



# excellent sundays

the MINISTRY PAPERS

## user unfriendly church

The Jones family are leaving home this particular Sunday morning to do something they never thought they would be doing. They are going to church.

The flyer in the letterbox from the local church came at just the right time. Everything else in life just seems so uncertain right now: the economy, the environment, everything. And that guy at work who goes to church seems to have something very rare these days: hope. It's got to be worth a look. It's a bit scary. But how bad could it be?...

It's hard to pin down the one thing that made the Jones' family church experience even worse than they could have ever imagined. Overall it was the overwhelming sense of being an outsider. The lack of explanation. The jargon. The meandering program that seemed to just go from one thing to another with no connection. Yes, that's it! Connection. That's what was missing. From the lack of welcome as they walked in, to being completely ignored as they walked out. And everything that happened in between. It might as well have been in another language.

The flyer promised so much more—talk about false advertising! I mean, even the starting time was printed wrongly. Or at least everyone else seemed to know that “9:30am” meant 9:42. And that “friendly” meant if you’ve already got friends there. And this “hope” thing... well who knows why they have it?

*There's an old saying: “you don't get a second chance to make a first impression”. That's what this paper is about. You don't know which Sunday the Jones family will pick to visit your church. You need to be ready for them every Sunday.*

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

As we seek to see people connect to Jesus, grow in Jesus and serve like Jesus, this 'excellent Sundays' ministry paper focuses on the **connect** part of this pathway. It's about the key role our Sunday gatherings play in helping people connect to Jesus. It's also about how we **serve** in seeing that happen. It's designed to help your ministry leader(s) introduce you to what it means to be part of excellent Sundays.



## read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

1. What is the “most excellent way” Paul shows the Corinthians?

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2. How does this serve as a corrective to the Corinthians' selfish approach to church (see 11:20-21)?

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## read 1 Corinthians 14:22-26

3. As Paul pushes the Corinthians to be more 'other-focussed', what is his special concern for unbelievers?

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4. Paul expects unbelievers to be part of church gatherings. To what extent is that your expectation?

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5. Their obsession with tongues was the particular way the Corinthians were obscuring the gospel from unbelievers. Thinking more generally, what other ways can church obscure the gospel?

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# outsider focus

Excellent Sundays are loving Sundays, gospel Sundays, connecting Sundays. The activity of mission and building relationships with unbelievers, of course, should be happen every day, all through the week. Our weekly corporate gatherings, however, provide a key opportunity for outsiders to connect to Christ through connecting with the body of Christ and hearing the gospel of Christ. Excellent Sundays are about maintaining this outsider focus and making the most of every opportunity.



## read Colossians 4:2-6

1. What does Paul ask the Colossians to pray for him?

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2. What are his instructions for the Colossians?

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3. How might these instructions be applied not just individually but corporately?

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4. How might our weekly gatherings be more full of grace and salty (interesting)?

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## if the Jones family visit this Sunday...

what most needs to change in our church for their visit to truly be made the most of: to be a gospel (and not a wasted) opportunity?



## the Jones family TAKE #TWO

Try to breakdown the overall "opportunity" of the Jones' family visit to a moment by moment series of opportunities for maximum connection...

### signage/environment

is it clear when/how to access the church facilities? are they inviting?

### parking

does this pose any obstacle to accessing the church?

### welcoming

are people greeted warmly and given relevant information?

### handouts

are these prepared with the outsider in mind? are things explained clearly?

### kids/youth

are they welcomed in their own right and relevant programs explained to them and their parents?

### leading

does the person leading welcome and acknowledge guests? (e.g. not using jargon or in-house acronyms; being sure to announce the collection as only for regulars, etc).

### pace and flow

do things start on time and move along in a way that conveys communication has happened?

### integration

does everything 'hang together' presenting one clear message (or is it a grab bag of many messages)

### announcements

are they brief, few and interesting?

### the break

are the Jones' family spoken to?

### preaching

are things explained with the Jones' family in mind?

### morning tea/supper

are the Jones' family spoken to?



## on the same page

Many of the issues raised in “the Jones family TAKE #TWO” are addressed in depth in various MINISTRY PAPERS e.g. welcoming, leading, preaching, crèche, kids church, music & audio ministries. Excellent Sundays require much more, however, than each of these teams simply ‘doing their own job’ right. It requires that they all be on the same page. This means preparation, communication, co-ordination: the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing. It may all be helped by literally producing a “same page” document...

## same page 9:30am 1 february 2009

big idea: The only way to cast out fear of what people think of us as Christians is to get consumed with what Jesus thinks! We can then treat others as they really are: people who also need to know Christ Jesus as Lord.

time	what	tech. notes
8:25	setup	setup (musos: tune etc; singers: words ready; sound guys: equipment ready; lights)
8:30	music practice start	after 1st song is practiced: pause to make sure all levels are right (amps, foldback)
9:15	sound check	kids talk/item/interview etc (lectern mic; handhelds? headsets? item mics? laptop?)
9:20	music/sound team pray	(with recorded music already playing – can start during sound check)
9:25	preacher/leader(s) pray	(feature recorded song to play now & in break = sons of korah ‘Psalm 130’)
9:28	all in position for start	sound team ready for music fade & lectern mic on

time	what		who	tech. notes
9:30	1 <sup>st</sup> song	<i>hosanna</i>	music team	
9:33	2 <sup>nd</sup> song	<i>at the cross (was it nails)</i>	music team	
9:36	prayer	praise	Pete	
9:37	welcome & connect card		" "	
9:38	today's key qn	"what do you fear most?"	" "	
9:39	montage-"here I go again"	"sometimes out of fear all we talk about is the weather..."	Pete and sound team	casting crowns cd track 6
9:44	today's key qn	"what do you fear most?"	Pete	
9:44	3 <sup>rd</sup> song & collection	<i>all creatures of our God and King</i>	music team	
9:47	church family news	"take home today's service sheet..."	Pete	
	slide #1 (minor):	wedding slide – Andy & Elyce slide – Elliott Hilaire & Amy McDonald	" "	
	slide #2 (minor):	ministry muster from 12pm	" "	
	slide #3 (major):	youth announcement – YC09	Simon interview with J Kinscher	mics: 2 handhelds lights: n/a
9:51	prayer	church family		
9:53	kids talk	intro: "could all the kids please come down..." after: "kid's we only need..."		mics: 1 handheld lights: n/a
9:56	kids song	<i>don't be ashamed of the Lord</i>	music team	mic: Louise (green)
9:59	BREAK			CD: 2009 songs
10:04	item	more than the watchmen		equipment: acoustic guitar lights: n/a
10:09	bible reading	psalm 130		
10:10	talk	connect without fear		
10:40	confess, ask prayer			
10:42	song	<i>stars</i>	music team	
10:45	reminder		Pete	
10:46	summary word	connect without fear	" "	
10:47	morning tea		Williams/Tulk	CD: 2009 songs
11:00	who let the kids out?		Pete	

NOTES: preacher provides: today's key qn; service leader provides: tech requirements for set-up piece/interviews etc; kids talker provides: lead-in/out needed, tech requirements; music leader provides: tech requirements for item (and /or other songs); Ministry Co-ordinator provides: lectern pack for leader, special cds/media for sound team

# the domino effect

If someone forgets they're on morning tea... no big deal right? Everything else can still run smoothly can't it? Except that two members of the welcoming team might have to step into the kitchen to cover the situation. Which means the welcoming team are a bit light on. Which means at the key moment when the Jones' family arrives... BEWARE 'the domino effect'. There is a bigger ministry team than the one you're a part of and we're all relying on each other.



## people

The goal of excellent Sundays is people. People being welcomed and served. People hearing the gospel. People connecting to Jesus.

Hopefully this MINISTRY PAPER has helped to demonstrate the relationship between effective preparation and effective ministry to people. The relationship between organisation and welcoming. These things are sometimes pitted against each other as opposites, "I prefer a people approach to being overly structured...". A degree of structure is needed, however, precisely in order to serve people effectively. Especially as a church grows.

Structure is not the goal. It's a means to an end of our real concern: people. Our great God spent thousands of years preparing for his Son's entry to the world to live and die and rise for our salvation. Devoted and diligent preparation is one way we honour Christ when we're part of proclaiming his gospel. When you see a church family effectively welcoming and serving people on a Sunday, you can be sure that there's a good deal of prayer and preparation behind the scenes that built the platform for that ministry.

## simplicity

This paper has focused on excellent Sundays. Sundays (or whatever day of the week your main gathering is), of course, are only one part of our overall mission as a church. There are other crucial parts of church life such as growth groups and other ministries we serve in. There is little doubt, however, that effective gospel-honouring Sundays are a critical part of the overall strategy of a growing church. And to invest in them as this paper suggests, care needs to be taken to maintain simplicity in the rest of church life. Any week where there are too many other things happening in the life of our church family will be a week where the ability to serve through an excellent Sunday at the end of it is compromised. And of course the more cluttered our lives are with church activities the less we'll be making that even more important investment: building relationships with unbelievers who we can invite to an excellent Sunday. The lose/lose of too many church activities? Investment in excellent Sundays is compromised and so is investment in relationships. The win/win of an uncluttered church calendar? Investment in excellent Sundays is possible and so is time with unbelievers who can be invited along.

Keep it simple. Keep the church calendar uncluttered. Excellent Sundays. Growth groups. A handful of key ministries. And lots of time and space for building relationships with unbelievers to connect with Jesus and his body.

## the 9:15 moment

I remember seeing a poster on a train in Sydney explaining the complex nature of train delays. Because of the interwoven nature of the Sydney rail system, a sick passenger in Berowra could mean trains running late in Penrith—many miles away and seeming unrelated situations. Their goal was to make the system simpler so such knock-on effects were reduced.

There's a lot to be said for simplicity. The nature of a system however, means that there is always the potential for sickness in one part to effect one or all other parts of the system. This is a great reality with the aim of excellent Sundays.

Consider "the 9:15 moment". In order for all the other moments from 9:30 to 11am to flow the way they should, it's vital that there be a state of readiness at 9:15. For that to happen, all the prior moments need to have occurred as planned. And before that the preparation and communication also.

And what's the goal of all that? slickness? professionalism? a great show? NO!. The goal is people. The goal is people connecting with Christ and with each other. It takes a lot of preparation and discipline for an excellent Sunday where there is a calm at 9:15 where no-one is still planning, preparing or perplexing... but rather, everyone is *peopling!*... thinking "Jones family".

For that to happen every person and team needs to play their part. Beware the domino effect. When it comes to excellent Sundays we all rely on each other. It really is a case of the whole being greater than sum of the parts.

*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12*