

Helping People Feel More than Welcome

2. More than welcome to join us in our life with Jesus

Genesis 18:1-10. Abraham receives three visitors

What would our hospitality be like if we want people to experience Jesus while they are with us?

How might that be different from what people experience at a “club”?

What **do** visitors experience when they enter our campus and attend any of our activities?

Handout: 6. *When the First Impression Forms a Lasting Relationship*

1. Work through the worksheet individually.
2. In your groups, total the scores for each item.
3. Which rated highest/lowest?
4. Discuss your findings.
5. Select one that you would most like to improve – and how you could go about it.

What comes first: belonging or believing?

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20 NIV)

“Follow me” was Jesus’ invitation. “I’m inviting you to come and do life together with me.”

What is on Jesus’ heart when he issues that invitation?

- For the disciples themselves
- For the mission of kingdom of God

How did three years of doing life with Jesus impact his first disciples?

When did they start believing? And how was that shaped over time?

How has Jesus’ invitation impacted and shaped you?

Not everyone accepted Jesus’ invite. He always gave them freedom to say “No!” After the feeding of the 5000, and Jesus talking about eating his body and drinking his blood, we read:

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:66-69 NIV)

Why is this important to remember in our Good Shepherd community?

When we make people feel more than welcome, the impression we hope and pray they will receive: “We’re inviting you to come and share in our common life together as we follow Jesus...so that by the Holy Spirit you will come to trust and follow him too!”

Handout: 16. A New Member's Story

It's hard to develop a sense of belonging if you don't know many people, or are not invited to share in the activities of the community... or into the lives of people of that community.

What are some ways we could help guests or "seekers" to feel a deeper sense of belonging?

Loving people by calling them by name

Can you think of some examples in the Bible when God calls people by name?

What difference does it make to you when others warmly greet and call you by name?

Our parents named us. While some people change their names, or adopt nicknames, most of us keep our names for a lifetime. You've been hearing your name since you were born. You never get sick of people greeting you warmly by name. Dale Carnegie: **A person's name is to him/her the sweetest and most important sound in the English language.**¹

Friends, it doesn't matter what you've been up to, or how messed up you are, **Jesus knows you by name**. He knows everything about you, and calls you by name to be HIS friend. By his cross, he has made that possible forever. In Jesus, the God who created you calls you by name, invites you to do life with him, and have life to the full! He is thrilled when people accept his invitation!

Greeting people by name is a great leaf to take out of Jesus' book! When your name is spoken by another with warmth and fondness, it puts wind in your sails, courage into your heart, and affirmation into your spirit.

10 Tips for remembering people's names

1. Give the other person your focussed attention. Instead of thinking of the next thing to say (often because we want to make a good impression), **listen carefully** to the other person's name.
2. If you didn't hear it properly, "Sorry, I didn't get your name clearly."
3. Repeat the person's name as soon as you have heard it. "That's Jack -is it?" Or: "Please to meet you Jack."
4. If it's appropriate (ie not for "Tom"), ask: "How is that spelt?" This helps visualise the name in your mind.
5. Repeat the name several times in your conversation with that person. This not only endears you to the other person, but helps you learn that person's name through your ear.
6. Write down the person's name as soon as practically possible - & recall several times over the next few days.
7. Family connections help us to remember names; eg couples (Jack and Jill Smith), whole families (Jack and Jill Smith, and their children: James, Jeremy, and Julie); or whole names (Jack Andrew Smith, Jill Agnes Smith).
8. Make it your goal to greet every person you've ever met by name. This goal will help you keep working at it.
9. If you forget a person's name, "Terribly sorry, but for the life of me I can't remember your name." Or: "Sorry, I'm having a senior moment. Can you please remind me of your name?"
10. Since God knows and remembers our names, we do well to reflect this value in all our relationships.

Maybe some of you remember the TV show: **Cheers**. It was a bar full of interesting characters. Does anyone recall the jingle? "Cheers - the place where everyone knows your name."

Maybe that could be our slogan: "Good Shepherd - the place where everyone knows your name!" Would that be amazing?!

¹ Source: Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, (Sydney-London; Angus & Robertson, 1950), p.78.

A New Member's Story

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Continuing to invite people to activities even after they become members is important. Here is the story of a woman who was asked to give devotions at a women's meeting.

"When I was asked to have this devotion, I thought, 'Me? I'm such a newcomer that I don't know how you've done it before. Why, I couldn't even tell you much about the group or the organization.' But, I realized that as a newcomer, I might have something to share with you—some of the observations that I've made during these months.

"I've realized that an announcement in the bulletin is a mixed blessing. It is a necessary reminder for those involved in the group, but one would have to be a real self-starter to come to a meeting without any other contact. And it could be scary enough that other newcomers would just stay home. 'Why,' we newcomers think, 'surely everyone there has known everyone else who is there for who-knows-how-long. . . .'

We're sensitive about being alone and we do feel excluded so easily. No one here would ever intend to make someone feel left out, but feeling 'out of it' can be very uncomfortable.

"So, invite us! Suggest that we ride together. Tell us what the organization offers. A lot can happen in that short ride. We know someone so much better if we have five minutes to visit uninterrupted, one-on-one. It's so much more satisfying than the hurried 'hello' in the hall. Besides, we'll know something about each other—where we live, whether one of us carries an umbrella even on sunny days—or if a short delay results in a very real tension.

"Talk about what's going on in your life. We won't think you are self-centered, but we will have a place to begin a conversation the next time we meet. We won't have to go back to the 'Hello. How are you?' line that doesn't take us very far.

"Please listen. Try to understand that when we talk, your listening tells us that we have value. . . . Some of us live alone, and we may have 'saved up' a lot to talk about. Besides, we may be figuring out what we're really feeling, and by saying it out loud we get another means for evaluation. What your reaction is does matter.

"Introduce us to other members. We want to feel a part of this group, and this is a good way to start that process.

"There's one more thing. If you bring us this time, don't presume that from here on in we are ready to be on our own. A

hearty greeting with no further follow-up can give a message we'd never intentionally give. Invite us a second time. A newcomer needs cultivation and nurture. If we think back, we can probably recall the person who gave us that needed help, and we think of them with appreciation.

"So, even though I can't tell you all the ins and outs of this organization, I know that it's made up of people who are God's children. It's a place where we gather to grow spiritually and where we unite in projects and activities that serve others. While we are doing those things, we are getting to know each other and that makes it possible for us to care for each other. We want to show concern and aid in sorrow, share joy in the good times and all the reactions to the other situations in life where a person could benefit if a Christian friend would walk beside [her]."²⁶

Discuss this story in a small group. Consider these questions:

1. Have you ever been in a similar situation as a "newcomer"? Tell your story. Identify what helped you and what didn't help.
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you invited a guest to an event or had the opportunity to observe a new person in a group? Tell your story. Identify what helped the new person and what didn't help.
3. What are the implications for your group?

When the First Impression Forms a Lasting Relationship

6

Before a worship service, visitors to our church will experience the following:

(Circle 1-5. 1 = will not likely happen; 5 = will almost certainly occur)

1. A courteous person meets them at an exterior door, regardless of location, and welcomes them with a smile, handshake, and genuine expression of interest.

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5

2. When the visitor returns a second time, members in the congregation call the visitor by name and are genuinely glad to see him or her.

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1 2 3 4 5

3. Appropriate information about the congregation is given to the visitor.

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1 2 3 4 5

4. Members of the congregation introduce themselves and make an effort to learn the name of the visitor. They wear readable name tags.

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1 2 3 4 5

5. The visitor is invited to wear a name tag.

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5

6. There are clear and accessible signs and/or building maps to help visitors know the location of various rooms, offices, rest rooms, etc.

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1 2 3 4 5

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5

8. The entry foyer is well-lighted, clean, cared for, roomy, and attractive.

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5

9. People make eye contact with the visitor. People say "hello."

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1 2 3 4 5

10. Someone is readily available to supply desired information, or, if unknown, to take down the question and the telephone number of the visitor so that the answer can be given as soon as possible.

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1 2 3 4 5

11. The rest rooms are convenient and accessible to people with physical disabilities.

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1 2 3 4 5

12. The building is completely accessible. People with physical disabilities are able to move throughout the building without encountering barriers.

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5

13. The visitor will note that the diversity of the people present reflects the community where the congregation is located. The percentage of singles, couples, children, youth, people of varying physical and mental abilities, and people of diverse racial/ethnic and age groups appears to correlate with the surrounding area.

SCORE |-----|
1 2 3 4 5