

Franks, Danny. *People Are the Mission: How Churches Can Welcome Guests Without Compromising the Gospel*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 208 pages.

Book review by Bud Simon, PhD student, Asbury Theological Seminary. (Simon also served as a missionary in Brazil for twenty years.)

Danny Franks, pastor of guest services at The Summit Church in North Carolina, has written a practical guide to building a gospel oriented guest services ministry. The book is oriented towards practitioners which divides six chapters into two sections. The first section addresses how create an environment in which church visitors are transformed into guests. The second section focuses on the objections and obstacles that arise within the church when the doors are opened wide to guests. The author closes with an appendix that walks churches through establishing guest services. Franks approach to guest services can be summarized in his portrayal of hospitality as an apologetic of the gospel by which he means that hospitality defends the gospel in an undeniable manner.

The first section provides an outward focus for the church concerning how to become a place of hospitality, both corporately and personally. The author aligns guest services with the discipleship process establishing integration into the life of the church as a primary goal. This vision is reached by making the church a safe place for guests through removing offenses. The message the church communicates to visitors should encourage people to engage with the gospel even those who are in opposition or skeptical. Guests frustrated by former negative church experiences and evangelism encounters can be disarmed through humble service to their needs.

Hospitality in the church serves the purpose of pointing people to Christ so a clear vision calls those in guest services to move visitors towards life in the church community. Resistance to guest services from the within the church can be addressed by graciously reminding people of that vision and treating church members with concerns redemptively. Some church members seek to maintain the status quo however gently pushing through an insider mentality and confronting fears of inadequacy will make the church a welcoming place. By making room for the other, the church passes along the grace and love that it received from Christ, affirming the *Missio Dei*.

Franks makes an authentic contribution to evangelism literature by placing guest services as a gospel apologetic. He moves a topic which has received very little attention theologically or biblically directly into the conversation concerning discipleship and evangelism. The theme of hospitality as an apologetic is woven throughout the book and invites the reader to engage critically with hospitality through guest services both personally and the corporately.

The author explicates the implementation of healthy church hospitality by providing an appendix which delineates the process. The book adds new evangelism insights by expanding the discussion concerning guest services. Franks writing style and engagement with application are for practioners however this book is an excellent resource which should be used in the classroom and is highly recommended for those in practical theology, church planting, pastoral ministry and evangelism.