

## Phrases That Welcome - And Repel - First Time Guests

Every new guest is a sign that you are doing something right, and an opportunity to change a life.

Each new guest represents an opportunity to influence their life toward Jesus, and by His power, they can be transformed. But they need to come back for greater opportunity to impact their life.

The return rate of your guests is more important than the actual number of your guests. Of course, it's always better to have more guests, but let me explain what I mean.

For example, it's better to have 25 guests a week with 15 returning, than 50 guests a week with 10 returning. We often get more excited about the more significant numbers, but guest engagement will always beat out guest attraction over the long haul.

The truth is that it's easier to attract a guest than to engage a guest. It's similar to the mall nearest your house. They can attract shoppers during the holidays, but it doesn't mean the shoppers will buy something or come back.

Every time someone in your church invites a guest, they are taking a risk that the staff, volunteers and regular attenders will treat each one with honor, kindness, hospitality, and respect. The better your teams are trained and prepared, the lower the risk.

It's always *disappointing* when you invite someone, and they won't come, but it's *devastating* when someone does come, but because of their experience won't come back.

### 6 Worst Phrases:

These are the most common things ushers, greeters, staff and key leaders say that repel rather than engage your church guests.

#### 1) "You must be a first-time guest."

This infers that something about them doesn't fit. For example, perhaps they are dressed up, and your church is casual. Or they arrive halfway through the service because they didn't know what time it started. Instead, say something like "I'm so glad you are here!"

#### 2) "Your kid is crying."

Yikes, really?! But it's true, this is said! First-time guests are reluctant to leave their child in the nursery but will try it. Don't reward that risk with a slam. Instead, say something like: "Your child is having a tough time without you, everything is fine, and we can handle it, but thought you might like to know if you want to come check on him."

### 3) “I don’t know.”

This often translates in your guest’s mind and heart as, “I don’t care.” If you don’t know the answer, that’s okay, but instead say something like: “Let me find the answer for you.”

### 4) “We’ll need you help in the nursery next week.”

Yup, I’ve seen it happen! And literally heard, “Okay, your first week is ‘on us’ but if you return you have to help.” Instead try, “We are so happy to serve you and your family and hope to see you next week!”

### 5) “You look tired.”

Please avoid and refrain from any subjective comments about a guest’s demeanor or appearance even if your intent is kindness or compassion. This kind of commentary infers that you are evaluating them. Instead, say a simple “Good morning!” which is always appropriate.

### 6) “That seat is saved.”

That’s close to “We don’t really want you here.” Instead, offer to give up your seat, or tap a committed volunteer on the shoulder who you know would love to give up their seat for a guest.

It is said that “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.” There is a lot of truth in that, but I don’t fully agree with that statement. I think it’s what you say AND how you say it.

Two of the things that can make or break your church on a Sunday morning are:

- Your choice of words. (Action)
- Your heart behind those words. (Attitude)

## 6 Best Phrases:

### 1) “May I help you?”

Your guest may be fumbling with an umbrella or negotiating a stroller through the front door, or a family is arriving with several kids. Offering to help is a fantastic way to engage a new guest.

### 2) “I’ll walk with you.”

Never point, always offer to go with the person. It may only be a 30-second walk, but in that 30 seconds, you have an amazing opportunity to connect with that person.

### 3) “My name is Dan, what’s yours?”

Offer your name and ask for theirs. A person’s name is deeply personal to them. If you make

an effort to ask for their name, it shows you value and care about them as a person.

#### **4) “Can I get you a cup of coffee?”**

Don't worry about whether or not they drink coffee, or might turn down your offer. The gesture matters. The important thing is that if they say yes, you are genuinely happy to get them a cup and make it just like they like it! Serving someone is a powerful form of engagement.

#### **5) “Let me introduce you to my friend ‘David.’”**

Helping a guest meet a person or two is a fantastic way to increase engagement. Don't be pushy, keep it real and natural. But as the opportunities arise, make the introduction. Keep it short and simple.

#### **6) “Is there anything I can do for you?”**

This might sound like a summary or catch-all phrase, but it's an important way to establish early on that you want them to enjoy the best experience possible and that you will go out of your way to be helpful; this is endearing and engaging.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)

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Learn more about the power of your church's first impression - [connect with Guest Experience Navigator Bob Adams.](#)

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Want to learn how to create an EXCEPTIONAL Guest Experience at your church? [Check out Auxano's Guest Experience Boot Camp in Cincinnati, OH on August 7-8.](#)

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