

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



6 Ways

***TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT IN YOUR
CHURCH'S WEEKEND SERVICES***

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How do you know that a church service is “successful”?

What are the elements that tell you when things are working or not?

It's important that your team shares a clear understanding of what success looks like when it comes to designing weekend services. While there are many different factors that could determine whether a church service is successful or not, community engagement is a key component. **We don't want people to feel so disconnected from what's happening in the service that they find it boring or disengaging.**

How can you find ways to increase engagement? Everyone who is involved in planning weekend services should be concerned with how to cultivate a sense of connectedness. It should also be a given that we need to move beyond simply engaging and focusing on the people in the first few rows that we can see from our platforms. As worship leaders, we often fail to look beyond the front rows to the people in the back who arrived with a coffee in one hand and suspicion in the other. We need to see them too in order to evaluate whether we're successfully promoting engagement throughout our entire community. **A preacher usually hears the two or three people that give verbal feedback or nod their heads wildly in agreement, and we assume that the entire audience shares that level of engagement – this just isn't the case.** Engagement needs to

work its way through our entire community from the front row, all the way to the back. Here are six ways that you could increase engagement during this weekend's services at your church.

Question-and-answer time

Something incredible happens in the life of a community when its leadership opens itself up to answer questions on anything that was said, or unsaid, in that weekend's message.

Pausing during the service to allow people to ask questions is an incredible engagement opportunity for any weekend service. This practice forces us to not only prepare our message but also readies us to be aware of a wide variety of other thoughts or ideas that relate to that message. Hearing other's questions about the content is instructive for the wider community as they seek to understand various nuances of the issues at play. Including a question-and-answer time will definitely increase your engagement and enable this further understanding. There are a few ways you can do this:

- Hand out microphones and pass them through the audience as people raise their hands with questions
- Have your guest services team manage microphones in the audience at a certain part of the service

- Invite your community to text or phone in questions during the service; this also allows the opportunity for the church to provide light filtering for the questions. (Be aware that the more filtering that takes places, the less engagement there may be. People might feel like the community isn't willing to answer their most difficult questions.)

Response prayer times

I spent most of my time at the end of the evangelical Christian spectrum that doesn't pray for people during a service, so it's amazing for me to watch an increasing number of churches add prayer time into the service itself rather than simply stating that there is a prayer team available after the service.

Integrating prayer as a part of the overall service undoubtedly drives up participation in the church. It requires us to train a whole group of new leaders to care for and love the people that are coming forward for prayer. It allows people to receive immediate support for both the content the church is teaching and for the personal lives and events of the community. This is an incredible way to increase engagement across the entire church.

I have a fear that when we invite people to our churches all they will find when they arrive is us. Adding a fervent, expectant prayer ministry to your services regularly ensures that you are ultimately pointing people to God for support and guidance for their problems. **What if instead of giving people another sticky statement or bottom line we took them to a place where they received responsive prayer?** I know this is a normative practice for many churches, but if it isn't at yours, why not?

Encourage phone use

Can we be real for a minute? When you're at your church this weekend, stand at the back of the room during the service and see how many people are on their phones. I think you'll be surprised and humbled to see how many people are opening up their phones at various points during the service to do everything from check the weather to cross-reference a bible verse from the message. **Rather than fighting the phone, what if we looked at ways to try to increase phone use within our services in a productive manner?** The reality is people have a phone in their pocket and they want to use it.

Encourage people to:

- Open the church app or a bible app
- Submit questions for next week's message
- View a website you reference
- Respond to a survey or question



People use this technology in every other environment, so let's find a way that we can use those phones to reinforce engagement this coming weekend. In fact, 95% of Americans own cell phones; 77% of that number own smartphones, an increase from just 35% according to research completed in 2011. [ref] **This technology is embedded in our lives, and it's time to embed it in our churches as well.**

Play a game

What if during your announcements this week instead of just talking about the activities the student ministry is doing, you actually ran some of those activities in the auditorium while the service is happening? What if you used a service like [Kahoot](#) and had a trivia game as a part of the message where people could ask or answer questions about the content and message?

You could give away prizes to people who get the highest scores on any given weekend. **It's a fun way to help people recall what you talked about, and it ultimately drives deeper engagement by adding a bit of fun and something out of the ordinary from the usual Sunday morning service.** Adults learn when they are having fun, so maybe the best thing you can do to get your message across is to help them have a good time.

Cookies and water time

Remember when you were a kid in Sunday school and some nice person would show up with a tray of cookies and maybe some water or juice for snack time? **That always felt like the best part of Sunday school.** Why not do the same during your church service?

In fact, it may surprise you to know that [Hillsong Church](#) stops all their services midstream to do this exact thing. That's right, the uber-hip, production driven, super cool church has taken a page out of the Sunday school playbook and stops their services to hand out cookies and water! **Providing a small embedded fellowship time during the service is an effective way to increase engagement at your church.** In addition to handing out snacks and drinks, you could give people a question or two to engage with the folks around them. Those with higher social anxiety can simply just enjoy the cookies and drink while those who are a bit more outgoing have the chance to interact and talk with each other during the service.

Surprise and delight

Imagine using this filter for the upcoming weekends at your church: what could we do during our services that have a chance at being a lifelong memory for our community?

In what way can we surprise our people and delight them with something unique that we've never done before?

You could add a memorable prop to make a unique teaching point or do a fun giveaway at the end of the service or any number of other interesting elements that will draw your community in. I remember the day that we delivered Krispy Kreme donuts to all of our campuses as a teaching point for the message. It's something I still think back on and smile about even now. I remember another service where we had our campus pastors do a lip sync battle to a popular Bruno Mars song as a way to celebrate entering into summertime. Elements like this, if executed elegantly, are more than something to simply put a smile on people's faces. **Remember, we're not trying to entertain people; we are trying to draw them in and ultimately create deeper engagement.**



How are you increasing engagement at your church?

Engagement is what we are looking to develop during our services every weekend at church. The goal of engaging more people than ever before should be important to everyone that's involved in planning the church services. **If our churches are going to continue to grow, influence, and make a difference in the world, we need to find ways to increase engagement on a regular basis.**

I'd love to hear about the ways that you're seeking to increase engagement in your community. How have you ensured that more people are excited to be a part of what's happening at your church? Leave your comments below.

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