

A FREE GUIDE FOR CHURCH LEADERS

How to Respond to Every Google Review of Your Church

Short, gracious replies that thank your members, reassure visitors, and handle hard reviews with wisdom.

Inside this guide

1. Decide who replies
2. How to reply on Google
3. Replying to kind reviews
4. Replying to critical reviews
5. Reporting reviews that break the rules



Your replies are read by more people than the reviewer

Every reply you write appears publicly under the review. The person who wrote it will see your reply, and so will every neighbor who reads your profile while deciding whether to visit.

Google lists responding to reviews among its own tips for improving your local ranking, and says replies show that you value people's feedback. For a church, a reply is also a small act of hospitality. A warm thank-you tells a visitor that real people are paying attention. A gracious answer to a critical review often says more about your church than a dozen five-star ratings.

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Colossians 4:6 (ESV)

Part of a seven-step series. This is Step 4 of the **Found on Google** series, seven short guides that help neighbors searching online find your church. Each step builds on the one before it. When you finish, continue with the Step 5 guide, **Add photos and videos**.

1 Decide who replies

- ☐ **Choose one person, plus a backup.** Often this is the pastor or church administrator. Replies appear under your church's name, not the person's own name.
- ☐ **Agree on a rhythm.** Check for new reviews at least once a week. Google encourages timely replies, and a quick response shows you care.
- ☐ **Agree on what needs the pastor.** Anything critical, personal, or sensitive should be seen by the pastor or elders before a reply goes out.

2

How to reply on Google

You must be a verified owner or manager of the profile to reply (see Step 1).

1. Open your Business Profile (search Google for **my business** while signed in).
2. Select [Read reviews](#).
3. Next to the review, select [Reply](#).
4. Type your reply and select [Reply](#).

To change a reply later, select [Edit](#) under it. You can also delete it.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- Google checks your reply against its content policies. This usually takes up to 10 minutes, but can take up to 30 days.
- The reviewer is notified of your reply, and may update their review afterward.

3

Replying to kind reviews

Google's advice fits churches well: keep it short, be personal, and avoid sending the same "thank you" to everyone.

- ☐ **Use their first name** and mention something specific from their review.
- ☐ **Keep it to two or three sentences.** Long replies often go unread.
- ☐ **Be conversational, not promotional.** Don't turn a thank-you into an advertisement.
- ☐ **Sign it**, for example "Pastor Tom" or "The Grace Presbyterian office."
- ☐ **Reply to star-only ratings too.** A one-line thank-you is enough.

EXAMPLE

Review: "We visited last month with our three kids and were welcomed so warmly. The preaching was faithful and clear."

Reply: Thank you, Sarah. It was a joy to have your family with us, and we're glad the children felt at home. We hope to see you again soon. Pastor Tom

4

Replying to critical reviews

A critical review stings, especially when it concerns a church you love. Before you reply, wait a day, pray, and if needed, ask an elder to read your draft. Then follow these principles:

- ☐ **Stay calm and courteous.** Never argue or attack. Visitors are reading.
- ☐ **Apologize when it's fitting.** If someone wasn't greeted or couldn't find the entrance, say you're sorry and mention what you're doing about it.
- ☐ **Be honest about what you can and can't change.** Google advises acknowledging mistakes without taking responsibility for things outside your control.
- ☐ **Take it offline.** Invite the person to call or email the church office so you can talk privately.

PROTECT PRIVACY, ALWAYS

Google warns never to share a reviewer's private information. For a church this goes further: **never mention membership status, pastoral counseling, church discipline, prayer requests, or anything shared in confidence**, even if the reviewer brings it up first. A simple invitation to talk privately is always the safest reply.

When a review criticizes your convictions

Sometimes a review objects to what your church believes, such as your view of Scripture, worship, or church leadership. You don't need to defend your theology in a Google reply, and you don't need to apologize for it. State plainly and kindly who you are, thank them for visiting, and leave the door open.

EXAMPLE

Review (2 stars): "Very old-fashioned. Hymns only and a 45-minute sermon."

Reply: Thank you for visiting, Mark. You're right that our worship is simple and centered on singing, prayer, and preaching through the Scriptures. We know it isn't what everyone is looking for, but we'd be glad to talk anytime if you have questions. Pastor Tom

Reporting reviews that break the rules

You can report a review for removal if it breaks Google's policies, for example spam, profanity, harassment, hate speech, or content that has nothing to do with your church. Google is clear that you **shouldn't report a review just because you disagree with it**, and it doesn't step into disagreements between a business and its visitors.

1. Open your Business Profile and select [Read reviews](#).
2. Next to the review, select [Report](#).
3. Choose the reason, such as "Spam" or "Profanity," and select [Send report](#).

Google's review usually takes several days. You can check the status in Google's **Reviews Management Tool**. If a review is abusive, it's still wise to leave a short, calm reply while you wait.

QUICK REFERENCE

Reply starters

SITUATION	A REPLY YOU CAN ADAPT
Kind review from a member	Thank you, [Name]. It's a gift to worship alongside you each week. [Sign-off]
First-time visitor	Thank you for joining us, [Name]. We're so glad you found us, and we'd love to see you again. [Sign-off]
Star rating, no text	Thank you for taking the time to rate us, [Name]. [Sign-off]
Practical complaint	Thank you for telling us, [Name], and we're sorry about [issue]. We've [what you changed]. Please call the office at any time. [Sign-off]
Personal or sensitive	Thank you for sharing, [Name]. We'd welcome the chance to talk with you personally. Please call the church office. [Sign-off]

THE FOUND ON GOOGLE SERIES

Seven simple steps to help neighbors find your church

1 Claim your church's Google Business Profile

2 Make your Profile Strength look good

3 Invite honest reviews

4 Respond to every review

THIS GUIDE

5 Add photos and videos

6 Post regular updates

7 Match your details across 40 directories

Next up: **Step 5, Add photos and videos.** Take one step at a time. Each one makes it a little easier for people searching nearby to find your church and walk through the door.

If you'd rather not carry this alone, or just want someone to look over what Google shows your neighbors, we'd be glad to talk. Five More Talents serves conservative, Bible-believing churches with websites, local search, and online outreach. You lead. We support.

Schedule a free 20-minute Outreach Discovery Call

go.fivemoretalents.com



Five More Talents · Helping churches reach more people without compromising their convictions · fivemoretalents.com