

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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Part 2: Opening the Door
Lesson 5: Initial Contact ¹

Goal: *Build Authentic Relationships by Reestablishing the Art of “One Anothering.”*

Objective: *To promote initial contacts and sincere greetings among the church body with a spirit of genuine interest while offering Christian love and hospitality.*

Overview:

Have you considered the impact you can have on a person with your *initial contact*? The world often calls this the “*first impression*” a person may have about you or who you represent. It is also said, “*You only get one time to make a first impression.*” This lesson will emphasize the significance of making your *initial contact* among fellow believers a meaningful representation of “*who you are and whose you are*”; *that is the Lord Jesus Christ’s*. Moreover, making an initial contact with someone you do not know builds acquaintances and increases fellowship and community among the church body.

Our authors Wayne and Clay Jacobensen referenced motivational consultant, Dale Carnegie’s statement; “*You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.*”²

Scripture teaches: “*Greet one another.*” [2 Corinthians 13:12] “*Offer hospitality to one another.*” [1 Peter 4:9]

Today a general greeting of, “*How are you?*” is seldom a sincere question to a person about their well-being. It is all too often a routine social greeting. Unfortunately we carry many of the “social courtesies” of our busy world into our feelings about members of our daily lives and church family and lose the sincere support we should feel and transmit to others. We are destined to grow spiritually if we prefer and build up one another according to the Word of God.

People who fail to understand and acknowledge this principle of sincere reaching out to others are subject to miss many opportunities to minister to people at their point of need, to help them, and encourage them just by representing the relationship all of us should have with the Lord. “Most relationships begin with a simple greeting offered sincerely. Scripture’s encouragement to greet

¹ Jacoben, W., & Jacoben, C. *Authentic Relationship: discover the lost art of “one anothering”*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, (2003). Print

² Ibid

one another is not a ministry for few—it is a way of life for us all.”³ “Beyond inquiring about someone’s life, a greeting can also impart God’s blessings.”⁴ “*God bless you.*”

If we want to live a life of “*one anothering*” we have to tackle our struggles with time. Simple adjustments in your schedule and attitude can allow you the freedom to capitalize on “*one anothering*” opportunities.⁵ The church and you will be enriched by this effort.

Discussion Point #1:

What does scripture teach us about entertaining strangers?

We know that there are times when it is not safe to greet strangers; however, we cannot allow this precaution to limit our expressions among fellow believers when there is no apparent risk. “*The harvest is ripe, the workers are few.*” There are people throughout our church family who need to feel and know what it is like to have a genuine relationship with the Lord and with other believers in Christ.

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:1-2)

Discussion Point #2

How did Jesus greet the Samaritan woman at the well? (John 4) How did Jesus model for us a way to open a door for “one anothering”?

A simple greeting can change a life. Jesus asked the Samaritan woman, “Will you give me a drink?” His greeting defied the cultural habits at that time; however it was His acknowledgement that captured the woman’s attention. If Jesus had followed the customs of that time, He would not have acknowledged her presence. Sometimes a simple unexpected act of kindness is all that is required to engage a person’s interest and it can be an opportunity to share with them what it is like to have a relationship with Jesus. The Samaritan woman went away telling everyone about the experience she had with the man she met at the well. She became the first evangelizer to the Samaritans. As a result, she had an entry point for new and improved relationships with others in her community for she had been ostracized and scorned for her immoral life. Her life was changed by this initial contact with the Savior.

Discussion Point #3

How does Paul’s epistle which opens with a warm greeting to members of the early churches, provide examples for our greetings today?

³ Ibid

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⁵ Ibid

Paul often opened his epistles with, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” or some close variation. See, e.g., Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2⁶

It was customary for people in the early church to express genuine affection. It was common for men to greet one another with a warm embrace and a kiss. Today it is common to hug one another to express the same kind of genuine fellowship. It is important to remember the difference a friendly smile, a warm handshake or a sincere hug can make to someone seeking acceptance as a new member in our church family. In the same way, this initial contact with some older church members may provide the desired connection with the church body that they have been seeking.

Making initial contacts outside of the church can help us to fulfill our church challenge of “12 in 2012”. Step out, reach out, and show forth genuine interest in promoting authentic godly relationships for the kingdom of God.

Biblical Exercise:

Think of ways to offer people genuine greetings while anticipating responses that may lead to authentic relationships within the body of Christ. Impart blessings that will encourage those you greet. Finally think of ways to be hospitable.

Monthly Biblical Exercises

Month	Year	Monthly Biblical Exercise
October	2011	<i>Introduction to Authentic Relationships</i>
November	2011	<i>Loving Others Like God Loves You</i>
December	2011	<i>A Soft Place to Fall</i>
January	2012	<i>It's Not All About You</i>
February	2012	<i>Initial Contact</i>

⁶ Ibid