

Church Marketing for Easter and Christmas

Written by Steve Marr
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Each year many visitors attend church for Easter and Christmas services. Most churches and pastors treat this as a great opportunity for outreach. One new face on a Sunday is a good opportunity; many new faces are a much greater opportunity.

Some of these visitors are families who attend an Easter or Christmas service as part of their family tradition. Others feel a tug to return to church and find that Easter or Christmas is an easy time to reconnect. Still others are seekers who are looking for answers to spiritual questions or support during crises. Whatever the reasons that bring them, Easter and Christmas are major opportunities for churches to connect with new people.

In business, whenever you have a marketing opportunity to reach new customers; you start with the goal to bring them one step closer to becoming customers. Perhaps you get them to take a trial subscription, buy a sample, or test-drive a car. Marketers understand that the goal is to encourage prospective customers to keep taking additional steps.

Pastor Mellish, my pastor in Michigan, provided a good model. He would say, "You can't do too much at Christmas or Easter." He focused on making visitors comfortable so they would come back. He accomplished this several ways. He prepared the congregation by encouraging them to leave the best parking places for visitors. He told them to be pleased rather than irritated if a stranger sat in "their pew." He challenged them to get visitors' names for follow up. Every year the church experienced growth from both days.

Each church and pastor should pray about their goals for anticipated visitors, and carefully plan how to achieve their goals. In business, the owner or manager develops a plan for a sales presentation when encountering new people. While no pastor should "sell" the church, a wise pastor will develop a detailed plan about how to connect with visitors. Print messages and verbal communications need to be positive, inviting, and share the benefits of the church as well as the importance of a personal relationship with Christ.

If your goal is to persuade visitors to return; then, focus every action with that goal in mind. What does this mean for greeters, the sermon, or follow up? If the goal is to present the Gospel; then, focus on the Gospel presentation. How visitors perceive their church experience matters. When Paul preached about idol worship in Athens, he was relating to the culture. (See Acts 17:16-33.) He recognized idol worship as a way to connect with Athenians in order to expand the kingdom. Try to find that connector among the people you are trying to reach.

Never underestimate the activity of the enemy during Easter and Christmas. He seeks to discourage pastors and others who are engaged reaching out to the unchurched. Focused prayer to close the mouth of the lion, confound the enemy, and render him ineffective will be critical in preserving outreach opportunities.

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As a business writer I want to be careful that I do not suggest that churches secularize for popularity. However, it is possible to apply effective business marketing principles to help churches maximize their impact on visitors that attend their churches on Christmas and Easter.

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