

# First Impact

## *The Two Minute Greeting Window*

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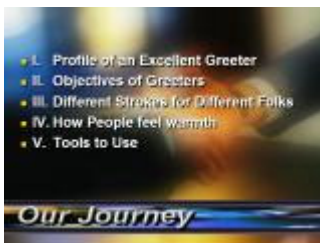
## Suggested Manuscript

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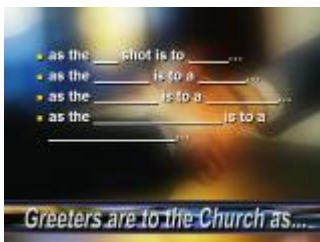
“Welcome to *First Impact*—a seminar designed to help you become an excellent greeter. What happens during the first two minutes of any encounter pretty well determines what kind of relationship will ensue. The first two minutes that a person comes to church is the best opportunity to make a good impression. And there are no second chances to make a first impression.

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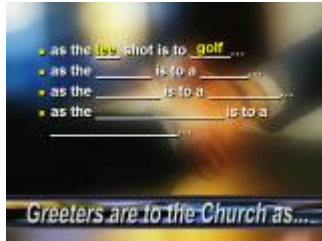


During the next few minutes together we are going to go on a journey. We are going to discover what it takes to make a good first impression. First we are going to give a profile of an excellent greeter. Next, we are going to see what the objectives are for greeters. Then we’re going to see why there needs to be different strokes for different folks. Then we’ll see what it takes for people to feel warmth. Finally I’ll share some tools to use in your greeting ministry.

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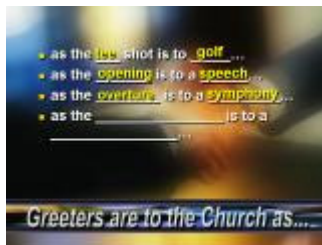
To help you follow take your handouts now and fill in the blanks as we go along. Let me use a few metaphors to show how important the first impression is.



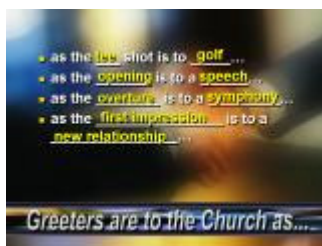
Greeters are to the church as the tee shot is to golf.



Greeters are to the church as the opening is to a speech.



Greeters are to the church as the overture is to a symphony.



Greeters are to the church as first impression is to a new relationship.



No Fear—Am I confident that I am a child of God?  
 Am I confident that I am loved? Am I able to  
 approach people I've never met before and be their  
 first contact with God?



Sanguine—Do I feel “charged” by being with people?



Sensitive—Am I perceptive to what others moods are? Can I read body language? Can I assess what type of person is coming through the doors and what their greeting need will be?



Dependable—When I commit to a responsibility do I follow through? Do I arrive at my scheduled time and stay for the entire time I am scheduled to? If an emergency comes up and I will not be able to cover my scheduled time, do I call a replacement or another greeter to cover for me?



Attractive—Do I smell sweet but not so strong that people can smell my perfume from the parking lot? Do I look well-groomed, clean, and sharp—not gaudy?



Attitude—Is being an ambassador for Jesus important to me? Do I share the vision of my church and support it? Am I excited about being a part of this most important ministry?



Selfless—Am I more concerned about others than I am about how I look, or if there’s spinach between my teeth? Am I more interested in listening than talking? Am I focusing on what’s going on in others’ life rather than my own?



Knowledgeable—Do I know where all the classes meet? Do I know where the resources are?



Positive—Am I “in love” with my church even though it’s full of sinners in need of a Savior?



Gracious—Do I exude acceptance, kindness, and courtesy?



Now let’s turn our attention to what the objectives are for the greeter. What role do you play? What are you trying to do? And how do you know when you have succeeded? The first objective is to meet people’s needs.



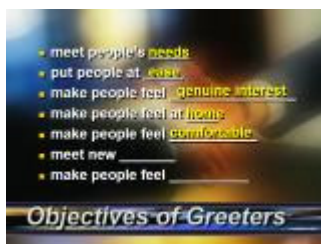
Next, when people come to a strange new place they are apprehensive. Your job as a greeter is to put people at ease.



Make people feel that you really care for them. Show genuine interest in them.



To help them feel less apprehensive about the new surroundings try to make people feel at home.



To accomplish that, try to make people feel comfortable.

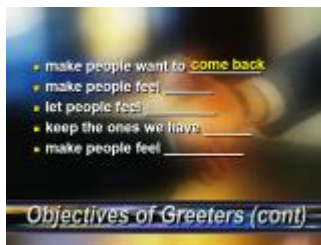


Some people are craving relationships so one of your jobs as a greeter is to help them meet new friends.

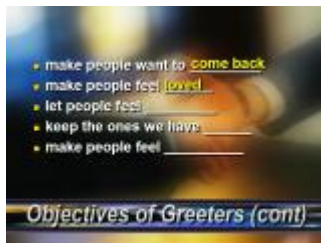




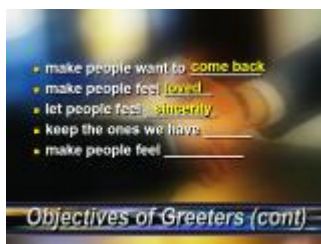
Another, one of the objectives of the greeters is to make people feel needed.



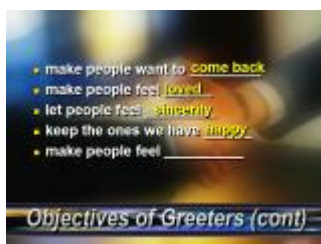
And of course you want to make people want to come back.



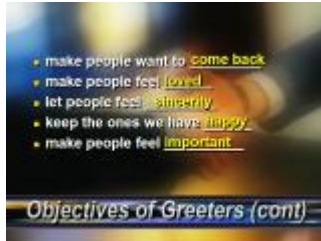
And at some deep level you need to help people feel loved.



But it has to be genuine. Visitors especially are turned off by phonies. Let people feel sincerity.



And for those who come regularly make them feel happy.



And last but not least, your objective as a greeter is to make people feel important—because they are important.



Now the tricky part about reaching all those objectives is that it may take a different style of greeting depending upon who you are greeting. What works for one, may be a turn off to another. That's why greeters need to be prepared to greet a diversity of visitors.



Of course there are the long time Adventist members. They aren't too hard to spot. They usually carry a Bible under their arms or even a Sabbath School Quarterly. They know the Adventist lingo and may greet you with inside language such as 'Happy Sabbath.' They need a warm friendly greeting and will usually feel comfortable when you speak to them with Adventist lingo.



New Adventist members might be dressed a little more casually than the long-timers, may have more jewelry, and may appear more exuberant than any other group. These people need to develop friendships and relationships. New members need a warm welcome (but may not be comfortable with hugs yet). You should make sure they are plugged into a group and introduced to other people. The more significant relationships they find in the church the greater the chance that they will keep coming.

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The next group of people are the unchurched. They may not establish eye contact with you, may not carry a Bible, may be dressed casually, have a tobacco scent, may appear more anxious and in a big hurry because they are afraid to commit to any new friendship. They may want to remain anonymous, so don't ask too many questions, but be ready to answer questions. Don't make them feel obligated to sign the visitor's registry. If they have a good experience they'll come back again and eventually they will feel comfortable enough to share personal information.



Another important group are former Adventists. They may act much like a visitor but be dressed like a long-time Adventist. They need a warm welcome, but they don't need an interrogation about where they've been for the last 10 years.



If you live in a tourist area you may get a lot of out-of-town Adventist visitors. They may look unfamiliar to you but they are dressed up, carrying a Bible and maybe even a Sabbath School quarterly. They crave a warm welcome, and aren't bashful about telling where they are from. They need to know where the classes are, what time the services are and where the restrooms are. They might even like to sign a guest book if you have one.





The final category is Local visitors. They are Adventists visiting from a neighboring Adventist congregation. They may resemble out-of-town Adventist visitors. They desire a warm welcome. They may be checking your church out. They deserve friendliness and an attitude of inclusiveness such as ‘You’re always welcome here.’

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People also come in different ages. Each age may desire a slightly different greeting. Great greeters need to be flexible.

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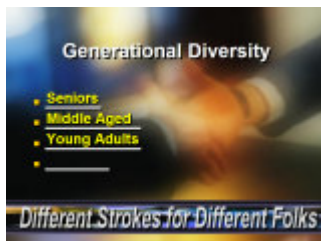
Seniors usually love a warm welcome. They aren’t in a rush and might enjoy chatting for a few moments. Some seniors may need assistance getting to where they are going.

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The middle-aged people look for information. They may want to know what all their class options are. They like to make their own decisions.

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The next generation is the young adults, from 21-36 years of age. They want to find other young adults. They are especially wary of hypocrisy. Authenticity is important. Some may come late and just hang out in the halls.



Finally there are the children. They love to be greeted and their parents love for their children to be greeted and “made over”. They will want to find their age appropriate classes as soon as possible. If they are visiting for the first time they may be shy about attending a new Sabbath School. You may wish to find an outgoing child from their age group who can take them into their Sabbath School and help them feel at home.



The population of the world is getting more fluid and you may have all nationalities show up in your church. Each culture may have a slightly different expectation on how they are to be greeted. Spend as much time as you can with different cultures until you begin to catch on.



These are people whose ancestors came from Europe. They may be somewhat free about expressing themselves. Some are outgoing. Try giving them a handshake or a hug.



These are people whose ancestors came from Africa. Most will enjoy a warm greeting, and are not bashful about recognition. Try giving them a handshake or a hug. Feel free to be interested in them and try inviting them to sign the registry.



Here's a chance to try out your Spanish: "Buenos dias! Como usted?" If they don't speak English you may wish to find an interpreter to help you with the welcome.



Many Asians are less physically demonstrative than Anglos, Blacks, and Hispanics, nevertheless they appreciate a warm verbal welcome.



These are just a few of the many threads in the fabric of humanity. Spend time getting to know each one and learn the special greeting customs. You'll be richer because of it.



One thing almost everybody appreciates is having someone welcome them by name. When you remember the name of someone you've recently met you make that person feel special and all important. You are helping to create an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness. This will lead to increased receptivity and openness to the good news of Jesus Christ!

Unfortunately not all greeters are gifted with name recollection. Here are a few tips to help cement those names into your brain. You can remember them with these three initials: IRA.



'I' stands for Impression. Make sure you hear the name. Ask the person to repeat his name and even spell it if you have trouble getting it the first time. Get a clear, detailed impression of the person. Pay attention to the person's physical features and mannerisms that may be distinctive.

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'R' stands for review. Try to use a person's name three times through the process of introduction, conversation, and termination.

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'A' stands for association. Try associating the name with something you can remember. Is the name a notable name—one that's famous like Reagan, Carter, or Kennedy, or is the same name as someone you know. You may be able to associate the person's appearance with his name: "Mrs. White" might have "white hair". Does the person's name imply a certain type of employment, such as "Taylor" or "Plummer".

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Some estimate that up to 93% of what we communicate is done by some means other than the words we use. We greet people non-verbally with: a handshake, our posture, our smile, the expression in our eyes, facial expressions, our appearance, our voice tone, our hair style, our clothes, how close we stand, how we touch, how we listen, our confidence or lack of it, our breathing, the way we move, the way we stand.

How can we non-verbally communicate to someone that we care and are welcoming? S-O-F-T-E-N communicates love and affirmation to a person.



‘S’ is easy. It stands for smile.



‘O’ stands for open posture. When your arms and legs are uncrossed and when you face others directly it gives them a sense that you are welcoming them.



‘F’ stands for forward lean. This means leaning forward slightly while the other person is talking. This indicates your interest and attention.



‘T’ stands for touch. The primary way of touching will be the handshake. A firm handshake usually indicates warmth. For even greater warmth or comforting someone in crisis, put your left hand on top of the right hand while giving the handshake.

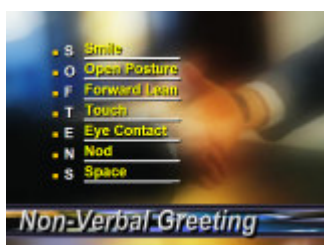


‘E’ stands for eye contact. This may be the strongest of all non-verbal gestures. It means “I’m more interested in you right now than anything else.” But don’t overdue it. A fixed stare can make a person feel very uncomfortable.





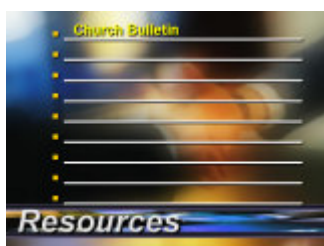
'N' stands for nod. An occasional nod of the head indicates that I'm listening to you and understand what you're saying.



'S' stands for space. Everyone carries a "bubble" of space around them. Usually this space extends 3-5 feet in front for strangers and 1 ½ to 3 feet for friends. Respect that space!



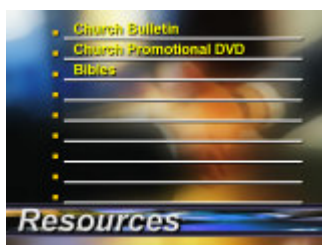
Being an excellent greeter means that you know where to find great resources to help you greet people. You may not have all of these at your church and you may have some that aren't mentioned.



The Church bulletin should be offered to everyone who enters the church.



An orientation video introducing the church, pastors, staff, and interviews with some positive members is a great marketing tool to give visitors, especially the unchurched. In this high tech world its possible to inexpensively make up DVD or video get acquainted tapes for visitors to your church. Have your pastor contact Adventist Communication Network about the possibility of putting one together for your church.



American Bible Society carries affordable Bibles in various translations that are great to have on hand to give to those who need them.



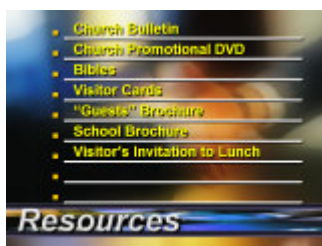
A visitor may want to communicate with the pastor with some special needs. If someone mentions that they're new in the area, and are open to a pastoral visit, use these cards and turn in the filled out cards to your greeter leader or pastor.



All visitors and first-timers should get these. They describe the mission of the church, a map, and give helpful information such as classes, locations, children's programs. If you don't have one made up already put it on your greeting team agenda ASAP.



Occasionally someone will ask if there are any Adventist schools in the area. Give them a brochure and advise them to contact the school office during the week.



If there is a potluck or a visitors dinner planned you may ask the guest if they have plans for lunch and then give them a written invitation to the luncheon.

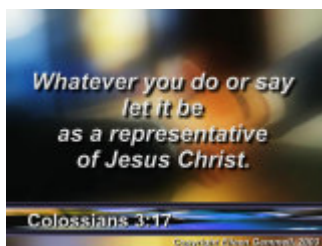


Have brochures handy describing each Sabbath School class or small group. If a guest is interested in attending a Sabbath School class you can direct the visitor to one that meets his/her need.



You should know where and how your guests can get a video or audio copy of the service in case you're asked.

Now obviously you're not going to give all those resources to everyone who walks in the door. The key is to know what is available and give the appropriate resource in order to meet the needs of those who attend.



As we close today I think this one text summarizes it all: Whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of Jesus Christ. You are standing not for yourself, or even the church, but even more important than that, you are standing representing Jesus Christ. May you always honor His name.

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