

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

# EASTER OUTREACH & FOLLOW UP



CHURCHLEADERS



# 4 Reasons Why Increasing Easter Attendance Matters



If there's one thing we know about Easter, it's that many senior pastors go to great lengths for increasing Easter attendance and mobilizing their congregations to get new people to attend on this day.

Many think this is a wasted attempt to pander to "Chreasters." I completely disagree.

Increasing your Easter attendance is important, but not for reasons commonly thought. Here are four reasons why doing everything you can to increase your Easter attendance matters to the mission of your church.

**1. More Than Likely, 25 percent of All Your Visitors This Year Will Come on Easter**

# 4 Reasons Why Increasing Easter Attendance Matters

At CCV we know that roughly 50 percent of all newcomers will come at Easter and Christmas. The rest are evenly sprinkled throughout the year. That obviously means that half, or 25 percent, of all the visitors that come to your church this year will come this Sunday. Most outreach-focused churches have similar newcomer attendance and retention figures.

## 2. Only 10 percent of Those Visitors Will Come Back

We also know that if 10 people visit our church, 1 of them will return and become a growing Christ Follower. Why is this important?

It's important because if you are a church of, say, 150, that wants to **break the 200 barrier** and grow to 300, that means you will need to have how many people visit your church in order to retain an additional 150 people (growing from 150 to 300)? That's 1,500 people. Ten percent of 1,500 first-time guests = 150 new attenders.

If you are a church of 600 that wants to grow to 1,000, you will need 4,000 people to come through your doors.

## 3. Wise Senior Pastors Capitalize on Cultural Attendance Patterns

If St. Patrick or **John Wesley** woke up in your shoes tomorrow, how would they view the opportunity afforded a congregation by the cultural propensity towards visiting church on Easter? You know the answer to that question.

Make culture work for your goals, not against them. Stop chiming in with **the missional naysayers** that say Sunday attendance doesn't matter, and take advantage of the opportunity. Learn from creative churches from around the country and take some risks. Start believing in the **possibility of growth and impact**.

# 4 Reasons Why Increasing Easter Attendance Matters

## 4. You Can't Make Disciples Without New Attenders

I tell senior pastors I coach that growing your Easter attendance matters because without attending a church, people won't start the process of becoming disciples.

I couldn't care less about growing the attendance of your church for numbers' sake. I care about whether or not you're making new disciples, and you can't make new disciples until they start participating in your faith community.

I liken our job as senior pastors to that of a Division 1 college basketball coach. Winning a conference title or national championship is great, but the #1 job of a college coach is to graduate players who go on to succeed in life. Getting to the Sweet Sixteen is a bonus.

Likewise, sure it's great to be a part of a growing church that reaches a lot of people, but that's not the goal in and of itself. Sometimes growth and discipleship go hand in hand, sometimes not; if for no other reason than disciples have a tendency to obey Jesus and "go."

So go nuts this Easter getting people into your doors. Pray for [holy passion for people far from God](#) and make sure you lead the way by inviting people yourself. Speed of the leader, speed of the team.

Be unashamed in your attempts.

# How to Make Easter Special for Your Church Family



Once a year, we have an unprecedented opportunity to make Easter special and welcome some in our communities who would not normally attend church. I want to give you some things to consider as we [move toward the final planning stages for Easter weekend](#).

## 1. Plan for Easter to Be a Great Success

If you do not plan for success, it will not happen. What is success? You will have to pray about and define what you believe success looks like in your church. For us at Cross Church, success for Easter weekend looks like:

- God is present with us in great power
- Increased numbers of people present that exceed a regular Sunday
- People hear the gospel and place faith in Christ alone for salvation

# How to Make Easter Special for Your Church Family

- Extra services so more people have the opportunity to hear the Gospel
- Members and guests have a fabulous experience at Cross Church

The last several years we have had a major Passion Week emphasis each day leading up to Easter Weekend. Since our spring break occurs at the same time as Passion Week this year, we have decided not to do our Passion Week emphasis and will do other things to accelerate forward.

On a normal Sunday, we have eleven services on our five campuses. This Easter weekend, we will have 16 services on our five campuses, offering Saturday services on three campuses.

We are saturating our community with the invitation to join us Easter weekend in several different ways. Our Communications Team has given us the tools to invite through social networking, newspapers, door hangers and invitation cards our members can share with their friends.

Pastor, plan for success.

## 2. Let Your Church Become Their Church on Easter Sunday

It is critical that you have a big, welcoming spirit from the pulpit and by the people of the church leading up to Easter weekend. About two decades ago, God put this phrase in my heart and we have used it almost annually: Let our church be your church this Easter Sunday.

Many people do not have a church family or a church home. Therefore, do all you can to demonstrate this big, welcoming spirit as pastor and challenge your people to resound it all over your community and region: Let our church be your church this Easter Sunday.

# How to Make Easter Special for Your Church Family

Take care not to make guests feel unwelcome by joking about some who may only come to church on or around Easter. A cynical spirit from the pulpit or in your people regarding guests is not productive. If we truly want to reach our community and region for Christ, we must welcome guests regardless of when they attend.

## 3. Preach the Gospel and Sing Recognizable Songs

Pastor, preach the Word of God and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unashamedly, call people to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Do not soft-sell in order to relate to the unchurched. Be who you are and proclaim the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ.

Attempt to sing at least one song that people who rarely or have never attended church may recognize. Possibly “Amazing Grace,” “How Great Thou Art,” “It Is Well With My Soul,” or something similar. You want them to experience your church and mostly, the presence of God.

□ Finally, pray like it matters. Lead your church to pray for a mighty and successful weekend. Saturate Easter with prayer.



# 3 Things You Can Do to Connect More People After Easter



Easter is coming! And we know you want to connect more people after Easter—not just have a big attendance day.

There are three ideal times to connect unconnected people every year. In most churches, late September/early October has the most potential followed by late January/early February.

A couple weeks after Easter presents a third very promising option to connect unconnected people. It's not problem-free, but the reality is every season comes with its own set of problems. Even with the problems that come with [launching new groups](#) in late April/early May, it is still a very promising window of opportunity.

All that to say, here are three things you can do right now to [connect more unconnected people after Easter](#).



# 3 Things You Can Do to Connect More People After Easter

**Schedule a small group connection four weeks after Easter.** If you begin promoting the small group connection on Palm Sunday, you can collect sign-ups every Sunday between.

Holding the small group connection allows your new groups to begin meeting and finish a six-week study in mid-June (a couple weeks later than ideal, but it is what it is).

Choose a starter study on a topic that matters to unconnected people (and ideally goes along with your message series, which has also been selected to draw back infrequent attenders).

Plan to help your new groups continue by pre-selecting a follow-up study and providing them a strategy for surviving the summer.

Need help putting on a small group connection? See also, [How to Launch New Groups with a Small Group Connection—2016](#) and [Here's How I Lead a Small Group Connection](#).

**Plan a set of short-term on-campus studies (that lead to off-campus studies).** Facilitated around tables, this strategy allows attendees to experience the benefits of a group with the safety of an on-campus first step. Providing them a natural follow-up study to be done off-campus will encourage many groups to continue.

One key is to choose study topics that appeal to unconnected people. Another key is to choose studies that are DVD-driven and naturally prompt (or provoke) a good discussion. DVD-driven (as opposed to something that involves live teaching) allows participants to easier imagine continuing to meet without the live teacher.

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A final key to leveraging this strategy for all it's worth is to be sure to segregate those already in a group from those who are not yet in a group. When you come to the end of the six weeks you don't want anyone at any table offering the excuse, "I'd like to continue with you, but I'm already in a group."

A good facilitator/emcee can get each session off to a good start, set up the DVD segment and then help discussion begin around the tables. Typically, de facto table leaders will emerge by the second session.

Plan to begin mentioning the possibility of continuing to meet after the six-week study concludes in about week four. A table displaying a well-chosen follow-up study with the DVD playing and sample study guides set out for examination before and after week five will further encourage many table groups to consider continuing to meet.

See also, Breaking: [North Point Increases GroupLife Participation by Adding an Easier Next Step](#) and [Take Advantage of This Short-Term On-Campus Strategy](#).

## **Plan a church-wide campaign that begins the week after Easter.**

**Plan a church-wide campaign that begins the week after Easter.** The right series will provide an excellent comeback incentive for unconnected people. Making it easy for unconnected people to join a new group or even invite a couple friends to join them in doing the study will give many the first step into community they need. Again, it is critical to choose a series that will actually appeal to unconnected people, but there are a number of very good options.

If you pull the trigger quickly, you can begin recruiting HOSTs before Easter and then recruit unconnected people to sign up for and attend a small group connection the Sunday after Easter.

# The Biggest Thing That Will Bring Back Easter Guests

*This article originally appeared [here](#).*

Are you poised to bring back Easter guests after **Easter Sunday**? You will probably have a good number of guests on Easter weekend ... along with some CEOs (Christmas and Easter only). The big question to ask: “How can we get them to return and become regular attendees? What is the biggest factor in getting them to come back?

Is it an event? A follow-up phone call? A nice letter sent to their home? A personal visit?

There is nothing wrong with these things ... but they are not the main thing that will draw families back to your ministry.

The number one thing that will draw your Easter guests back is your **FRIENDLINESS**.

How do you teach your team to exude friendliness?

## **1. Put 100 percent of your focus on people when they are in front of you.**

Have you ever walked into a store and the person was on the phone, engaged in conversation with someone else or doing paperwork ... and they didn't even acknowledge your presence?

It makes you feel devalued. You feel like you are “bothering” the person.

# The Biggest Thing That Will Bring Back Easter Guests

And it leaves a bad taste in your mouth, doesn't it? It may even cause you not to return.

Again, **train your team to be 100 percent focused on people**. If they are helping someone and another family walks up, acknowledge the new family's presence.

"Hi! How are you today? So glad you're here. I'll be right with you."

## 2. Make sure everyone is smiling.

Scowls, frowns or an "I really don't care" look will deter people from coming back. Teach your team that voice inflection communicates value.

How you say what you say matters. It translates into, "You are bothering me," or "I care about you."

## 3. Always walk ... never point.

Don't tell guests where to go ... take them there. And engage them in meaningful conversation on the way.

## 4. Answer questions.

There are no dumb questions. And never say "I don't know" and leave a family hanging. Instead, say, "I'm not sure, but let me find out for you."

A lack of courtesy, friendliness and sincere engagement will ruin your chances of a guest family coming back.

It doesn't matter how many times you call, send a letter or do a follow-up email. If they are not treated with courtesy and kindness on their first visit, the chance of them returning is slim to none.



# The Biggest Thing That Will Bring Back Easter Guests

I'll be reinforcing all of this with our team before Easter. They do great ... but I must continue to emphasize these values.

I would encourage you to have this conversation with your team as well. Do so, and you'll see more Easter guests return.

# 10 Vital Things to Remember About Your Easter Service



Easter Sunday is special. In spite of the competition from little furry bunnies who deliver colored eggs and sugar-induced hyperactive episodes among children, it's still a holiday that is fairly "religious." That is to say, Jesus still gets a fair amount of attention, possibly because it's always on Sunday and churches draw such attention to the resurrection. This is good.

As a pastor, I know that Easter Sunday excites me because I'll see new and unfamiliar faces in our weekend worship service. Most pastors (those who aren't [jaded toward the occasion](#)) get the warm fuzzies as we approach this big day because of the opportunity to address an unusually large crowd of attenders. As [my own church](#) gears up for this special Sunday, I wanted to pass along some wisdom I've learned from 15 years of celebrating this special time as a congregational leader.

Here are tips for [approaching Easter as a pastor](#) ...

# 10 Vital Things to Remember About Your Easter Service

1. **Remember Jesus.** It's all about Him. His resurrection is the first half of the Easter story and the promised and guaranteed hope for the future resurrection of all believers is the second half. Make it a day of worship.
2. **Remember family.** Easter Sunday afternoon has always been as meaningful to me as the morning service because our family gets to spend quality time together.
3. **Remember Jesus as a family.** I love peeps and chocolate bunnies as much as the next guy, but it's even more important to have family conversations about the story of Jesus' resurrection. Read it from the gospels together and talk about the wonder of that morning.
4. **Remember children.** I like church Easter egg hunts simply because we're smiling at kids for the 4.2 minutes it takes for them to locate our carefully hidden plastic eggs. If having an egg hunt means you will welcome more kids to church on Easter Sunday, go for it. I know you'll be faithful to present the gospel to them and their parents since you're remembering Jesus already.
5. **Remember to celebrate.** This is [a day of victory and triumph](#). It kinda deserves a smile.
6. **Remember a lost world.** People will come to your church on Easter who may only come once or twice the rest of the year. You can try to shame them into coming more (and it probably won't work), or you can just love them and have compassion on them the way Jesus often had compassion on crowds who only showed up when he had food. Love them. Treat them lovingly. Maybe they'll be back because of love.
7. **Remember the questions of a lost world.** The resurrection is unbelievable ... if you're a naturalist. If you don't embrace the supernatural God of Creation, you'll have a tough time with the miracle of the resurrection. Remember this. Don't fear the big questions, and don't be afraid to let Scripture give answers.

# 10 Vital Things to Remember About Your Easter Service

8. **Remember to be the church.** What do you do every Sunday when guests come? Do that, but do it even better. Welcome newcomers. Smile. Serve them. Love their kids. Guide them around your campus. Meet their need for friendship.
9. **Remember who you are.** Don't try to be the church you're NOT on Easter. Be you. Pastor, you should preach. Your worship leader should lead. And while the day is special, the worship service should give people an idea of who you always are, not just who you are on a holiday.
10. **Remember that people count.** So don't just count the people. Metrics are valuable and big attendance days can help us envision what our church will look like if we work together. But don't forget that every face is the window to a soul deeply loved by God.

**And remember Jesus no matter what!**