your community and experiences):
  + Strategy 1: Non-Visit Follow-Up
    - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, either email or call him thanking him for visiting and inviting him back.
    - Within 72 hours of a guest’s visit, mail a hand-written note to him again thanking him for visiting and inviting him back. (In this note you may even wish to consider including a small gift such as a $5 gas card, Starbucks card, or Sonic card.)
    - See alternative non-visit follow-up option in *Comeback Churches* (pg. 114).
  + Strategy 2: Scheduled Visit Follow-Up
    - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, either call or email him thanking him for visiting and asking if there would be a good time to visit or meet at a neutral location (Starbucks, McDonalds, Subway, etc.)
    - If they decline, invite them back and then write them a hand-written note later in the week.
  + Strategy 3: Unannounced Visit to the Home
    - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, make a visit to the guest’s home.
    - Keep the visit very brief, consisting of three main points: thank them for attending, ask if there is anything you can pray for, and invite them to return (do not go inside).
    - Later in the week write them a hand-written note thanking them for the visit and affirming that you prayed for their stated need.

**Getting New Believers and Guests Connected to the Church**:

* There is no better way to get new believers and guests connected to your church than by making them your genuine friends! Research indicates that if a new member does not have six or seven close friendships within the first six months of membership they are not likely to stay active.
* The best place for new friendships to develop is in the small groups in your church such as Sunday School.
* The best approach to connecting newcomers to a Sunday School class or small group is by having members of that class or group actively recruit that new believer or guest by befriending him and inviting him to class gatherings.

Additional Resources

*Fusion: Turning First Time Guests into Fully Engaged Members of Your Church* (by Nelson Searcy)

*Beyond the First Visit* (by Gary McIntosh)

*Ten-Four Follow-Up Plan* (NAMB)