

San Bernardino Region  
Leadership Masterclass Symposium

**CLOSING THE BACK DOOR OF YOUR CHURCH**

Presenter: Superintendent Garon Harden

What is the backdoor?

Literally speaking, the back door means a rear exit. It turns out to be the easiest way out; you don't get questioned or judged, and usually no one is aware you are leaving. The church's back door, though, is not a literal door at the rear of the church, but a metaphor referring to the process of quietly leaving.

Every church has a back door. This should not be a shocking revelation. If we are struggling to connect people, involve them, and close the back doors of our churches, the following five keys will help us in our efforts:

1. Know Your Numbers

- Understanding basic spread sheet numbers can really help us build and keep our membership growing and not diminishing.
- Pastors didn't go into ministry to study spreadsheets but it's important that we look at the information.
- How many new people attend your church every week? (Do you have someone taking inventory?)
- How many visitors actually become members?
- Lifeway research says only 12% of first-time visitors become members of our churches. The only way we can know this is by tracking the numbers.

2. Ask the Difficult Questions and be Willing to Hear Honest Feedback

- You may feel like you're doing a good job, but do you know the facts?
- Find out why people are leaving your church.
- Realize that some people don't connect with your church for good reasons (examples: unwelcoming ushers/greeters, the pastor etc.).
- Are you starting service on time? Are you holding service too long?
- What can the congregation do to serve the people better?
- When speaking with members ask them what you aren't doing that needs to be done.
- How can we enhance the worship experience and the church environment and our service to the people?

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3. Create a Comprehensive Follow-Up Process

- People don't care how much you know unless they know how much you care!
- Have a standardized First Time Visitor Letter.
- Make sure every visitor gets a response from you following their first visit (connection should be made no later than two days after visit).
- Develop a member services department.
- Assign a member coordinator and follow-up team.
- Make sure that they are connected with the sick & shut in as well as bereaved families.
- Create practices that consistently show care for the membership of your church.

4. Communicate a Clear Vision for the Ministry

- Once people become members of your church enroll them in your new members class which will acquaint them with your ministry.
- All new members classes should have key components:
  1. Why we exist as a church – understanding the church, ministry, and mission covenants.
  2. Spiritual Maturity which teaches the focus and goal of the ministry
  3. How to discover their spiritual gifts
  4. Emphasis on God's purpose for creating them, and their life mission, sharing the gospel.
  5. Emphasis on being mission minded.
- When the vision is clear you are more apt to have buy-in and commitment from your members.
- We become what we are committed to.

5. Provide Opportunity for People of All Ages to Connect

- Encourage ministry participation.
- Build a strong Youth Ministry.
- Provide small groups that minister to the needs of the membership.
- Sponsor annual events and worship services that include the entire family i.e. friends and family day, church outings, picnic etc.

**Above all things demonstrate love toward all people at all times.**