

Measuring Your Church's Vibe

**Imagine that
you're a first-
time visitor to
your church.
Does that
make you
nervous?**

by
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A key, and often the first, way that churches serve their communities is by offering welcoming, accessible, and meaningful weekly worship experiences. Of course, worship gatherings should be focused on God; but since God is focused on the lost, they should also be welcoming to those who are seeking Him, and should demonstrate the spirit of loving service that Christ himself modeled. Worship services are ultimately about God and them, not about us.

This survey asks you to imagine that you are a first-time visitor to, or a newer member of, your church, a person who has not had much experience navigating your weekend worship experiences. Your assignment is to walk through your weekend experience and view it through the eyes of this guest or new member, with a view to identifying anything that might make them feel unwelcome or uncomfortable.

We realize that some of what visitors hear in classes, songs, or the sermon might make them feel uncomfortable with their lifestyle; we're not talking about godly convictions of that kind, but rather about little things that might make them feel that your church is not welcoming or accessible to them. The goal is to overcome these small obstacles so that our guests will keep coming back to hear and learn more. They may choose not to come back, but we don't want to give them ready excuses not to do so.

PICK YOUR PERSON

Imagine that you are one of the following people/couples, all of whom might be typical visitors to your weekend services:

1) *Sandra*: female; age 32; divorced, single mother of two kids, ages 9 and 7; elementary school teacher; attended another church regularly before her divorce but has not been to any church on a consistent basis for the past 3 years and feels ready to become involved again. Very concerned to ensure that her kids have a good church experience.

2) *James and Catherine*: married couple; ages 42 and 43; three kids, ages 17, 14, and 11; James is an electrician and Catherine is a secretary in a law firm; both were raised Roman Catholic but have not been active in their faith during their adult life. Are visiting your church at the invitation of a person who works in Catherine's office.

3) *Will and Sharon*: married couple (second marriage for both); ages 55 and 58; both have adult children, with 3 grandchildren between them; Will is Director of Marketing at a tech company and Sharon is a pharmacist. Decided to become more involved in church after Will faced a potentially serious health issue several months ago.

EXPERIENCE YOUR CHURCH THROUGH THEIR EYES

Imagine yourself in the position of one of the 3 people/groups above as they move through all phases of their first visit to your church's weekend worship service. For each item below, rate how that person might respond to their experience on a scale of 1-10, where "1" means "that could have been better" and "10" means "that was really good." Below your ratings, feel free to take any notes that might explain your rating or your general impressions.

*The following survey is excerpted from **The Elemental Churches Field Guide**, a workbook that is a part of the **Elemental Churches Inventory**, a leadership development, team-based tool to measure and assess churches' challenges and opportunities through online videos, surveys, and curriculum. For more info, visit www.elementalchurches.com. For a detailed article on "vibe," download **The Art & Science of Vibe**.*

ELEMENTAL CHURCHES WEEKEND EXPERIENCE SURVEY

(circle one: 1 = "that could have been better" to 10 = "that was really good!")

GETTING THERE

- It's easy to get to this church from my house.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It's clear where I should park.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- There seems to be plenty of parking spaces.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It's clear which door to the building I should enter.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

WALKING IN

- People greeted me at the door and seemed friendly.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It's immediately clear where I should go after I enter the building.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- There are clear and helpful signs that tell me where things are.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It was easy to find the bathroom.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It was clear that the church provides coffee or drinks, and obvious where I could get them and whether I had to pay for them.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The lobby/foyer was attractively furnished and decorated; the overall look is up-to-date and seasonally appropriate (e.g., Christmas decorations).
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I could easily find the Welcome Center.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It was easy to identify people who might be assigned to answer questions or help me find my way around.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- If any kind of literature or books were available, it was clear whether I was welcome to take them for free or whether I had to pay for them.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

CHECKING IN (*if your sample visitor has children*)

- It was clear that the church offers programming for children/youth.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- People were available to help me learn more about available programs.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The children's check-in area was easy to find, with clear signage.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The youth/student area was easy to find, with clear signage.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The children's check-in process was simple.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The children's check-in/security system made me feel confident that my children would be safe.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The overall appearance of the children's area, my child's room, and the volunteers in my child's room made me feel confident about leaving my children there.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The youth/student space seemed like it would be relevant and inviting for my teenagers.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The volunteers in the room greeted my children/teenagers and seemed interested in engaging them, rather than talking to one another.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The other kids/students in the children's/youth ministry seemed open to having visitors.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- My kids seemed willing to go to the children's/youth programming; at least, there was nothing more the church could have done to make them feel comfortable.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

WORSHIP

- The directions from the entrance and/or children's/youth check-in area were clear.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The auditorium was attractively decorated and nicely furnished.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- People greeted me when I entered and offered to help me find seating.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The auditorium/sanctuary did not seem overly crowded.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- I was able to see and hear well from my seat.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- My seat, and the overall temperature in the room, was physically comfortable.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- Someone from the stage made guests feel welcome.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- I was able to clearly see words projected on the screen.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- I was able to hear everything that was said from the stage or from recorded videos and/or music that were played.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The visual elements of the service (videos, graphics, lyrics, etc.) were well-done; they seemed professional and were helpful and meaningful.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The overall sequence of the worship service made sense to me: it seemed clear why they were doing what they were doing, and how it all fit together.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The songs they played sounded like something I might hear on the radio.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The worship leader appeared authentic and engaging.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- Other people on the stage (musicians, singers) seemed enthusiastic about being involved in leading worship.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The music was well-performed.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The preacher seemed authentic and relate-able.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The sermon was not too long.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The sermon was on a topic that is relevant to my life in some way.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I was able to understand the main points of the sermon and how they might be relevant to me.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- The overall presentation of the sermon was engaging.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- It seemed clear to me that the sermon was based on the Bible, and I could understand the basic connection between the points the preacher was making and the Bible verses he/she used.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I felt challenged, in a positive way, by what the preacher was saying.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I did not get a sense that the church was being too pushy in asking me for money.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I did not feel that I was asked to do anything that made me uncomfortable during the service.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I did not feel unfairly condemned by anything that happened during the worship service.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- I could understand pretty much everything they were talking about during the service; the songs, the sermon, and the prayers didn't use much religious language that was unfamiliar to me.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- If the Lord's Supper/communion/Eucharist was celebrated, it was clearly explained what we were doing and whether I was invited to participate.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)
- If a baptism took place, or an invitation to baptism, it was clearly explained what "baptism" is and why anyone would do that.
(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- Overall, I felt that this church would respect my basic beliefs about God, and would not judge me for asking questions.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- Somebody talked to me as I was leaving the auditorium after services were over.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

ON THE WAY OUT

- I felt that this church was interested in the neighborhood where I live.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- It was clear where and how I could get further information about this church or its services.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- It was easy to find the place where I should pick up my kids.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- When I went to pick up my kids, they seemed actively engaged with other students and with adult volunteers.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- I did not have to wait a long time to pick up my kids.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- The children's/youth staff greeted me and told my kids they would like to see them come back.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- It was easy to get from the place where I picked up my kids to an exit that was close to where I parked.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

- It was easy to get out of the parking lot, or at least there were volunteers there to help with parking.

(-) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (+)

*Excerpted from **The Elemental Churches Field Guide**
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Churches, a consulting group devoted to developing tools to
help churches become healthier and more effective. For
more info, visit www.elementalchurches.com*

