



step **1.**

Developing Relationship.

Developing
Relationship



BIBLE STUDY

Acts 2

Where did the early Christians meet? How do the places where they met relate to gathering places in your context?

What lessons do we learn about being a devoted community?

What could practising Acts 2 look like, practically speaking, in your setting?

What changes would that involve?

2 Corinthians 4:1 – 5:21

What reasons does Paul provide for our increased motivation to tell others about Jesus?

What therefore must we do and say? What must we not do and say?

How will we become more compelled to tell others about Jesus?

Acts 13:16-43, 14:8-18, 17:16-34

How does Paul adapt his gospel presentation to different audiences?

What remains the same for each audience and what differs according to the context?

What are the implications for us as we seek to communicate God's truth to those who have not heard?

One of the conundrums of Saint James, Clerkenwell is that it has a very imposing outside but a very welcoming inside—the church is a classic Georgian preaching box and the whole building is designed so that as many as possible can hear the good news of Jesus. But unlike the ‘if-you-build-it-they-will-come’ slogan from the baseball movie *Field of Dreams*, people will not come if everything we do remains hidden behind walls that are three feet thick. As a church in the middle of London we may not be a baseball field of dreams, but we are a mission field of growth and life. All sorts of people live in Clerkenwell, and we’ve seen everyone from senior judges to crack addicts come to know the grace of the Lord Jesus. But the one mission field that eluded us were the people working for media, design, architecture, and start-up businesses in our local area.

The answer about how to reach these people dawned on me when I was in the New York Public Library. I’d chosen to work in the library because it was a beautiful space and away from the everyday hubbub of life. Its beauty to me was in the ‘welcome’ it communicated from the entrance onwards—the message was not ‘only come if you have a university accredited research reason’. Once through the bag check, anyone is free to go in and explore fully—all the reading rooms are accessible, and all have plenty of desks with power and free wifi. Yes, the building is beautiful and inspiring, but so is the welcome. My church of dreams became a space in the heart of London’s creative industries that would welcome and inspire people architecturally, socially, and even spiritually. That’s one contextual solution, but this section offers a whole range of potential solutions to help people get to know that there’s a place and people all about bringing good news.

Because.

Jesus' mission priority starts with 'Go'.

When I was a student, I signed up to join the parachute club. It seemed like it would be a good way to meet people without having to run up and down a cold, wet length of grass. All parachuting involved was getting a lift to the top and then hanging there while you came back down. At first, the club weekend away seemed just the ticket. We had a series of lectures on technique and safety in a nice warm hut off the airstrip. Even the practice jumps were inside a hangar, and we spent lots of time in the café on the airbase, drinking hot coffee and eating warm pies—I loved it! But then it came time to get in the plane and be taken up into the sky. Once in the air, I waited in line with sweaty palms and second thoughts. But there was no turning back, and when the green light came on indicating that I was to leave the plane, there was only one thing left for the instructor to say: 'Go!'

With similar urgency, Jesus trained his followers and modelled that Christians are to 'Go!' Almost the first thing Jesus says to Simon Peter and Andrew is that following him will involve going fishing for people (Matt. 4:19). Right from the start, Jesus takes his disciples 'people-fishing' (Matt. 4:23). The last thing Jesus says to his disciples is on exactly the same theme—go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). In effect, Jesus says to his church, 'I've taught you what to do—now go and do it.'

Church growth isn't just a matter of keeping birth rates higher than death rates. Nor will the church of God grow as individuals switch from one congregation to another. Growing churches are those involved in reaching out to prospective new members—and that means being intentional about meeting and building relationships with new people, whether that's through activities your church sponsors or through being involved in the community.

It's a lot more comfortable to stay inside with people you know, but unless we're 'going' churches we'll never be growing churches. We may be nervous when Jesus gives us the green light and the only thing left to do is 'Go!' But when we do go, we know that Jesus is with us—to the end of the age.

The New Testament church started small, but its numbers quickly multiplied as the people continued, with the Spirit's power, to do what they'd seen Jesus do. Jesus had gone from village to village preaching about the kingdom of God, and they did likewise—eventually going to all nations.

These believers followed the kingdom-extending plan Jesus outlines in Matthew 10:

1. Go with my authority (v. 1)

Jesus gives his disciples the authority to demonstrate the life-changing work of God in order to extend the kingdom of people devoted to God.

2. Go where I send you (v. 5)

Jesus wants us to go to all nations (Matt. 28:19), but he's specific about the people he has given each one of us as a mission field and wants us to go to and invite to join his kingdom. The amazing truth is that Jesus has given all of us a specific commission. Where is your commission?

3. Go to lost people (v. 6)

The work of extending God's kingdom is urgent and vital. Jesus tells us to go to people who are spiritually lost, cut off from a relationship with God.

4. Go with my message (v. 7)

The message of the kingdom is of life-and-death importance. It is:

- The life-saving message of restored relationship with God
- The life-giving message of adoption into God's family
- The life-sustaining message of the new earth to come.

5. Go to receptive people (v. 11)

Jesus' instruction to his followers is very simple: look for the 'worthy person' or 'man of peace' (Luke 10:6) and stay with that person. In other words, if you're going to have influence in a place you need to start small, with one household. But you also need to spend your time wisely, with a sympathetic household who will listen, so that you're not 'casting pearls before swine'. Jesus is clear that many will reject the message, so we shouldn't be surprised by, or waste time with, fruitless relationships—we should pray to have both shrewdness and innocence (v. 16).

Where is your divinely appointed mission field?

Mine is to my neighbours in my street, friends I've met though my children's school, people who sit with me on the church steps at lunchtime, people who contact the church, and people I've come to know over years of work and study. Jesus did not say to me, 'Go into the offices of Morgan Stanley and establish my kingdom there.' I don't work there, but my friend Katherine does, and that's her commission. Nor has Jesus said to me, 'Go into the depot of the number 4 bus and tell them about my rule.' I don't work there, but George does, and that's his commission.

Where is your mission field?

Therefore.

Identify your kingdom building contribution.

The first step in forming a vision that is both biblical and appropriate to your context is to choose one of the potential mission fields in which God has placed you. These mission fields may be geographic areas where people live or work, or they may be groups of people with similar lifestyle choices or life stages. What's important is to choose which groups of people your church is going to focus on and to know as much about those groups as possible.

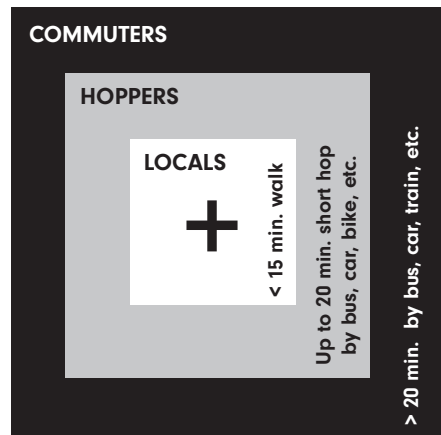
1. Survey your mission field

Since a church is a gathering of people, the location of that gathering is an important factor. Unless your church is going to be entirely virtual, there will be a geographical element that will play a major role in defining who can access the church most easily. Therefore, before you choose which people groups you're going to focus on reaching, it's wise to decide on the particular mission fields within which those people groups are found. Mission field profiling is about identifying who can realistically be part of, and contribute meaningfully to, your church in your particular location. The factors to consider include ease of access for Christians to main teaching and community group gatherings, but also the ease with which their friends can access opportunities to explore faith. Geography shapes strategy.

Proximity profiling

One analytical approach is to categorize existing members according to their proximity to the church. There are three levels of proximity (exact definitions for each will vary depending on your setting):

- **Locals:** People who live or work within easy walking distance of the church (e.g., less than 15 minutes). They are likely to know where the church is even if they've never been in the building, and they probably pass by on a regular basis.
- **Hoppers:** People who are within easy reach of the church by car or public transport. This will probably mean less than 20 or 25 minutes of travel time—they're close enough that the distance is not a barrier to coming to special events and regular activities at the church.



• **Commuters (network):** People who live further away from the church (e.g., more than 20 minutes) but would be willing to bear the cost of a longer commute because of the specific benefits the church is able to provide them or because the church has a particular focus on their network of friends.

Movement profiling

Another analytical approach is to look at transport hubs and people flows:

- Transport hubs that people from different areas can easily access
 - Hang-out areas where there's streetlife and where people are already gathering
 - Flow routes of travel through the city (public transport, cycle and arterial routes).
- However, the complication comes when you're trying to distinguish between a journey people might be willing to make to work or for a leisure activity (such as a sports game or theatre production) and a journey they'd be willing to make to meet church family. There is often a closer association between living and building community. This is particularly true of people at the stage of life with young families. A commuting, city centre, or workplace model of church may be effective for young singles, although whether that would be sustainable as they begin to marry and have families remains a question.

Network profiling

The third piece of geographic analysis is finding out where the friends and contacts of Christians coming to your church live and work. Are there particular times and places that will suit certain groups? Times and places include:

- Sunday (morning, afternoon, or evening) at a main church campus
- Sunday (morning, afternoon, or evening) at a non-church venue
- Midweek at a main church campus
- Midweek at a non-church venue.

2. Survey people groups

Having looked at the potential mission fields to which God is calling you, the next step is to identify the specific groups of people you are being called to reach within each mission field. Traditional class-conscious groupings, based on what you do, have been replaced largely by groupings based on how do you think. Market research is now geared more towards what you consume than your status. Churches operate in a community of people who can't be pigeon-holed by what they earn or do, but they can be identified by how their culture has shaped them and how their lifestyle and life stage shape their interaction with culture.¹

Work patterns

One aspect of lifestyle that churches now need to interact with is the changing work patterns. Gone are the days of 9 to 5 or job for life and now increasing number of people are co-working, remote working or distance commuting.

'We have located ourselves in the building, the meeting, and the programme and we have not effectively engaged the creation that holds our inheritance.'²

In addition the frequency of people moving Jobs is increasing. The challenge for churches is deciding whether different work practices require specific tailored evangelism approaches.

Life stage demographics

Another approach is to group people according to life stage that combines age, work and family into a set of natural groupings. Life stages normally have an age and family status component. Example include:

AGE: Preschool; school; college / university; work based training; work; retired.

FAMILY: Single, couple no kids, couple young kids, single parent young kids., couple older children, single parent older children. couple / single parent empty nesters.

Cultural demographics

Example groupings³ used by market researchers to analyse contexts include:

- **Cultural leaders:** Educated people living in cities. They work in the professions, government, or arts and enjoy discussing social issues over gourmet food.
- **Success symbols:** Professionals who travel a lot and have high disposable incomes; they're often away at the weekend at a second home.
- **New kids on the block:** Young professionals who often live in rented city accommodation. They tend to be focused on establishing their careers and having a good time.
- **Upscalers:** Busy earning rather than consuming, their time is at a premium so they want convenience and anything that contributes to the dream of a better life.
- **High technologists:** They live in modern houses, work for high-tech firms, and use technology to the full in their lives and entertainment.
- **Affluent blue collar:** Older manual workers settled in comfortable homes.
- **Towers and terraces:** Those who live in housing owned (or previously owned) by the council. With a strong brand awareness, they tend to be consumers of mass-market products.
- **Idyllic secluded:** They choose environmentally attractive homes, even if it means a long commute to work. They like nostalgia and don't watch a lot of TV.

C. Cultural mapping

Research the needs of each group you've identified to determine the potential for your church to add value by meeting those needs.

Note: Grouping people is a useful tool when developing strategies, but remember that a church is all about people, not categories. As Douglas Coupland once put it, 'I am not a target market.'

Gather data on each group from published sources

– Use internet data, visit a local library, and contact the local council and other agencies working in the area. Buy market research data.⁴

Conduct a walking tour of the area

– Observe where people gather: Who's in the pubs, coffee shops, cinemas, restaurants, clubs? Who are they with, and how long do they stay? Who's in the parks, leisure centres, gyms, and other recreation facilities? Who are they with? Where else do people socialize? What social activities are available and which are most popular?

– Observe the environment, advertisements, noticeboards, type of shops: What can you learn about the worldview, economics, and social dynamics of the area?

Interview local opinion-forming unbelievers

– What are their worldviews? What are their hopes and dreams?

– Where do they want to be in 10, 20, 30 years' time?

– What do they need? Where do they look to fulfil their needs?

– How do they make decisions on choices and priorities?

– What are their misunderstandings about the gospel? What are their idols?

The early church met for a variety of activities: Learning; Praying and breaking bread; Praising; Upbuilding and fellowship; Giving and serving; Witnessing (Acts 2:42-47). It's instructive to consider how much time your church spends on these different kinds of activities. What does this analysis tell you about your culture and priorities?

3. Survey opportunities

To assess growth opportunities, analyse the catalysts of change and opportunity in the environment in which your church is working. These may be outside the church's control (reactive) or within the church's ability to launch (proactive). They include:

1. Opportunities stemming from the external environment: Reactive catalysts

– New developments (e.g., new housing, offices, or student halls)

– New government or other agency renewal programmes

2. Opportunities stemming from the internal environment: Reactive catalysts

– New church members joining (e.g., new skills or demands)

– New partner supply in locality (e.g., gospel partner church plant or ministry in the same area or to the same audience)

3. Opportunities to impact the external environment: Proactive catalysts

– New outreach initiatives (e.g., outreach to youth, workplace ministry)

– New location (e.g., planting in another location)

4. Opportunities to impact the internal environment: Proactive catalysts

– New resources (e.g., new building or technology)

– New processes (e.g., new leadership structure, management methods)

– New programmes (e.g., new welcome ministry, small group structure, service format, or adding another service in an existing building)

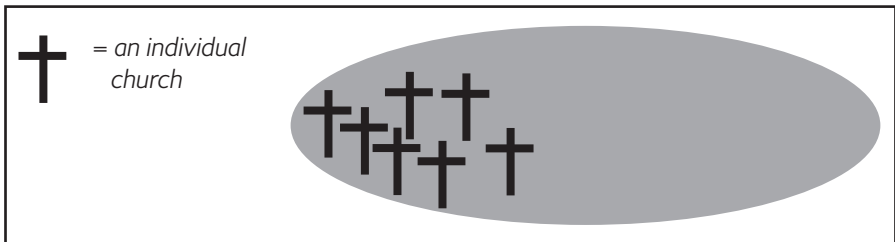
4. Look to your potential kingdom contribution.

A. Unique kingdom contribution looks for the 'blue ocean'

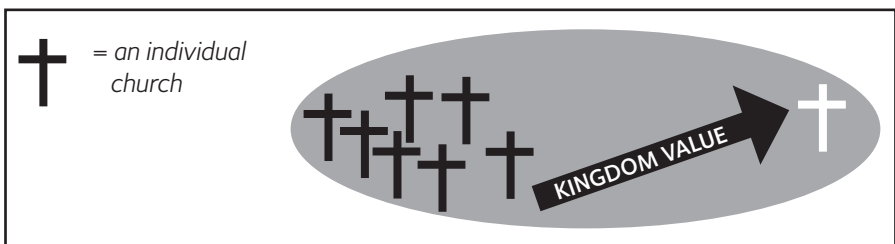
When Jesus sent out the disciples, he gave them his authority and told them which mission fields to go to and which were not their concern at that time (Matt. 10:1, 5–6). Sometimes the Great Commission will involve pioneering ministry in an unreached area and breaking new ground. In many places, however, there's an existing patchwork of churches. In these cases, innovation means filling gaps by reaching specific unreached people groups or adding partnership ministries. Strategic mission focuses on how God has equipped you and who he's calling you to reach, recognizing that he's also bringing growth through others. And so, driven not by ambition to build personal empires but by divine commission to build God's eternal kingdom, we ask:

- Where can we focus resources to serve a currently unreached area or people group?
- What makes us more strategically placed than others to make the most of these particular gospel opportunities?
- What, therefore, is our unique kingdom contribution that others are not currently making?

In this diagram, many churches are competing to reach the same people with similar strategies—the churches are all operating in a 'crowded ocean'.



In this diagram, value innovation has occurred as a church develops new ministry initiatives that open up new kingdom opportunities in an unreached area. This church operates in a 'blue ocean' of clear water to make a unique kingdom contribution.



‘Blue ocean’ strategy is about going into less crowded waters. Instead of competing with others to reach the same sector of people, this strategy invites us to try a different approach with a different group. That way we ensure we’re adding kingdom value and making a unique kingdom-building contribution.

B. Unique kingdom contribution looks for ‘value addition’

The traditional method of product development involves looking at what we want to give and considering how we can persuade people to receive it. Value addition begins by asking what people need and then considers how we can provide that in a form they will want to receive. Value addition provides ingenious solutions to real problems rather than synthetically generating desires. Value addition, therefore, often employs new methods to deliver solutions so that the ease of accessing a product or service is the value added to customers.

A biblical approach to value addition recognizes that God calls each individual church to meet a strategic need or needs unmet by other gospel partner churches. Unlike organizations in the secular world, churches are not in competition with each other. Instead, they’re competing against non-gospel suppliers. In a sense, these suppliers could be called ‘anti gospel’ because they are enemies of the gospel that supply distracting idols and cultivate appetites that draw people away from the gospel.

Based on a church’s strengths, four different strategic opportunities are available:

Level of church’s ability to add value	Differentiation. Where your church has the capacity to meet the gospel needs of people that other churches are also currently meeting, differentiate from other churches by focusing resources where you have particular strengths.	Substitution. Where people’s needs are seemingly met by non-gospel suppliers and your church has more capacity to meet them than other churches, innovate game-changing substitute ministries that meet needs more profoundly and beneficially than non-gospel suppliers.
	Cooperation. Where other churches have greater capacity to meet people’s gospel needs than your church does, cooperate with them instead of competing—or keep out of their way and focus on your areas of strength.	Incubation. Where neither your church nor other churches are currently meeting the gospel needs of certain people groups, focus on incubating ministries that meet their needs and play to your strengths.
	Level of customer’s need for additional value not currently offered	

Steve Jobs: ‘My passion has been to build a great company where people were motivated to make great products.... There’s lots of people innovating, and that’s not the main distinction of my career. The reason Apple resonates with people is that there’s a deep current of humanity in our innovation... People pay us to integrate things for them because they don’t have the time to think about this stuff 24/7.’¹⁵

ACTION SUMMARY

1. Analyse potential mission fields within which you could work.

Using the suggestions listed above:

- Profile potential audiences by proximity: locals; hoppers; commuters.
- Profile people flows: transport hubs; hang-out area; flow routes.
- Profile network locations:
 - Who is able to access your potential locations for church gatherings and evangelistic events (church campus, community centre, coffee shop, etc.)?
 - When are different groups of people most able to access these locations (Sunday mornings, afternoons, or evenings, or midweek)?

What potential mission fields does your analysis highlight?

2. Analyse potential people groups you could reach within each mission field.

Using the ideas listed above, find out:

- What work patterns and life stages are represented in each of your potential mission fields?
- Based on an analysis of published data, walking tours, and interviews, are there distinct cultural groups within each mission field? How would you describe the cultural attributes of each group you could reach in your context?

Deciding your unique kingdom-building contribution involves matching the needs within the mission fields and people groups you can access with your resource strengths, 'blue ocean' opportunities, and any 'value addition' activities you can offer.

3. Analyse the potential opportunities

Discuss in turn each potential people group you could reach within each mission field (see point 2 above) and decide:

- How big is the opportunity (numbers of people)?
- How much impact do you currently have (% reached)?
- How much impact do other gospel partners currently have (% reached)?

4. Analyse your current strengths

Discuss:

- What do you do well as a church? What makes you stand out from others?
- What are your physical resources (e.g., buildings and equipment)?
- What are your financial resources (sustainable income vs. expenditure)?
- What mix of gifts do you have as a church body?
- What programmes and ministry resources have you developed that you're experienced in running?
- What gaps are there in your capabilities as a church? How do these limit your effectiveness in mission?

5. Identify opportunities where you have particular strengths compared to other gospel suppliers.

- Where is the blue ocean?
- Where are the greatest unmet gospel needs?
- Which needs do you have the greatest number of resources and the leadership capacity to meet?
- Which needs might you be able to meet that would make the best kingdom-building use of your resources?
- Focusing on the boxes with most potential, consider how you can:
 - Differentiate from other churches by focusing your resources where you have particular strengths
 - Incubate ministries where people's needs are currently unmet
 - Cooperate with other churches that are already working effectively in that area
 - Offer substitutes for strong non-gospel and anti-gospel suppliers.

6. Discuss your unique kingdom-building contribution

Review your 'divine disturbance' and mission statement (pp. 24-27) and your opportunities and strengths analysis (p. 34). Use to inform your answers to the following questions:

- Of those mission fields within which you could work, which has God called you to and equipped you for?
- Of those people groups you could reach, which has God called you to and equipped you to work with?
- What needs are you going to focus on meeting and which ministries will address those needs?
- What, therefore, are you able to do that makes a unique and useful contribution to building God's kingdom?

4. Decide your mission fields

Prayerfully decide which people groups within each mission field your church will try to reach. Name each specific people group so there will be clarity in ongoing strategic planning and prayer.

Write a summary profile of each people group you are going to aim to reach, including the following aspects:

- Mission field dynamics of proximity, movement, and networking
- Distinct cultural attributes and main life stages
- Attitudes towards church and potential connection points with church ministries.

Start to pray regularly for the people and particular issues within each mission field and people group.

Therefore.

Establish contacts.

1. Increase your visibility

There are several ways the church can become more visible so that people in the community can gain greater insight into the life of the church:

A. Website

Increasingly, people are using the internet to search for churches. Someone's first impression of your church may well be a virtual one. People often use websites to check out churches they've spotted in their area. They may use the sign or notice board outside the church to learn the name of the church and then use the internet to investigate it in the comfort of their own home. A well-designed website will detail what the church offers and what style and approach the church adopts, and it will help people decide to come along to a service or activity.

Questions to ask about your website include:

- Does the site look professional and does it feature up-to-date information?
- Is the home page clearly designed for visitors and people looking for a church, rather than just describing activities for committed members?
- Is the language inclusive for people exploring faith?

B. Design

Using a consistent and carefully planned design on publicity you send out, notice boards you place at your entrance, leaflets you hand out, and websites will give people a positive first impression. Whether it's planned or not, the design of publicity speaks volumes about your church—contemporary, classic, old-fashioned, arty, warm and friendly, down at the heel, careless, or caring about quality. Any logo you might use also communicates what you're about—is it of a building rather than people, for example? Consider what your logo communicates to the outsider.

C. Door to door

There is always great benefit in face-to-face conversations with local people. In secure estates, apartments buildings, or gated communities, it may be very difficult to visit unannounced and uninvited, but the more contacts you develop with people living in the estates, the more access you'll have to other residents. Christians on the estates are your missionaries in those places.

Visiting with a specific offer, such as the *Jesus* video for them to watch, can also be a helpful opening. Visiting as an official representative of the church (maybe with identification) and perhaps asking if there is anything the church can pray about for them is another way of showing genuine care and concern for people.

D. Profile in local media

Advertisements—newspapers, magazines, posters, local radio, etc.

News articles—in the local paper or on the radio.

Faith slot or thought for day—in the local paper or on the radio.

E. Leafleting

Leaflets are not as effective a way of inviting people to services as personal invitations, but a regular distribution of attractively designed publicity builds awareness of the church's existence and the fact that the church is there to serve local people. It's a good idea to take care that the design shows that the church is about people—and not just another pizza leaflet! Hand delivery is becoming increasingly difficult in secure estates. Mailings may be more effective. The name of the resident shouldn't be used unless they're personally known by the church. This removes any fear that they're on a database and ensures that it's not addressed to the wrong person.

F. Magazine

A good way of maintaining contact and informing people about the church is a regular magazine designed as a good read for people outside the church that gives a positive message about the church and seeks to remove any negative impressions people may have. It enables people to find out what the church is about and who's involved before they visit.

G. Publicity in the community

It may be possible to leave leaflets or posters about the church and its activities in schools, community centres, doctors' surgeries, libraries, and other community buildings. Local grocery stores and coffee shops often have a local community board where special events and community activities run by the church can be advertised. Sometimes the church's official presence at a local festival can raise its profile—stalls with anything from baked goods to face painting can give church members opportunities to meet people and give out information about the church. Another way to publicize events is to ensure that church activities are on local listings and known by local helpline services who can refer people to them.

H. Mailing list

Establish a 'friends of the church' mailing list of people who have a connection or affinity to the church—whether they've come to a social event or special service (such as a carol service, wedding, baptism, etc.). This mailing list could be used to send out a newsletter with a listing of special events and introductory courses.

I. Vox pops

Conducting video interviews on the street and showing them at church services can create opportunities to meet people and invite them to come see themselves on the big screen. It also communicates to local people that the church is interested in what they think about current issues.

2. Embed intentional welcoming

Consumer choice is the new king. The days when the only thing to do on a Sunday morning was to go to church are long gone. Church is one of many options available to the modern consumer—and all of the different options compete to offer a sense of community, friendship, value, and acceptance. People have such leveraged diaries, with multiple activities scheduled in every hour of every day, that the concept of setting aside time for corporate worship and spiritual seeking gets lost in a whirl of polyphasing plate spinning!

One answer is to ensure that we have a customer-oriented, rather than a product-oriented, approach. Product orientation says, 'Here it is, take it or leave it.' Customer orientation says, 'How can I serve you?' And the church isn't just '*here to serve our customers*' but is '*servant to all*'.

People's first impression of a church has a major effect on how they engage—research shows that the first seven minutes are vital. There's a balance between wanting people to feel welcomed but not smothered and letting them know they're valued but also free to come and 'just look'. Some welcoming ideas to consider:⁶

A. Appoint a welcoming ministry leader and recruit a team to welcome newcomers. Welcomers are the first points of contact for new people and introduce them to others in the congregation so that everyone can be part of welcoming newcomers without overwhelming them. Having a welcome team shouldn't mean the rest of the congregation are let off the hook—everyone should be looking out for new people sitting near them or who are on their own after church not talking to anyone. One thing I often say to people at church is, 'If I introduce a new person to you, then I'm expecting you to engage them in conversation rather than say "hello" and walk away!' It's also important for those who introduce newcomers to other people to stay with them and make sure they've made a connection before leaving. It's also important to be sensitive and not force newcomers to stay longer than they want to.

B. Prepare an information pack. This might include an invitation to welcome events (make sure the information is always up to date), a flash drive, or weblink with a welcome video and sample music, a gospel outline, a map of the local area, a voucher for a meal, etc.

C. Place welcome cards in the seats or include welcome information in the weekly bulletin. In either case, have a tear-off section that people fill in and hand back.

D. Consider what impressions you communicate to new people via your website, buildings, worship style, etc. It's increasingly common that people will have not only viewed the website but also gained an initial impression through viewing or listening to talks posted online.

E. Before the service, greet visitors and give them pertinent information (e.g., how ministries for children work, the location of the restrooms, if there's coffee available), but also give them space. The greeting team can be different from the welcome team, but there is good continuity if the people greeting before the service are also around afterwards to chat to people they spoke to on the way in. But, again, the role of those on the welcome team is to connect newcomers with others in the church rather than do all the work of welcoming themselves.

“By sending that guest to you, God is giving you the privilege of cooperating with Him to move someone forward in their journey toward Jesus.”—Nelson Searcy⁷

F. At the start of the service, have the minister or worship leader give a warm welcome and briefly explain what is going to happen at each point in the service.

G. Connect with newcomers during the service in one or more ways:

- Ask them to text a number for further information.
- Have people greet one another so they can continue conversations with newcomers after the service—maybe ask a ‘thought starter’ question linked to the theme of the service so there's content to people's chat.
- Hand out a welcome pack during the greeting time to people if it's appropriate to ask people to indicate that they're new—or point people to where they can pick up welcome information.
- Another idea is to ask everyone to write a comment or question on the response slip after the talk so that everyone hands in something. This highlights the principle that we're all invited to respond to what we encounter when we gather, whether that's a response of wanting to find out more about the church and newcomer events, to explore faith, to ask a question, or to commit to making life changes in the light of the Bible message.
- End the service with an invitation to chat to your neighbour and train the congregation to make a point of talking with new people sitting around them. In fact, it's good to encourage members to find a seat near someone who's new (but not so near that it's uncomfortable for them). New people will often sit at a distance from others if they're nervous but often still appreciate a friendly hello.
- The power of trays: if it's feasible in your worship space, consider serving coffee to people where they are in their seats so they don't have to take the extra and sometimes awkward step of finding where the coffee is being served. This also makes it less likely that they'll dash for the door

H. Have a connection area or welcome desk with information, refreshments, etc.

I. Agree a follow-up strategy, which may involve sending an email or letter, possibly with a welcome pack if one hasn't been handed out already, and perhaps an invitation to a welcome event or to an evangelistic course if they've indicated interest on the response slip. One key is not to overwhelm but to provide the means for them to find information that's relevant to them. For many, therefore, a well-laid-out website which is newcomer friendly covers a lot of a newcomer's requirements.

When devising your follow-up strategy, consider whether you're going to follow up with people with a call or home visit—those decisions depend on your culture and context, and you may need an opt-in on the response form so people are expecting a call and it doesn't seem like a cold call. Decide who will gather information on Sundays, who they'll pass that on to for follow up, and how that follow-up process will be managed until the newcomer is a member or a no-longer-comer.

J. Invest in a process of discipleship

An in-depth discussion of discipleship would require another volume, but within the Because Approach's focus on evangelism strategy it's worth noting that welcoming is the start of a process that continues with ongoing encouragement for people to move from the 'crowd' to the 'core'. Ideas to build stakeholders include:

- An introductory course—covering what a Christian is, what the vision of the church is, and how to get the most out of being a part of what goes on.
- A newcomers group—a 'holding' group that meets at the same time as the established home groups of the church with an open invitation for anyone new to attend. This provides an opportunity for newcomers to receive immediate support while church members help them find the most appropriate group and/or service opportunity for them to settle in more permanently.
- Easy access into community—this means that how to join a small group is clearly communicated to all and is as simple as replying to an email, speaking to a coordinator, or signing up online. Most people will be nervous about joining a group when they're new and don't know many others that well. We can build confidence by profiling community groups on a website, interviewing group leaders on Sundays, and encouraging existing group members to have a recruiting mindset.

Volunteer opportunities are a great way for people who are fairly new to the church to feel part of the church family. People will feel more part of a church and less like an occasional consumer if they have a role. When people join volunteer teams they make some level of commitment to the church, take a stake in the life of the church, and gain the experience of community in a team that meets regularly for teaching and support. It's good, therefore, to communicate that there are service opportunities for everyone—and you don't need five years of Bible college training!

One way to encourage everyone to have a role is to run a 'volunteer fair'—stalls or tables set up before and after services where people can get information about different service opportunities at the church. People can find out how they might get involved in different areas of church life and what it would entail. Such an event is often linked to a special teaching emphasis in the service.

'Whatever approach the church chooses for disciple development, the pastor and other leaders must cultivate a congregational culture of intentional discipleship.' Or church can be 'a mile wide and an inch deep.'⁸

ACTION SUMMARY

Discuss the ways listed above (see pp. 36–37) to make the church more visible so people in the community can gain insight into the life of the church.

– Which of these ideas will increase your visibility most in your context and why?

Welcoming

In order to formulate an appropriate welcoming strategy, interview newcomers and church members:

- What first impressions of the church do newcomers have?
- How can newcomers get to know others and integrate into the church?
- What parts of your current welcoming strategy are working and what might need to be adjusted so that people feel welcome but not overwhelmed?
- What stops church members from taking more responsibility in welcoming others?
- Are there ways the church is ‘institutionally unwelcoming’?

Areas to discuss when formulating a welcoming strategy (see pp. 38–40) include:

Team set-up phase

- Will you develop a team to resource the welcoming ministry?
- How will the team encourage the whole church to be involved in welcoming?
- Who will take overall responsibility for leadership of the welcoming ministry? What will be their brief?

Contact phase

- How will you identify newcomers on a Sunday and obtain contact details (response cards, hands up during the notices so information can be handed out, texting a phone number, newcomers’ desk, etc.)?
- What information will you give to newcomers (in printed form at church or by post, email, and on the website)?

Relationship forming

- How will you introduce newcomers to others in the church, invite them to welcome events, and assimilate them into community groups?
- What welcome events will you offer (straight after a service, Sunday lunch, or evening meal during the week, etc.)?

Information sharing

- What activities will help newcomers become familiar with the church’s vision and values?
- What courses will you offer to give newcomers a clear understanding of the gospel and how to grow as a Christian?

References

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- 3 Categories and descriptions based on an article by P. Wintour, 'Voter Tribes: Marketing Pinpoints Audiences', *The Guardian*, 28 Dec. 2004.
- 4 For more information on researching neighbourhoods, see T. Keller and J. Thompson, *Church Planter Manual* (New York: Redeemer Church Planting Center, 2002).
- 5 W. Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (London: Little Brown, 2011), pp. 567–68.
- 6 N. Searcy, *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church* (Ventura: Regal, 2007).
- 7 Searcy, *Fusion*, p. 6.
- 8 Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, p. 285.