

# How to Effectively Use a Guest Speaker for a Breakthrough Event

## 5 Tips and a 10 Point CHECKLIST for working with guest speakers

NOTE: While this article was written for pastors and churches, many of the 5 tips and 10 point checklist still apply for leaders who are planning conferences, events, chapels, retreats, etc.

Every year most churches are in need of some game changing weekends in the life of their church. This can effectively happen by bringing in a proven guest speaker to address a specific topic during a weekend of ministry.



Unfortunately, when most pastors are out of the pulpit, most churches default to always and only using a staff member or church leader to be the guest speaker. But with a little bit of forethought and prayerful planning, a pastor and church can “hit the ball out of the park” by effectively utilizing a designated home run hitting guest speaker when the pastor will be gone OR to help the pastor address an important topic for the congregation.

To illustrate this point from the world of farming, farmers change the depth of the plow periodically to avoid hard pack. Hard pack is what happens when the plow is kept at the same depth and the dirt forms a hard crust below the surface that doesn't allow water or the seed's roots to grow. Guest speakers can be used by God to allow the seed of His word and living water to “break through” the spiritual hard pack in a congregation. God can powerfully move through a guest speaker to bring genuine life change and spiritual transformation to your people.

As a past senior/preaching pastor, guest speaker at hundreds of churches/conferences, and an organizer for an annual 1000-person conference that worked with hundreds of guest speakers, I learned a few tips along the way on how to most about effectively utilize a game changing guest speaker.

- **TIP #1 Choose guest speakers to “say” something you want said or to “reinforce” something you’ve been saying.**
- **TIP #2 Choose guest speakers that won’t just speak “to” your congregation but who will also have follow-up resources “for” your congregation.**
- **TIP #3 Choose guest speakers that will share powerful Scriptural insights, a moving message, and inspirational true stories from their own life.**
- **TIP #4 Choose guest speakers to help provide credibility and expertise to a particular topic you want addressed.**
- **TIP #5 Choose guest speakers that can provide more than just a weekend sermon (i.e. also use them for a seminar, coaching and leadership training time with pastor/staff/and/or committee(s), a special appreciation and/or vision event for key givers, etc.).**

### HELPFUL 10 POINT CHECKLIST

How do you find and work with a game changing guest speaker, here's a list I put together for your benefit.

1. **RESEARCH** available speakers on the topic you want addressed. You can search the topic on Google, identify authors, and/or get referrals and recommendations from friends and leaders.
2. **READ** the speaker's references/endorsements, bio, available topics/messages, and speaking guidelines. Some speakers are only available locally, while others are willing to travel nationally or even internationally. Some have guidelines on the size of churches or events where they speak or specific honorarium requirements.
3. **REVIEW** samples of their videos or speaking online (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.).
4. **READ** about their available resources (books, devotionals, podcasts, CD's, DVD's).

5. **REQUEST** their availability and speaking/honorarium/travel guidelines from the speaker. Ask if their spouse would be traveling with them to speak at your church.
6. **RESERVE** dates and speaking schedule: preaching at worship services, seminar, meeting with leaders, etc.).
7. **REVEAL** information the speaker needs to plan the weekend of ministry at your church (i.e. topic you would like them to address, how long the message should be, recommended clothing choice – casual, business casual, open collar/coat, tie/coat, if sermon slides are used in message, if handout is used in message, worship service times, time to arrive for a mic check and prayer, address/person to ship resources to in advance, typical attendance and demographic variations in your worship service schedule, office/home/cell phone numbers of main contact person or persons).
8. **REQUEST** any promotional information or material to highlight any special events (photo, bio, seminar handouts, posters, video promos, etc.)
9. **RESPOND** to all the travel and speaking arrangements that need to be finalized:
  - **SCHEDULE:** Provide a detailed itinerary for the weekend.
  - **FLIGHTS/VEHICLE:** If this is not a local speaking commitment, ask if you should make the flight arrangements or if you would like them to do it. Ask if they would prefer to be picked up and dropped off at the airport or if they would prefer to get their own rental car.
  - **LODGING:** Ask if they would prefer to stay in a hotel or with a family from the church. Some speakers prefer their privacy and others prefer the hospitality of staying with a generous and hospitable family in your church. If the speaker stays in the home of a church leader, he will be able to get a much better feel and a helpful understanding for your church family, history, and any challenges you may currently be going through.
  - **MEALS:** Determine how each meal time will be handled – which meals the speaker will be on his own and/or which meals the speaker will have with a person, family, or group.
  - **ACTIVITIES:** If the speaker will be with your church for a few days, there may be a recreational, entertainment, social, or sports activity or event someone or a group in your church can offer to provide for the guest speaker. Ask if this would be welcomed by the speaker. Some speakers prefer their privacy while others find this is a great time to get a feel for the church, people, and area before they speak to the congregation.
  - **SPEAKING:** Type of microphone(s) available, deadline for sermon slides (if used), send speaker sample of typical sermon notes and deadline for getting in sermon notes (if used), resource tables/counter space for materials after the service (if used), seminar needs (projector, white board or flip chart, table seating or rows of chairs).
  - **PROMOTION:** Send a press release to local papers with a picture highlighting information about the guest speaker. This free publicity can raise awareness of your church's work in the community. If there is a seminar being offered, create "bring-vitations" flyers and/or tickets that will encourage your church to attend the event and bring others along with them.
  - **PRAYER:** Put out a prayer request to leaders and your prayer team for God to protect your speaker and his family during this time and for the LORD to mightily use the speaker to touch many people.
  - **FINANCES:** Arrange for a generous honorarium and/or love offerings, travel reimbursement, and assistance (if needed) in processing any monies related to resources/materials the speaker makes available, and receive a W9 form from the speaker to send tax info by January 31st.
10. **RESPECT** the guest speaker, his ministry, and his message. Do everything you can to make this special time of ministry a great experience for you, your leaders/staff, congregation, and the guest speaker. Rejoice over any positive reports you hear and share these results with the speaker (in person and/or in an email follow-up). If the guest speaker was effectively used by the LORD at your church, with the speaker's permission, send a referral email or note with your personal endorsement to other pastors, conference planners, clergy conferences leaders, and/or denominational leaders.

**About the author:** Pastor Brian Kluth has been a guest speaker, keynote speaker, or seminar presenter for over 300 speaking events at churches, colleges, camps, retreats, conferences, associations, events, and groups. **More info:** [www.BrianKluth.org](http://www.BrianKluth.org)