

# An Entertaining Experience

If you love to entertain, like I do, then this next idea on how to help grow your church is probably right up your ally.

Most of us have friends, colleagues, neighbors, coworkers, and so on who don't attend church regularly (or at all!). Some of these are close friends and some may lean more on the acquaintance side of the continuum. One of the things my wife and I enjoy doing is hosting a get together of people with different perspectives or from different walks of life. For instance, we've regularly hosted summer barbeques and brought together guests who were attorneys, teachers, professors, rabbis, and police officers. I can tell you that the conversations were lively, entertaining, enlightening, and always fascinating.

Although entertaining a disparate group of unchurched people probably presents you with a great opportunity for talking up your church and your church's events, those opportunities don't always make themselves available. And honestly, even when they do, it may seem kind of awkward to bring it up and pitch your church to a group like that. But wait – there's good news in all this. *You* don't have to be the one responsible for bringing up what's happening at your church ... you can pass that off to someone else. Someone like ...

Your Pastor.

Most pastors are pretty comfortable talking about the church and the work they do for the kingdom. In fact, most of us are pretty adept at sliding church-stuff into conversations in ways that aren't awkward for anyone ... not for you, not for your friends, and certainly not for your church. Which brings me to the point of all this. You can help grow your church by entertaining your unchurched friends and inviting your pastor to be one of the guests.

I've had the opportunity to be one of the invited guests at a number of these kinds of gatherings. I've been invited to office parties, Monday Night Football watch parties, tailgating parties, cocktail parties, neighborhood block parties, formal dining experiences, Christmas parties, wine tasting parties, hog roasts, and even a baby shower. The possibilities are literally limitless.

However, there's a key factor in all this: Your pastor's schedule. There are two ways to put these pastor-meet-my-friends kinds of parties together. First, there are the intentional get togethers. For these, you'll want to start by setting the date based on your pastor's availability. Call the church office or connect with your pastor (*not* on Sunday morning before worship) and find an open date that will work for both you and your pastor – then schedule the event, invite your friends, and away you go.

Second, there are the get togethers that are already on your calendar or already set-in-stone. For instance, your office might schedule their summer picnic on the second weekend of July. Or your neighborhood might have a block party scheduled for September 8. And if you're hosting a Monday Night Football party, you're pretty much stuck with Monday nights in the fall. For these

kinds of get togethers, you'll want to invite your pastor as early as possible. Many pastor's schedules fill up pretty quickly, so if you invite him/her to an event next weekend, it may not be possible. Your best bet, then, is to do the inviting weeks ... or months ... before the event. In my case, the longer the lead time, the more likely I can make accommodations.

One last consideration. If your pastor is married, s/he may or may not want to bring their spouse, especially if you've let your pastor know what's afoot. However, it's good form on your part to invite both to these events when it's appropriate. Let your pastor make the call about bringing the spouse or not. (However, it is totally okay to host an event sans children – just let your pastor know if the event is or isn't kid-friendly and if a babysitter is in order. If a sitter is in their future, depending on the pastor's financial support, it may be nice if the church picked up the tab – after all, this *is* church business!)