

Hospitality: Discipleship's Missing Piece

A Summary of Pastor Jay's Research Project

As part of taking a Doctor of Ministry degree at Tyndale Seminary, Pastor Jay conducted a study to answer the question that had been on his mind for some time: "Why is it that a healthy church with lots of new guests each week doesn't increase in attendance?" Our pastors have always been concerned with what happened in the year after people started coming to church. We have always wondered what motivated some people to get more involved, and what made others step away entirely. Whatever happened in that first year, we started calling it "the Wall" – some made it over, others didn't.

In order to better understand what "the Wall" was, Pastor Jay decided that his team should talk directly to newcomers themselves and hear their stories. The team talked to people who had landed at different levels of involvement in the church: from those who were deeply engaged in small groups, ministry and leadership to people who no longer attended Sunday services, and some who had ended up at other churches.

The first round of interviews revealed that it was difficult for people to make new connections in our foyer after the service. The team decided to repurpose and reorganize the greeters to become a Welcome AND Connect team to help our foyer become less overwhelming and awkward for everyone.

After almost a year of running the W:C team, the research team had another round of interviews to assess the impact of the ministry. The research showed that the team had made it easier for the people who wanted to connect to do so. The number of families who came as newcomers and meaningfully engaged in church activities beyond Sunday services doubled in 2017 as compared to previous years.

The intent of this sermon series is to make the most of this learning opportunity and share with the whole congregation the results, implications and challenges of this study.