

## **A Church Planter's First 90 Days of Outreach**

When you are planting a church, the first ninety days can feel both hopeful and overwhelming.

There's vision. There's faith. There's a deep sense of calling. And then there's the quiet question many planters carry but rarely say out loud:

*How will people actually find us?*

This is the story of my first 90 days of outreach as a church planter - not a formula, not a hype-filled success story, but an honest look at what changed when outreach became intentional, not exhausting.

### **The Early Weeks: Faithful, but Uncertain**

In the early days, most of the energy went into preparation. Services were planned, volunteers were trained, and the launch team prayed faithfully. But outreach felt unclear.

*"We were doing what we knew to do - posting on social media, inviting friends, and using word of mouth. But every week felt unpredictable."*

Some Sundays brought new faces, others didn't, and following up with those new faces only happened when someone remembered. Guests were welcomed warmly, but there was no clear system to help them take next steps. I would describe it in this way:

*"We weren't lacking effort. We were lacking clarity."*

### **The Realization: Outreach Starts Before Sunday**

Around the one-month mark, something became clear: Most first-time guests were forming impressions long before they ever walked into a service.

They were already familiar with us from searching online and scrolling social media. They were even deciding whether or not they would feel comfortable bringing their family.

*“People weren’t just showing up randomly. They were already trying to decide if they belonged.”*

This shifted the focus from *getting people to show up* to *helping people feel ready to show up*.

### **Building Simple Outreach Systems**

Instead of adding more tasks, I focused on simplifying outreach.

The goal wasn’t to do everything, it was to do a few things consistently. Outreach became centered on:

- Clear digital invitations to the local community
- Simple ways for people to plan a visit ahead of time
- Follow-up that didn’t rely on memory or extra volunteers

*“Once we stopped trying to do everything, things actually became lighter.”*

People could raise their hand online to say they were interested in learning more about the church. Expectations were set before Sunday, so first-time guests arrived knowing what to expect.

And most importantly, the connection didn’t stop after the first visit because the church was following up.

### **The Shift: From Attendance to Retention**

Around day 60, something subtle but important changed.

Instead of asking, *“Did we have guests this week?”*

The question became, *“Did guests come back?”*

Follow-up conversations happened naturally. Text messages felt personal, not transactional. Guests weren’t rushed into serving or joining, they were just cared for.

*“It felt less like marketing and more like hospitality.”*

Some guests came back the very next week, while others took time.

But one thing was clear: fewer people disappeared after a single visit.

### **What the First 90 Days Actually Produced**

By the end of the first 90 days:

- New guests were arriving more consistently
- Fewer people slipped through the cracks
- Follow-up stopped feeling stressful
- I felt more present, not more stretched

*“The biggest difference wasn’t numbers. It was peace. Outreach stopped feeling heavy.”*

Growth didn’t depend on hype or constant promotion. It came from systems quietly doing their job, week after week.

### **Lessons Other Church Planters Can Learn**

This story isn’t unique. Many church planters experience similar shifts when outreach becomes intentional.

Some key takeaways:

- Outreach works best when it starts before Sunday
- First impressions shape whether guests return
- Follow-up is pastoral care, not pressure
- Systems protect leaders from burnout
- Retention matters as much as attendance

*“We didn’t grow because we tried harder. We grew because we stopped guessing.”*

## **A Word of Encouragement**

If you're in the early days of church planting and outreach feels uncertain, you're not behind. You're normal.

The first ninety days don't have to be defined by exhaustion or pressure. With clarity and simple systems in place, outreach can support your calling instead of competing with it.

Growth doesn't require burning out your team. It requires building pathways that care for people well.

## **A Gentle Next Step**

If you're a church planter navigating your first season of outreach and want help building sustainable systems that support growth and retention, a short strategy conversation with someone who has been there before can help bring clarity.

Here at Hello Church, we're eager to partner with you during this kind-of-exhausting, incredibly-beautiful, life-giving church planting season. **Reach out to us today.**

-Pastor Brad

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