

First Impressions Training Series - Session 1 Workbook

***IBSA* | Leaders**

How to Use This Workbook

Welcome to the *First Impressions Training Series – Session 1 Workbook*. This resource was designed to transform the way your ministry team thinks about hospitality—not as a task, but as a form of **discipleship**.

Whether you're a church leader, hospitality coordinator, or volunteer, this workbook will equip you to create meaningful first moments that reflect the heart of Jesus.

Who It's For:

- Guest services teams (greeters, parking, ushers, hospitality)
- Pastors and ministry leaders training volunteer teams
- Small groups or leadership development cohorts
- Churches of any size, from rural to urban, traditional to modern

How to Use It:

1. Start With a Team Session

- Use the **Lesson Summary** and **Scriptures** to anchor the “why.”
- Read aloud or watch the session video before diving in.
- Discuss as a group using the **Discussion Questions**.

2. Reflect Individually

- Encourage volunteers to complete the **Reflection Prompts** during personal time or before serving.
- Use the **Final Reflection** section after one month of implementation.

3. Train With Role-Play

- Run team meetings using the **Scenarios** and **Coaching Drills**.
- Invite new and seasoned volunteers to practice together.

4. Evaluate Your Environment

- Walk through your campus using the **First Impressions Audit Checklist**.
- Map out the **7-Minute Guest Journey** to identify friction points.

5. Apply What You Learn

- Use the **Challenge & Application** page to pick 1 actionable change per month.
- Revisit the **Progress Tracker** quarterly to assess growth.

6. Develop Long-Term Culture

- Use the **Team Covenant Drafting** section to write your shared hospitality values.

Onboard new volunteers using the **Volunteer Framework** and **Bonus Worksheets**.

Pro Tip for Leaders:

Don't try to "fix everything" at once. Focus on **small, relational wins** that create momentum. Celebrate stories. Keep the vision in front of your team. Repetition builds culture.

Goal:

By the end of this session, your team will not only greet guests—they'll disciple them in the first seven minutes.

1. Introduction: Why First Impressions Matter

First impressions are not fluff—they are formation. A visitor's first few minutes on your campus often shape whether they'll come back, whether they'll trust, and ultimately whether they'll encounter Jesus in community.

People are not only evaluating your friendliness—they're discerning your **intentionality**. Every moment matters: the parking lot, the eye contact, the clarity of signage, and the warmth of your welcome.

A powerful first impression creates three things:

- A sense of **welcome**: "You belong here."
- A sense of **safety**: "Your questions, kids, and background matter."
- A sense of **intentionality**: "We planned for your arrival."

Jesus modeled this when He saw Matthew at the tax booth—not as a project but as a person. He offered a simple invitation that changed a life: "Follow me."

Your guest experience ministry has the same opportunity to extend a clear, warm, and Christlike invitation to relationship and community—often without a word from the stage.

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2. Lesson Summary: The Power of Presence

Jesus didn't wait for people to clean up before welcoming them. He led with relationship. Your team can do the same by:

Leading with eye contact and warmth

Offering real guidance, not just friendly words

Understanding the **7-Minute Rule**—the time it takes for someone to decide if they'll return

Creating presence is about being fully available—not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. It's about shifting from transactional greetings to transformational moments.

You're not just greeting people. You're helping them open their heart to what God may do that day.

3. Reflection Prompts

1. When have you felt out of place in a new space?
2. How do you recognize when someone feels invisible?
3. What would Jesus do if He were on your greeter team?
4. Who is the "Jessica" in your congregation today?
5. What might the Holy Spirit be doing in the first seven minutes?

4. Discussion Questions for Teams

- 01 What does our parking lot, signage, or lobby setup communicate to someone who has never been here before?**

- 02 In what ways does our current hospitality model reflect (or miss) Jesus' example in Matthew 9:9?**

- 03 How are we equipping greeters and volunteers to think theologically—not just practically—about welcome?**

- 04 What story do we want guests to tell about their first visit?**

- 05 What specific areas on campus do we need to rethink through the lens of hospitality?**

- 06 How can we make our environment not just friendly, but inviting and safe for everyone?**

- 07 What small step can each of us take this week to increase presence and reduce confusion for guests?**

5. Real-World Scenarios

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Scenario 1: Jessica – The Overwhelmed Parent

Jessica is a single mom visiting your church for the first time. She's juggling a diaper bag, stroller, and a 5-year-old. She's nervous about judgment, unsure where to go, and visibly flustered.

What should happen?

- A smiling volunteer approaches with, "We're so glad you're here—can I help you get your kids checked in?"
- They walk with her (not just point) to the right place.
- They offer to help carry or hold something if appropriate.

Debrief:

- What might Jessica be thinking in that moment?
- What assumptions might she be carrying?
- How might that moment affect her decision to come back?

Scenario 2: Andre – The Unsure Teen

Andre walks in alone with earbuds and a hoodie. He avoids eye contact and seems unsure whether to engage.

What should happen?

- A team member acknowledges him without being intrusive: “Hey man, we’re really glad you came. Anything I can help you find?”
- Avoid being overly enthusiastic—respect his space but make him feel seen.

Debrief:

- How do we balance respect for space with intentional engagement?
- How do we train our team to notice people like Andre?

Scenario 3: The Browns – Retired and Relocating

Married couple, recently moved from out of state. They're dressed nicely but unfamiliar with your church layout.

What should happen?

- A host team member walks up and introduces themselves warmly: “Welcome to [Church Name]—are you visiting today?”
- Provide a quick overview of where things are: restrooms, worship center, coffee area.

Debrief:

- How can we build a connection that lasts beyond a single Sunday?
- What can we do to invite them into next steps (small group, lunch invite, etc.)?

6. Group Role-Play & Coaching Drills

Use the following role-play exercises during team training to help volunteers prepare for real-world moments. These drills are designed to strengthen empathy, presence, and response under pressure.

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Role-Play Instructions:

1

Break into small groups of 2–4 people.

2

Assign one person as the “guest” and one as the “greeter.”

3

Choose a scenario and act it out for 2–3 minutes.

After each round, reflect as a group using the debrief questions.

Drill 1: Lost and Late

Scenario: A visitor walks in 5 minutes late, flustered and unsure where to go. Their child needs to be checked in, but they are already embarrassed about being late.

Greeter's Goal: Offer calm direction, minimize shame, and offer to walk with them to check-in.

Debrief Questions:

- What did the guest feel in this moment?
- What helped them feel seen and safe?



Drill 2: New and Alone

Scenario: A first-time adult guest enters the building alone, quietly looking around the lobby.

Greeter's Goal: Start with a simple welcome and offer gentle next steps (tour, seat, or coffee).

Debrief Questions:

- Did your greeting feel natural or scripted?
- How did you read the guest's body language?



Drill 3: Multilingual Barrier

Scenario: A guest approaches who speaks limited English and is confused about kids' check-in.

Greeter's Goal: Use welcoming tone, hand gestures, signage, and team assistance to create clarity.

Debrief Questions:

- What non-verbal cues worked well?
- How did you avoid making the guest feel overwhelmed?



Drill 4: The Reserved Teen

Scenario: A teen walks in ahead of their parents and is clearly unsure of where to go.

Greeter's Goal: Make a quick, friendly connection without drawing too much attention.

Debrief Questions:

- Did you respect the guest's independence while still being welcoming?
- What cues helped you read their comfort level?



Coaching Tips for Leaders:

- Celebrate effort, not just outcome.
- Remind teams that mistakes in practice lead to confidence in real life.
- Encourage a culture of feedback: kind, specific, and actionable.

7. Key Scriptures

Use these scriptures to ground your team in the biblical heart of hospitality and relational discipleship:

Matthew 9:9“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and He said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed Him.”

Key Insight: Jesus offered relationship before reputation. His first words were an invitation.

Romans 15:7“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Key Insight: Our hospitality reflects God's nature. It's not just kindness—it's theology in action.

Hebrews 13:2“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Key Insight: Every guest could carry eternal significance. We must approach our role with reverence.

John 13:35“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Key Insight: Our love and warmth may be someone's first encounter with the Church—and with Jesus.

8. Glossary of Key Concepts

Use this glossary as a quick reference for the core ideas presented in this session. These terms are foundational to shaping a healthy, intentional first impressions ministry.

Relational Access Creating space for people to feel seen and known before they ever hear a sermon. It's the principle of leading with relationship, not rules.

7-Minute Rule Research shows that guests decide whether or not they'll return within the first seven minutes of arriving. This window matters more than any message from the stage.

Intentional Hospitality Hospitality that goes beyond politeness—it's active, Spirit-led, and mission-focused. It means preparing for people before they arrive and welcoming them as Jesus would.

Discipleship Pipeline The journey someone takes from being a stranger to becoming a fully engaged disciple. First impressions are the first step in that journey.

Guest Experience Funnel A visual model that helps teams think through each step a guest takes—from driveway to doorway to discipleship. Each stage requires intentionality.

Presence Over Performance The value of authenticity and attention in the moment. People don't need perfect—they need present.

Ministry of Welcome Viewing the role of greeters, hosts, and ushers not as logistical helpers, but as spiritual first responders who model the gospel in action.

9. Progress Tracker

Use this tool to set clear goals, delegate responsibilities, and measure the growth of your first impressions ministry.

Task	Assigned To	Due Date	Complete
Campus walkthrough with guest lens			<input type="checkbox"/>
Signage audit and improvement plan			<input type="checkbox"/>
Greeter script practice session held			<input type="checkbox"/>
Create/update welcome area signage			<input type="checkbox"/>
Launch guest follow-up workflow			<input type="checkbox"/>
Gather 3 first-time guest feedback forms			<input type="checkbox"/>
Run a role-play training for new volunteers			<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate parking team's guest interaction			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule monthly hospitality team huddle			<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Final Reflection

Use these prompts for journaling or team discussion after completing this session. They help capture growth, conviction, and next steps.

1. What surprised you the most about the role of first impressions in ministry?
2. How has your mindset shifted from “greeting” to “discipling”?
3. What part of your campus or team dynamic most needs improvement?
4. What would it look like for your team to lead with presence every week?
5. What story do you want a first-time guest to tell after visiting your church?
6. What personal next step will you take this week to embody intentional hospitality?

11. Challenge & Application

Put your learning into action. Choose at least one of these tangible challenges this month and report back to your team.

This Month

- ✍️ Rewrite or refresh your greeter training outline.
- 👉 Pair a new volunteer with a seasoned one for shadowing.
- 🧠 Host a 20-minute vision refresh for your hospitality team.

This Week

- 🚶 Take a slow walk through your church as if you're a first-time guest.
- 🗣️ Practice three new welcome phrases with your team.
- 👁️ Observe your signage and body language during guest interactions.

Bonus Challenge

Choose one guest who visited recently and personally follow up with a handwritten note, coffee invite, or phone call.

Remember: Your team's job isn't to impress—it's to invite, include, and disciple.

12. First Impressions Audit Checklist

Conduct this audit by walking through your entire guest experience pathway—from the parking lot to the worship center. Use it to identify opportunities for clarity, connection, and care.

Instructions:

- Do this during a real Sunday service or team walkthrough.
- Use a fresh perspective—invite someone who is not on your regular team.
- Rate each area on clarity (Can I find it easily?) and warmth (Do I feel seen and welcome?).

Area	Clear? (Y/N)	Warm? (Y/N)	Notes/Improvements
Parking lot flow			
Greeters visible and active			
Entry doors open or obvious			
Kids check-in clearly marked			
Lobby signage helpful			
Coffee/refreshment area			
Restroom signage visible			
Worship space entrance clear			
Guest seating clearly marked			
Smiles and eye contact from team			
Post-service follow-up visible			

13. Volunteer Onboarding Framework

Use this framework to welcome, equip, and activate new volunteers with purpose and clarity. A great first impression starts with a great first experience for your team members.

- Step 1: Interest & Invitation
Share your vision for hospitality during announcements, emails, or personal invites.
Use a simple interest form (online or paper).
- Step 2: Orientation Session
Host a 30-minute vision and values walkthrough.
Cover the 7-Minute Rule, guest experience funnel, and team expectations.
- Step 3: Shadowing Experience
Assign new volunteers to serve alongside an experienced team member for 1–2 Sundays.
Encourage them to observe and ask questions.
- Step 4: First Serve
Give them an official team role and let them lead with support nearby.
Use encouraging feedback during and after their serve.
- Step 5: Feedback & Coaching
Meet one-on-one or in small groups to share what's working and what could improve.
Offer encouragement and new responsibilities as they grow.
- Step 6: Integration & Celebration
Add them to regular team communication (group chats, emails, huddles).
Celebrate their first month and introduce them publicly if appropriate.

Tip: First-time volunteers are forming their own first impression of your team—make it a culture of belonging, not burnout.

14. 7-Minute Journey Map Template

This tool helps you visualize and evaluate a guest's experience during the critical first seven minutes. Use it to identify gaps, pain points, or missed opportunities.

Instructions:

- Walk the path of a first-time guest—from the street to their seat.
- Note every interaction, sign, or moment where hospitality is (or isn't) happening.

Journey Steps:

1. **Arrival at campus/parking lot** – What greets them first? People? Signage? Confusion?
2. **Walk from parking to entrance** – Are there friendly faces? Clear guidance?
3. **Entry into building** – Is there someone to say hello? Is the environment warm?
4. **Navigating the lobby/check-in** – Can they find the kids check-in? Restrooms? Worship space?
5. **Being greeted or guided** – Are volunteers actively welcoming and helping?
6. **Finding a seat or next step** – Do they feel lost or included?

Map It:

Step	What Happens?	Guest Emotion	What Could Be Better?
1. Arrival			
2. Parking to entrance			
3. Enter building			
4. Find check-in/lobby			
5. Welcoming moment			
6. Finding a seat			

Encourage your team to walk this path regularly and make the guest journey better every week.

15. Team Coaching Guide

Strong hospitality culture is sustained through intentional coaching. Use this guide to equip your leaders to encourage, correct, and empower their teams.

Weekly Coaching Rhythms

Hold a 5–10 minute huddle before service begins.
Focus on one vision point or scripture (e.g., "Today, let's practice noticing the unnoticed").
Close each huddle with a short prayer or encouragement.

In-the-Moment Feedback

Use the "see it, say it" method: affirm what you see that's great, and kindly correct what needs redirecting.
Examples:
"I loved how you walked with that guest instead of pointing. That really mattered."
"Let's try using names when possible—it builds connection quickly."

Monthly Team Development

Schedule 30-minute training or review sessions.
Use real guest stories (good or challenging) as learning opportunities.
Highlight a volunteer of the month and celebrate culture wins.

Empower Your Captains/Leads

- ✓ Give team leads ownership of their zone (parking, welcome desk, auditorium).
- ✓ Encourage them to coach newer volunteers and lead huddles.

Culture Check-Ins

- ✓ Are we welcoming people like Jesus would?
- ✓ Are we making this about people or process?
- ✓ Are we noticing first-time guests and long-time members equally?

Coaching Mindset

- ✓ Lead with humility and encouragement.
- ✓ Remember: The way you coach your team becomes the way they treat your guests.

16. Mini Case Studies (Small, Large, Diverse Churches)

These real-world examples show how different churches approach first impressions in unique ways—based on size, location, and community makeup.

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Case Study A: Small Church – Grace Fellowship (Rural, 45 members)

Challenge: Small volunteer pool, everyone knows everyone, few first-time guests.

What They Did:

- Created a rotating welcome team of just three people.
- Focused on personal invitation and “notice the new face” Sundays.
- Empowered teens and seniors to serve side-by-side.

Result:

- New visitors were greeted by name on their second visit.
- Volunteers gained confidence and ownership.

Case Study B: Large Church – Summit Community (Suburban, 1,000+ members)

Challenge: Many first-time guests, easy to feel lost or anonymous.

What They Did:

- Developed a Guest Experience Team with specialized roles: parking, greeters, guides, coffee hosts.
- Created “First 7” zones and directional hosts for every major intersection.
- Implemented digital check-in and follow-up within 24 hours.

Result:

- First-time guest return rate increased.
- Volunteers felt more focused and less overwhelmed.

Case Study C: Diverse Church – Vida Nueva (Urban, multicultural)

Challenge: Guests speak multiple languages; varying cultural expectations of welcome.

What They Did:

- Trained greeters in cultural sensitivity and body language awareness.
- Added multilingual signage and translated bulletins.
- Positioned bilingual team members at high-impact points (doors, info desk, kids check-in).

Result:

- Families felt respected and understood.
- Team unity strengthened through cross-cultural training.

Use these stories to inspire contextual strategies in your own ministry.

Next step: Choose one insight from each case and discuss how it could apply to your church.

17. Bonus Worksheets: Language, Posture & Greeting Scripts

Use these practical tools during team huddles, training sessions, or individual preparation. These worksheets help build consistency, confidence, and connection.

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Worksheet A: Powerful Phrases That Connect

Choose 2–3 to focus on this month:

- “We’re so glad you’re here.”
- “You made our day by coming.”
- “Can I help you find something?”
- “Would you like a tour or a seat?”
- “How can I serve you today?”
- “We’ve saved you a seat!”

Practice Tip: Use your real lobby space to rehearse with a teammate.

Worksheet B: Body Language Do's and Don'ts

Do This	Avoid This
Smile naturally	Forced or fake smiles
Open posture (arms at sides)	Crossed arms or phone checking
Step toward, not away	Standing back and watching
Eye contact with guests	Talking only to teammates

Body Language Drill: Role-play 30-second greetings using only body language. Ask the group: what message did you pick up?

Worksheet C: What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say

Sometimes a guest asks something you don't know. Here's how to respond:

- “Great question—I don't know, but I can find someone who does.”
- “Let's figure it out together!”
- “Let me walk you to someone who knows.”

Reminder: Warmth > answers. Be helpful, not perfect.

18. Team Covenant / Culture Statement Drafting

Culture doesn't happen by accident. Use this section with your team to co-create a shared hospitality covenant—a living statement that guides how you serve, speak, and support each other and your guests.

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Why a Covenant?

A covenant invites commitment. It's not a rulebook—it's a rallying cry that defines your identity and your mission.

Example Covenant: “The Welcome We Carry”

We will show up early, stay present, and welcome others like Jesus welcomes us.

We will lead with kindness and look for those on the outside edge.

We will remember that no role is too small to make a spiritual impact.

We will be the smile, the guide, the open door to community and belonging.

Writing Your Own Culture Statement

Use the prompts below to craft a covenant that reflects your unique values:

- What do we want every guest to feel within the first seven minutes?
- What does hospitality look like at our church on a great Sunday?
- What will we *never* do to a guest or teammate?
- What 3–5 words define our ideal culture?
- How does Jesus' example of welcome shape how we serve?

When finished, post your covenant in your team room, Sunday huddle binder, or weekly email footer. Repeat it until it shapes your culture.

Pro Tip: Revisit and revise your covenant annually as your team grows.

19. Appendix: Communication Templates

Use these templates to support follow-up, connection, and volunteer encouragement. Feel free to adapt them to your tone and audience.

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Template A: First-Time Guest Follow-Up Email

Subject: We're glad you visited!

Hi [Guest Name],

Thank you for joining us at [Church Name]! We're honored you chose to spend part of your weekend with us. We hope you felt welcomed, seen, and connected.

If there's anything we can help with—questions about our ministries, prayer needs, or ways to get involved—please don't hesitate to reach out.

We'd love to see you again soon.

With gratitude

[Your Name]

Guest Services Team

Email / Contact Info

Template B: Volunteer Appreciation Note

Subject: Thank you for showing up with heart

Hey [Volunteer Name],

Just wanted to say how much we appreciate the way you show up and serve. Whether it's your smile at the door or your calm leadership in chaos—you're making a difference every week.

Thank you for carrying the welcome of Jesus so faithfully.

With thanks,

[Your Name]

Hospitality Lead

Template C: Guest Services Team Reminder (Text or Email)

Subject: Quick Reminder – You’re up this Sunday! 🚗✨

Hi [Team Name or Volunteer Name],

You're scheduled to serve this Sunday! Please arrive by [Time] and check in at [Location].

Our hospitality moment begins before the first handshake—thank you for leading with presence and warmth.

Let’s pray for open hearts and fresh connections this week.

See you Sunday!

[Your Name]

[Team or Scheduling Contact Info]

20. Notes Pages

Use this space during team meetings, reflections, or huddles. Write down ideas, challenges, names of guests you've met, or anything else that matters to your ministry.

NOTES

You've completed the workbook for **First Impressions Training Series – Session 1**. Now, lead with presence, serve with joy, and carry the welcome of Christ into every moment.

Let's go.