

5

steps to make the right first
impression with your
church website

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Did you know that people are visiting your church website before they ever step foot in the door of your church? And that first impression matter more today than ever before.

President of LifeWay , Thom Rainer, did a Twitter poll and found that one of the top 10 ways churches drive away first-time guests is a bad church website.

"Most of the church guests went to the church website before they attended a worship service. Even if they attended the service after visiting a bad website, they attended with a prejudicial perspective."

Your church website should be given the attention it needs to help your church give a great first impression that lets people know who you are, what you believe, and Who you serve.

READ ON TO DISCOVER 5 STEPS TO MAKE THE RIGHT FIRST IMPRESSION WITH YOUR CHURCH WEBSITE.

1. HAVE FRIENDLY FACES AT THE TOP OF YOUR WEBSITE

Churches are notorious for placing pictures of their building at the top of their website. While church buildings and sanctuaries are often beautiful and majestic, they do little to convey the heart of the people inside.

People are attracted to others when they smile because they feel love and care. That's why most churches have greeters, people who stand at the door to welcome new attenders to church and help them feel loved and cared for before they ever step foot inside.

Your church website should be built around the same things that happen offline.

When you want someone to accept your invitation to visit your church, telling them about the building will not really appeal all that much to them. Instead, you will probably tell them about how loving and friendly your church is, how safe and fun the children's environment is, and how there is an inspirational message of hope in Jesus delivered every week.

People are attracted to friendliness. So make sure your church website has friendly people featured at the top.

2. INTRODUCE YOURSELF JUST LIKE YOU WOULD IN PERSON

Have you ever been to a church website and immediately felt overwhelmed? They show you last week's message, all their programs, a calendar of events, how to give online, and a special area to hear some thoughts from the pastor.

If your church wants people to feel loved and cared for, then your church needs to treat them as guests. And guests don't need you to shout everything your church does and offers right at the doorstep.

As a pastor or ministry leader, you probably know the age old truth that people have to hear something seven times in order to remember it. That's one thing repeated seven times. So as a church you need to practice what you believe and not overwhelm people on their first visit to your church website.

Start with an introduction. Welcome them just like you would in person. If you follow step one they'll see friendly faces and then feel welcomed with a friendly message right off the bat. And then you can share a little bit about your church - your mission, vision or values. But start with a welcome and make it friendly, fun, and attractive.

3. SHARE WHY YOU EXIST AFTER YOU HAVE PEOPLE'S ATTENTION

People attending a new church usually have some pre-conceived notion of what church people will be like. Your website gives you the chance to help normalize who you are by sharing why you exist. You might call this a mission statement or vision statement. Or maybe you have by-laws that define your why.

Don't confuse people with long-winded statements about who you are and what you believe. They want to know why. NY Times Bestselling author Simon Sinek has a great quote in the business world that is completely applicable to the church world:

"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe."

If you want people to be attracted to your church then you need to tell them why you exist. Why you meet every week to worship Jesus and praise His name. Keep it simple, short, and it will be highly effective.

Some examples of churches that have compelling why statements are:

- Leading people to become fully devoted follower's of Jesus
- All of life, all for Jesus
- We exist to reach people far from God and teach them how to follow Jesus step by step
- We live to see people far from God be filled with life in Christ
- We are a church that believes in Jesus, that loves God, and loves people.

Your church needs a compelling mission or vision statement if you want people to know why you exist.

4. SHARE SOME CONTENT THAT HELPS PEOPLE LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR CHURCH WITHOUT OVERWHELMING THEM

People love to share their lives with each other. It's what helps build community. One of the central narratives throughout Scripture is relationships. And your website is not different. You want to build a connection with people by sharing details about who you are and how you fulfill your why.

Your church might share your weekly sermons or teachings, some key ministries or programs that people enjoy, or some pictures of a recent outreach opportunity that show people serving your community.

The key is to give people a taste of the life of your church without presenting every single option they have to get plugged in and get involved.

You do not want anyone feeling overwhelmed. You only want them to feel loved and know your church cares for its community.

5. GIVE PEOPLE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO KNOW HOW TO VISIT YOUR CHURCH IN PERSON

Many times churches are so busy sharing an informational platter on their website that the most relevant information gets lost in a sea of clutter — how to get to the church and where to go when you get there.

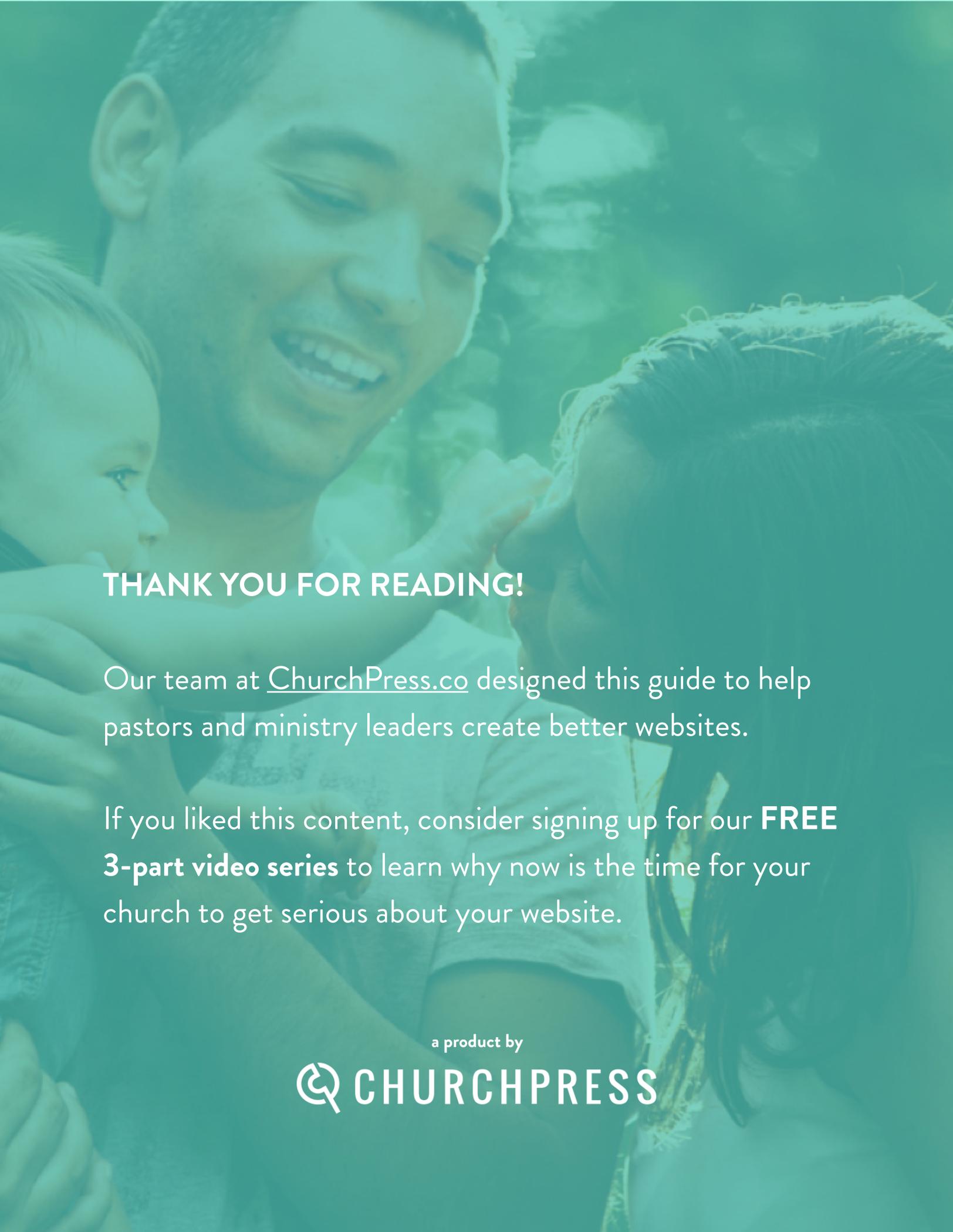
In the spirit of treating people as first-time guests online, lead them to your church. Once people feel welcomed, know your why, and see some other things like a safe, fun child environment that appeal to them, they'll want to know how to get there.

Your job as a church is to make sure you display your service times, directions, and phone numbers prominently on your church website. People are easily distracted when potentially stepping foot into a new environment. Your church needs to make sure times and info are updated, accurate, and easy to find.

Someone who hasn't attended before has some pretty basic questions in mind: *what should I wear? how early should I get there? where do I park? what do I bring? how much does child care cost? will there be live music? what style of music do you have? how much money should I bring? how long is the service?*

As pastors or ministry leaders it's hard to put yourself in the shoes of someone who has not attended church before or for a long time. Many people come from different faiths, backgrounds, experiences, etc. Your church website should make them feel comfortable in every possible way.

If your church doesn't man the phones, don't put a phone number on your site. If you do use a phone number and you can receive texts on it, then open that channel wide open. People are much more comfortable when they are armed with information about what they need in order to visit your church in person.



THANK YOU FOR READING!

Our team at ChurchPress.co designed this guide to help pastors and ministry leaders create better websites.

If you liked this content, consider signing up for our **FREE 3-part video series** to learn why now is the time for your church to get serious about your website.

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