

The Ministry of Greeting

(Part 2)

The scene is repeated across the country every Sunday morning. It is about 10 minutes before the worship service is to start. In the church foyer, we notice an individual that has not been seen here at the church before. He is standing there nervously looking around, not sure of what to do next. A stern looking gentleman in coat and tie thrusts a bulletin into his hand and mutters, "Good morning", and then moves on to hand out more bulletins to others. Finally, the stranger walks into a door to the sanctuary and slips into a seat by himself. Several of the congregation sense that something is different. There is a visitor among us! But there is a strong possibility that he will not return and bother us in our church family worship service again.

Actually, this stranger-visitor is a gift and opportunity from God! The Lord may have been working in his life and drawn him to visit our church. But so often in our uneasiness and lack of preparation, we will simply let him slip away. It does not have to be this way.

The "Ministry of Greeting" is one way that churches are preparing to welcome, befriend, assimilate, and win to Christ these "guests" who visit. Dynamic, growing churches are moving away from the traditional usher ministry and utilizing a "Greeter" approach. The February ChristWay Ministries newsletter features a ministry methods article contrasting the ministry of greeters vs ushers. That article partially defines what a greeter does. The following is a list of ways greeters can be mobilized to welcome, befriend, and bring visitors back.

1. Pray for three things:

- That God will send us visitors.
(And we will become an answer to that prayer by inviting new people ourselves.)
- That God will raise up people to be trained and serve as greeters.
- That God will impress all of our church members with the realization that visitors are actually gifts from God and should be treated as special "Guests" whom we feel honored to have in our presence.

2. Greeters should be chosen because they possess or want to have:

- A love for people of all types and culture.
- A commitment to seeing God's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) operational in their life and church.
- The ability to happily meet new people, initiate conversations.
- The willingness to dress in a manner that is compatible with the culture of the community and guests who come.

3. Greeters need to be able to graciously pull themselves away from conversations with regular church attendee friends when they observe a guest/visitor, and move quickly to the new person's side and start a conversation.

4. Greeters approach new people with an obvious, warm attitude of, "Wow, I am really glad you came today! How can I serve you?"

5. Greeter opportunities come in the form of helping young mothers who are struggling with young children in the parking lot, providing an umbrella in inclement weather, introducing the guest to others who may escort them to the nursery/pre-school, restrooms, coat racks, and the "Guest Center" for a welcome packet, as well as providing the service bulletin or assisting with someone to sit with them.

6. While enjoying their conversations with church guests, greeters make mental notes of what they are learning about this person or family. Later, these observations are written down and passed along to the church office or those responsible for follow-up with the guest. If the church is not using response card in the worship service or does not have a "Welcome Center", the greeter may need to give the guest a welcome packet and ask them to fill out an information card that comes with it.

What has been written in this "Ministry Methods" monograph may seem like a pretty difficult task for some. But actually, the assumptions are quite simple and rooted in Scripture. A Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (all are if they are saved!) has access to the "Fruit of the Spirit". (Galatians 5:22-23) The characteristics found in this list of "fruit" are exactly what is needed by an effective "greeter"! If you possess a spiritual gift of mercy, ministering, or helps, God may have already wired you to be an effective greeter for His Glory.

ChristWay Ministries is eager to assist churches who desire to seek, welcome, assimilate, and win church visitors to Christ. Please feel free to download and copy this article (along with part one in February's newsletter) and use in training in your church.

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