

Building a World-Class Parking Lot Team

A Practical Toolkit for Structuring & Growing a Small Parking Lot Team

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord.”

Colossians 3:23

1. Lay the Foundation First

Before a guest ever meets a greeter or an usher, they meet the parking lot. A confusing lot, an unsafe crossing, or a frustrated driver circling for a spot can undo a warm welcome before it even starts. A world-class parking lot team isn't built on a few guys with flashlights — it's built on structure: clear positions, clear signage, and a clear plan for when the lot fills up. Before you build a schedule, put these things in writing, even if it's one page.

Vision, Values & Guidelines

State plainly why the parking lot team exists: to make the first sixty seconds on the property feel safe, smooth, and expected. Core values should be visible from the road — safety, efficiency, and genuine warmth, even while directing traffic. Non-negotiables: high-visibility vests worn at all times while on the lot, no phone use while directing traffic, and a posture of patience even when guests are confused or in a hurry.

Developing a Leadership Team

Even a team of four needs a lot captain who owns the traffic plan for the day, and a second who can run the team if the captain is out. This small core should walk the property before every service to confirm the plan, check golf carts and signage, and decide who's covering which lot and entrance.

Discipleship applies here too — every experienced parking team member should be training a newer one on hand signals, golf cart operation, and how to handle a confused or frustrated driver. A team with no one in training is one absence away from chaos at the entrance.

Roles, However Few

Write down every function the parking team must cover: the command tent, main lot direction, overflow lot direction, golf cart shuttle service, and accessible/VIP parking. If three people are covering all five, write it down anyway — it shows exactly what you're recruiting toward.

Parking Lot Positions at a Glance

Position	What It Covers
Command Tent Lead	Runs the tent station at the entrance — the team's home base for radios, signage, supplies, and real-time decisions on overflow and golf cart routing.
Main Lot Director	Waves cars into open rows, keeps traffic moving safely, and prevents the bottlenecks that happen right at the entrance.
Overflow Lot Coordinator	Activates and directs the overflow lot once the main lot fills, and makes sure signage and a team member are in place before the first car is turned away.
Golf Cart Shuttle Driver	Runs guests from overflow parking to the front door, especially those with mobility needs, small children, or bad weather overhead.
Accessible / VIP Parking Attendant	Keeps designated accessible spots open and available, and personally assists any guest who needs it.

2. Practical Structure — The Small Things That Matter Most

- **Put the basics on one page** — A one-page sheet covering arrival time, vest and radio pickup, assigned lot, and who to ask when something goes wrong. New team members should never have to guess.
- **Build a tent command station, not just a meeting spot** — Set up a command tent at the entrance to the lot as the team's work station — radios, extra vests, cones, a lot map, a first aid kit, water, sunscreen or rain ponchos, and a clipboard for tracking overflow status all live here. Every team member should know the tent is home base if they need backup or supplies.
- **Vests are non-negotiable** — Every team member on the lot wears a high-visibility vest, no exceptions, rain or shine, day or night service. This is a safety requirement, not a uniform preference.

- **Treat golf cart drivers as a trained position, not a volunteer perk** — Anyone driving a golf cart must be approved ahead of time, briefed on the route, and trained on basic safety — speed limits on the lot, always yielding to pedestrians, and a pre-service check of brakes and charge.
- **Build a real overflow parking system** — Decide the exact trigger point ahead of time — for example, once the main lot is at 80% capacity — for opening the overflow lot, and make sure signage, cones, and a dedicated team member are ready before that point is reached, not after.
- **Create a communication rhythm** — Handheld radios or a group text between the tent and each lot position keeps the team ahead of traffic instead of reacting to it.
- **Build a backup for every position** — Cross-train every team member on at least one other position — main lot, overflow, golf cart — so one absence never leaves a gap during the arrival rush.
- **Review after, not just before** — A five-minute debrief after service — what caused backups, how fast overflow filled, any near-misses — turns a small team into a sharp one.
- **Say thank you publicly and often** — Even a small parking team should hear thank-you out loud. They're outside in the heat, cold, and rain for every single service, often before anyone else has arrived.

3. Game Day: Running a Small Parking Lot Team

This packet is built entirely around the parking lot team, but the format is meant to be copied — every ministry at this conference should build its own version of this section around the pressures of running their department lean.

Pre-Service

- **Set up the command station first** — Set up the tent, restock the radios and vests, and confirm the golf carts are charged, fueled, and safety-checked before the first car arrives.
- **Walk the property before anyone arrives** — Walk the lot to place cones, confirm signage is visible from the road, and check that accessible spots are clear.
- **Assign positions ahead of time** — With a small team, decide positions before the huddle, not during it — who's on the main lot, who's on overflow standby, who's driving the cart.
- **Huddle, pray, and be in position early** — A short huddle to pray and confirm the plan, with every team member in position and ready before the first wave of cars arrives.

In Service

- **Direct traffic for safety first, speed second** — Use clear, consistent hand signals and keep foot traffic and car traffic separated as much as possible — most lot incidents happen at the crossing points, not the parking rows.
- **Activate overflow on schedule, not on complaint** — The moment the main lot hits its trigger point, activate overflow immediately — don't wait for cars to already be circling and frustrated.
- **Run the golf cart shuttle proactively** — Keep the shuttle running on a steady loop rather than waiting for a full cart — guests parked in overflow are forming their first impression during that wait.
- **Know your escalation chain before you need it** — A car accident, a medical situation, or an unsafe driver on the lot should go straight to the lot captain at the tent, who loops in church leadership or emergency services immediately. No one should manage a serious incident alone.

Post-Service

- **Manage the exit, not just the entrance** — Direct exit traffic with the same attentiveness as arrival — a bad experience leaving is just as memorable as a bad one arriving.
- **Close well** — Break down the tent, return golf carts to charge, restock the kit, and debrief anything that needs to change before next service.

4. Top 5 Struggles Small Parking Lot Teams Face

1. Not Enough Coverage for the Arrival Surge

Most guests arrive in the same fifteen-minute window, and a small team can get overwhelmed fast right when the first impression matters most.

2. Overflow Confusion

Without a clear trigger point and signage plan, guests don't know overflow exists until they've already circled the main lot multiple times, frustrated before they've parked.

3. Safety Risks From Under-Preparation

Directing traffic without visibility gear, without trained hand signals, or without separating foot and car traffic puts both guests and volunteers at real risk.

4. Golf Cart Logistics Falling Through the Cracks

Carts that aren't charged, drivers who aren't trained, or no clear shuttle route turn a helpful convenience into a liability or an embarrassment.

5. Burnout From Being Outside Every Single Service

Parking teams are exposed to the weather more than almost any other ministry, and without rotation, even committed volunteers wear down.

5. Top 5 Solutions for Parking Lot Team Growth

1. Write It Down — Build a One-Page Manual

A single page covering vision, values, guidelines, and positions turns the team from personality-dependent to structure-dependent.

2. Build the Overflow System Before You Need It

Decide the trigger point, prep the signage and cones, and assign the coordinator role in advance so overflow activates smoothly instead of reactively.

3. Treat Vests, Radios, and Golf Carts as Standard Equipment, Not Extras

Budget for and maintain visibility gear, a working radio set, and properly serviced golf carts as core ministry equipment, not optional nice-to-haves.

4. Cross-Train Every Team Member on a Second Position

A team where everyone can flex between the main lot, overflow, and the golf cart never has a true single point of failure.

5. Make the Lot Part of the First-Impression Follow-Up

Note guests who needed the overflow shuttle or extra help, and make sure the greeter or guest services team follows up warmly. A guest's very first interaction with the church happens in the parking lot — treating it as part of the growth strategy, not just logistics, changes how seriously the team takes the role.

Closing Word

A guest's whole experience of a church can be won or lost before they ever park the car. A small parking lot team, run with real structure and real care, turns a stressful arrival into a smooth, welcoming one. The goal of structure isn't to make the lot feel like an event staff operation — it's to make sure every guest feels expected and safe from the very first moment they turn onto the property. Take this framework back to your house, adjust the language, keep the bones, and build a team that serves with excellence before anyone even reaches the door.

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”
