

BOOMERANG

THE SIX-WEEK SYSTEM TO SEE MORE CHURCH GUESTS RETURN

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Participant Edition

TYLER SMITH & ALI HOFMEYER
Part of the free Boomerang Kit

Using This Guide

Your Guest Care team is in charge of making big-picture vision a reality. On a Sunday morning. On a Tuesday afternoon. On a Thursday evening. The vision of a church that intentionally follows up with their guests and invites them into community, and the details of how to do that in practice, week in and week out, can sometimes feel like opposing forces. That team is pouring their heart into this work. This guide was built for them.

This discussion guide walks your leadership team, your hospitality team, or your volunteer team through the book - through the system - chapter by chapter, and turns each one into a working session. By the last page, you will not just have finished a book. You will have mapped out how your church gathers guest information, connects with every guest personally, and builds a follow-up system that runs faithfully, every week.

Use it alongside the book or the audiobook. Read or listen to a chapter before you meet, then work through the questions together. Whether you gather weekly for a few months or cover a section per meeting, the goal is the same: no guest slips through the cracks at your church again.

How to Use This Guide

Read or listen to the chapter before your group meets. Each session here gives you the big idea, a handful of questions worth wrestling with, and space to write. We encourage you to use this space - write a commitment for that section. Great ideas only go as far as we let them. When we can articulate not just the why, but the what and the who, we can start to implement real change.



Your Journey Tracker

Seventeen sessions. Check them off as your team works through the book.

Session	Date	Done
The Introduction & The Boomerang System		
Chapter 1: The Guest's First Seven Minutes		
Chapter 2: The Welcome Talk		
Chapter 3: Building Trust With Your Guests		
Chapter 4: The Red Balloon		
Chapter 5: What Happens After the Sermon?		
Chapter 6: The Silent Goodbye		
Chapter 7: Butter Brickle Ice Cream		
Chapter 8: The Throw Formula		
Chapter 9: The Three Phases		
Chapter 10: The Six-Week Plan		
Chapter 11: The 98 Percent		
Chapter 12: The System That Cares While You Sleep		
Chapter 13: Build It Once. Run It Forever.		
Chapter 14: Know Your Number		
Chapter 15: When They Text Back		
Before Next Sunday & Your First Thirty Days		





The Introduction & The Boomerang System

The Big Idea

Tyler opens with the problem nobody sees happening: the silent goodbye. Last Sunday, first-time guests sat in your services. Something hard or hopeful brought them there. And research says only 10 to 20 percent of them will ever come back. Not because Sunday was bad, but because in the six days that followed, they never heard from you. As one Text In Church teammate puts it, “no one drifts into a community, but they can drift out.”

The Boomerang System chapter then lays out the entire book in three words. Gather their information. Connect with them personally. Build a system that does not depend on anyone remembering. And it closes with the line that governs everything that follows: “The system is never the point. The person is. The system just makes sure you actually reach them.”

Discussion Questions

Before reading this book, how would you have explained why first-time guests at our church did or didn’t come back? Have we taken a more passive, “drift” approach to guests?

Tyler says guests usually show up because something happened: a move, a loss, a diagnosis, a new baby. Think about the last guest you personally met. Do you know what brought them in? If not, what would change if you did?

Be honest as a team: if a family visited last Sunday, what would they actually hear from our church this week? Walk through it hour by hour, Sunday afternoon to Saturday night.

Tyler’s brother Matt’s pushback was that automated follow-up feels like customer support rather than ministry. Where does our team land on that tension right now? What would need to be true for a system to feel like care instead of a machine?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?

Section

1

Gather

Everything that happens before a guest ever gives you their name. The book says it plainly: "Consistency is loving. Gathering is where it starts, with something as small as a name and a number." These three chapters cover the first seven minutes, the Welcome Talk, and the moment a guest decides whether to trust you with their contact information.

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The Guest's First Seven Minutes

The Big Idea

The chapter opens with Ryan Keim's team at Bachelor Creek Church of Christ and their 10-4 rule: eye contact and a smile at ten feet, a greeting at four, and space for the guest who looks away. It ends with the story that should stay with your team: the woman at Ali's own church who built up the courage to show up and later told her, "Honestly, I just wanted to meet someone. I have no friends and desperately need community." She was smiling on the outside and pleading on the inside, and nobody introduced themselves. Because, as Ali writes, "A friendly church can be one of the loneliest places on earth for a guest, because all that warmth is pointed inward." Her mantra for everything in this section: "Hospitality prompts connection. That's our mantra. If it doesn't, it's unnecessary."

Discussion Questions

Walk through the first seven minutes at our church as a group, right now, from memory: parking, walk-in, greeting, lobby, finding a seat. At which of the five points would a nervous first-timer feel most uncertain? Where is our strongest point?

Ali distinguishes between friendly and welcoming: friendly is how you treat people you already know; welcoming is how you treat people you don't know yet. Which one is our church actually good at? What is one specific Sunday moment that proves it?

The book says to stop calling them visitors and start calling them guests, because you prepare for a guest. What language does our team use, and what does it reveal about how we think?

Who will audit our seven minutes before next Sunday, parking where a first-timer parks and walking in the door a first-timer uses? Pick the person and the date before this meeting ends.

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

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Who owns it?

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By when?

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The Welcome Talk

The Big Idea

Every service has one moment when someone speaks directly to the whole room, and most churches waste it on announcements.

The fix fits in sixty seconds and four steps: a warm greeting that sets the emotional tone, a guest acknowledgment that says we see you without a spotlight, one clear next step instead of five announcements, and a vision cue that gives a guest one sentence they could repeat to a friend on the drive home. The three mistakes that ruin a good welcome: singling guests out, burying the welcome after eight minutes of announcements, and asking for too much. And the principle underneath it all: "Specificity kills fear of the unknown." Tell guests exactly what happens when they fill out the card, down to the text this afternoon and the email tomorrow.

Discussion Questions

Play back last Sunday's welcome moment as honestly as you can. Was it a welcome, or announcements with a friendly face? What did a first-time guest learn from it?

Of the three mistakes... singling guests out, burying the welcome, and asking for too much, which one are we most guilty of? What is the story behind how it became our habit?

Write our sixty-second Welcome Talk together, right now, using the four steps. Who should deliver it Sunday, and what makes them the right person?

What is our one clear next step for a guest? If everyone on this team gives a different answer, what does that tell us?

The book moves announcements to slides, QR codes, weekly emails, and social media so the Welcome Talk can do its real job. What would we have to stop announcing from the stage, and who will resist that?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



Building Trust With Your Guests

The Big Idea

Ali opens with a bold statement: “It’s worse to get a guest’s contact information and do nothing with it than not to ask for it at all.” Most churches have a connect card. Very few have a connect card strategy. And the trust math is harder than it used to be. Barna found that only half of millennials are comfortable sharing their last name with a church, one in three will share an email, and fewer than one in eight will share a phone number. Trust has to be earned before information gets handed over.

The chapter gives you three formats so every kind of guest has a comfortable way in: the paper card, the digital card, and Text a Keyword. But format is the easy part. The real lever is telling the why: “Transparency builds trust. And trust fills connect cards.” Three things determine whether a guest says yes: clarity about what happens next, reciprocity that makes the trade feel worth it, and genuine connection, because nobody hands their number to a church where no one has spoken to them. Then keep the promise fast, the same day. If almost nobody fills out your beautiful cards, Ali’s diagnosis is simple: “You don’t have a connect card problem. You have a trust problem.”

Discussion Questions

React to Ali’s opening statement: Collecting information and doing nothing with it is worse than not asking at all. Has our church been guilty of that? What did it cost the guests who filled out a card and heard nothing?

Sit in a guest’s seat this Sunday and listen to how the connect card is introduced. Would you fill it out? Would you want to share your phone number with our church on a first visit? Why or why not?

Do we ever tell guests why we want their information and what will happen after they give it? Draft the exact sentence we would say from the stage.

What happens, step by step, to a paper card as it moves from the offering basket to our database? How many hands touch it, and where could it get dropped?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

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Who owns it?

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By when?

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Section

2

Connect

Turning a single Sunday into the start of a relationship. Gathering gets you a name. Connecting is what you do with it. These four chapters cover the systems that make noticing possible, the most unowned moment in your church, the silent goodbye, and the story behind why this whole book exists.



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The Red Balloon

The Big Idea

Ali was not visiting as an expert. She was a mom, new to Kansas City, walking into a big church with a one-year-old, a four-year-old, and the question every guest carries: will anyone notice us? After the service, her daughters came running out of the kids' wing with bright red balloons tied to little gift bags. And suddenly, in a packed lobby, several strangers approached the family, asked if they were new, and invited them back. Weeks later, a pastor told her the secret: "Well, the bright red balloons are a good giveaway." The balloon was not a decoration. It was the first step in a system that told every person in the building: "See the kid with the red balloon? That's a first-time guest. Go say hello."

A red balloon is "any small, repeatable signal that makes your whole church notice a guest without any one person having to remember to. The balloon does the remembering. The people get to do the loving."

Discussion Questions

Ali's family had visited other churches where nobody noticed them. What made the red balloon church different was not warmer people; it was a system that made warmth possible. Does that distinction change how anyone on this team feels about the word "system"?

What is our church's red balloon today? If we do not have one, what small, repeatable signal could tell our whole congregation who the first-time guests are, without putting a spotlight on them?

The balloon worked because everyone in the building knew what it meant. Whatever signal we pick, how would we teach the whole church to respond to it, not just the hospitality team?

Ali says her family was noticed by "multiple people" who were "genuine about it. Not performing hospitality." What is the difference between genuine and performed hospitality, and can a guest really tell? Can we?

Who owns our red balloon? The book says a signal nobody owns runs on luck and good memory, "and both of those run out on a busy Sunday." Name the owner before this meeting ends.

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



What Happens After the Sermon?

The Big Idea

The closing prayer ends, the lobby fills, and the church happens: people talking, praying, making lunch plans. But who is looking out for the guest standing alone outside every circle? Ali names the problem precisely: “That moment in the lobby is the most unowned moment in your entire church.” A guest might linger unnoticed for about ninety seconds. Then they start walking toward the door.

The chapter’s fixes are ownership and clarity. Give the after-service window an owner whose only job is to identify unfamiliar faces and connect with them. Give guests one clear next step and a reason to visit the Welcome Center, remembering that “people can appreciate being part of a process, but no one wants to feel processed.” Staff it with the person who considers it their actual ministry, because “If you have that person, you have a Welcome Center. If you don’t, you have furniture.” And underneath it all sits the oldest research in the book: newcomers who stayed had made an average of seven friends in the congregation within six months. The ones who left averaged two. As Ali puts it, “Friendship is the retention strategy.”

Discussion Questions

Who owns the ten minutes after our service today? If the honest answer is “everyone,” is it really “anyone”? Name one person or small team who could own it starting this Sunday.

Ninety seconds. That is, at a maximum, how long a guest lingers before heading for the door. What does a guest see and feel in our lobby during their ninety seconds?

Ali writes, “people can appreciate being part of a process, but no one wants to feel processed.” Where might a guest feel like they’re being processed at our church? Where do they get real human connection?

Apply the furniture test: does our Welcome Center have the person who considers it their actual ministry, or does it just have furniture? Who is that person, or who could be?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

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Who owns it?

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By when?

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The Silent Goodbye

The Big Idea

There are 144 hours between one Sunday and the next, and somewhere inside them your guest is making a quiet, mostly subconscious decision about whether they will come back. Tyler claims that the deciding factor usually is not the sermon or the greeters. It is whether they heard from you. When guests do not return, there is no exit interview and no angry email. “They mean to come back. They just drift, and the silence lets them.”

That reframe changes the job. “Most of the time, you are not fighting a rejection. You are fighting a drift. And a drift is beatable.” The chapter introduces the 5-D Theory: people visit churches because of a Divorce, a Death, a Displacement, a Development, or a Disaster. They arrive, equal parts desperate and distracted, squeezing church into a life that is already full, which is why six weeks of follow-up is not a bombardment. In Tyler’s words, “It’s pursuing them the way you’d pursue any relationship you cared about.”

Discussion Questions

Rejection versus drift: which one have we been designing for? How would our follow-up look different if we truly believed most guests drift rather than decide against us?

Walk through the 5-D Theory: Divorce, Death, Displacement, Development, Disaster. Think of recent guests you know by name. Does this ring true? If you don’t know, do you think it’s important to understand why they’re showing up for the first time? Why or why not?

The chapter says we err on the side of passivity because we do not want to be pushy, but guests can receive that as apathy or neglect. Where is the line between pursuing someone and pestering them? Who at our church decides where that line is?

Read Holly Howard’s guest comments out loud, including “I have never felt so loved.” What would it take for a guest at our church to say that about our follow-up?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



Butter Brickle Ice Cream

The Big Idea

This is the chapter where Tyler tells you why he cannot stop doing this work. When he was nine, his family moved to Kansas City to be near his grandpa, who was dying of cancer. They got three months. After the funeral, the grieving family looked for a church. They visited, sang the songs, shook hands, and walked out “the same strangers we’d walked in as.” Then one Sunday, they just did not go. And nobody seemed to notice or care. Nobody followed up.

The cost was not their faith. “We didn’t lose our faith. We still loved God. But the church had lost us, and it never even knew we were gone.” And the diagnosis is the heart of the whole book: nobody at those churches meant to abandon them. “There was no decision made, no cruelty intended. They just didn’t have a system.” Tyler closes by pointing at your pews: families sitting there right now who are “one hard season away from slipping through that same crack, quietly, invisibly, without a word.”

Discussion Questions

What stayed with you from Tyler’s story? Say it out loud before we analyze anything.

Nobody at those churches meant to abandon anyone. “They just didn’t have a system.” How does it change the conversation when the villain is the missing system instead of uncaring people?

Has anyone on this team lived the other side of this story: a season when you drifted, and nobody reached out? Or a season when one person’s follow-up changed your direction? Tell it.

Tyler says families in your church right now are one hard season away from slipping through the same crack. Who came to mind as he said it? What would reaching out this week look like?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?

Section

3

Build

The system that follows up faithfully, even on the weeks you can't. The section opens with a warning: "You can care deeply and still drop the ball, because caring is not a system, and memory is not a plan." And it introduces Faith Brown, who sent 60 to 120 personal texts every week until she found a better way: "Faith wasn't failing at follow-up. She WAS the follow-up." These eight chapters turn everything you have discussed into a functioning system.

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The Throw Formula

The Big Idea

A boomerang only comes back when the throw is right, and Ali gives the throw four requirements: your follow-up must be Reliable, have Rhythm, stay Relevant, and build Rapport. Get the four R's right and guests come back. Get them wrong, and you have random messaging people ignore. The chapter also names the four ways churches quietly kill their own follow-up, the Four I's: Inconsistency, Irrelevancy, Insufficiency, and Impersonal.

But the deepest reframe in the chapter comes from Greg Curtis: "You can't disciple an unconnected person." Which means follow-up is not paperwork. Follow-up is not an administrative task. A text on Sunday evening is a ministry moment. A phone call that asks how to pray for someone is the beginning of a relationship. Follow-up opens the door for discipleship.

Discussion Questions

Score our current follow-up from one to five on each of the four R's: Reliable, Rhythm, Relevant, Rapport. Where do we score lowest, and what is one real example that explains the score?

Which of the Four I's is most alive at our church: Inconsistency, Irrelevancy, Insufficiency, or Impersonal? The book says naming it means you can fix it.

Sit with Greg Curtis's line: "You can't disciple an unconnected person." If follow-up really is the first step toward discipleship, how should that change who owns it and how seriously we resource it?

Ali says most churches quit too early: a welcome email, maybe a text, then nothing, because "Insufficiency is not usually a failure of caring. It is a failure of stamina." When has our church started something relational and run out of stamina? What does that history teach us about building this?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



The Three Phases

The Big Idea

Somewhere around the words “six weeks of follow-up,” a voice in your head asks: won’t we be pestering people? Tyler says if that voice is talking, good. It means you care how this feels on the receiving end. So he hands you the test to carry through the rest of the book: “If a message wouldn’t feel strange coming from a new friend, it isn’t spam.” A new friend texts you the afternoon after you spend time together. A new friend invites you to coffee a couple weeks in. Spam is constant frequency and irrelevant content. This plan is built like a friendship: “heaviest at the start, lighter as it goes, more personal the more they share.”

Discussion Questions

Apply the new friend test to the last message our church sent a guest. Would it feel strange coming from a new friend? Would it feel like anything at all?

The phases follow a friendship: heaviest at the start, lighter as it goes. Our instinct is often the opposite: one big welcome and then silence, or a steady drip of announcements forever. Which wrong shape is our church closest to?

Each phase has a single job: earn the next visit. How does that change what we would write in a week-one text versus a week-five text?

Phase 3 is the lightest in frequency but may carry the most weight because it proves faithfulness to people who are convinced churches just want warm bodies in seats. Who in your life proved themselves to you through quiet consistency? What did it change?

Remember the 5-D Theory from chapter 6. The guest who came because of a divorce is not healed in one week. How does six weeks of being pursued serve people the way one welcome email never could?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



The Six-Week Plan

The Big Idea

This is the chapter where the philosophy becomes a plan. Six strategies carry the six weeks.

The division of labor is the sentence to underline: “The system carries the schedule. People carry the impact.” In a real first week, the system sends the Sunday text, the Monday email, and the Saturday text, while a person writes one three-sentence note. Five minutes of hands-on time per guest. And the chapter ends the weekly scramble for good: “A copy-and-paste plan exists, so you decide once and then quit deciding.” Because a church that follows up the same faithful way every week is saying the thing a hit-or-miss church never can: “You can count on us.”

Discussion Questions

Of the six strategies: text, email, gift, call, social media, and handwritten note, which do we already do, which have we never tried, and which one have we been avoiding? Why?

Draft our Parking Lot Text right now: their name, a real person’s name, zero ask. Read the drafts out loud. Which one sounds most like a friend, and least like a church account?

The 66-day research reframes the whole timeline: guests are not making a decision; they are rebuilding a life pattern. How does that change how we feel about still showing up in week five?

“The system carries the schedule. People carry the impact.” Sort our current follow-up tasks into those two buckets. What are humans doing that the system should carry? What has the system swallowed that needs a human?

The gift chapter says to skip the branded mug and prompt connection instead, like the mason jar of cookie ingredients that equipped Ali to love her neighbor. What could our church give that starts a connection instead of filling a cabinet?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



The 98 Percent

The Big Idea

The channel that carries most of the plan is the text message. But Tyler is clear that raw stats are not a strategy: “A church that texts and a church that has a texting strategy are two very different things.”

The strategy has parts: a local ten-digit number a guest can actually reply to; timing that lands when guards are down, because “The right words at the wrong time still miss”; and four kinds of messages worth sending: Care, Inform, Pray, and Invite. Most churches only ever send one kind. When April Buske texted guests at her own church, “How can I be praying for you this week?”, more than thirty people wrote back with real requests. And the craft rule underneath every message: “Write to one person, every time, even when the system sends it to a thousand.”

Discussion Questions

Pull out your phones: what are the last three texts you responded to today, and how fast? Now compare that to how our church currently tries to reach guests. What are we learning?

Care, Inform, Pray, Invite: which of the four do we send today, and which have we literally never sent to a guest? What would our first Pray message say?

April Buske’s one-line prayer text got thirty real responses, and some guests asked how they could pray for her. What does that story tell us about what guests are actually waiting for?

“Write to one person, every time, even when the system sends it to a thousand.” Take one announcement we recently sent and rewrite it to one imaginary guest by name. What changed?

Does our church have a phone number guests can text? What do guests get back when they text in? What’s working and what’s not?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



The System That Cares While You Sleep

The Big Idea

The most dangerous person in your follow-up process is the one doing it all alone. This chapter takes the objection head-on: automation feels impersonal. Tyler's answer starts with a birthday reminder: it is automated and lets you show up for the people you love. "The automation didn't replace the relationship. It protected you from forgetting it." Then he flips the objection completely: "The truly impersonal thing was never the automated text. It's the silence that takes over when the busy week wins, and the guest never hears from anyone at all."

Discussion Questions

Before this chapter, what was your honest gut reaction to the word automation in ministry? Did the birthday reminder comparison move you? Why or why not?

Sit with the flipped objection: the truly impersonal thing is the silence when the busy week wins. Do you agree or disagree? Is this a reality for the guests at our church? What can we do about it?

A woman felt wanted and noticed by a church for the first time in her life because of an automated text. What does that story say about the difference between how a message is sent and what it communicates?

"The system sends the same-day text. You show up when she texts back to say she's new in town and scared." Draw that line for our church: which parts of follow-up need a system's memory, and which need a person's presence?

Where does our follow-up depend entirely on one person remembering? Circle those points: the book calls them invisible exit points.

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



Build It Once. Run It Forever.

The Big Idea

Imagine Sunday night. Guests visited this morning, maybe two, maybe twelve, and you are not worried about them, because by dinner every one of them received a personal text, and for six weeks the system will keep reaching out whether you are at your desk or at your kid's soccer game.

The chapter's dividing line: "A ministry runs on systems. A dependency runs on you." Then it asks the question worth sitting with: "If your church doubled in size at midnight tonight, would the systems you have in place today still work tomorrow?" The answer for most churches is no, and the way out is handing pieces away. "A system that runs entirely through you isn't really a system. It's a bottleneck with your name on it." And when you hand a piece to a volunteer, "You're not dropping the work. You're handing someone else the quiet joy of being the reason a guest came back."

Discussion Questions

Answer the midnight question honestly: if our church doubled in size tonight, which of our systems would still work tomorrow, and which would collapse by lunch? Does guest follow-up survive?

"A ministry runs on systems. A dependency runs on you." Where in our church have we built dependencies and called them ministries? Name names kindly, including your own.

Whose limits is our follow-up currently living inside? What happens to guests during the week that person is sick, on vacation, or out due to a crisis?

Handing off follow-up feels like lowering the bar, but the book says the system upholds the standard, not the person. What piece would each of us hand away first, and to whom? What is the quiet joy we would be giving them?

Tyler wants the finished feeling to be relief. What specifically would our team stop carrying if this system were running? Go around the room.

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



Know Your Number

The Big Idea

Of the first-time guests who visited in the last three months, how many came back? Not a guess. A number. Most leaders go quiet at that question, and Tyler says the silence is the whole problem: “You cannot improve what you refuse to measure, and you cannot feel the size of a leak you never look at.” The one number that matters most is your first-time guest return rate. Nationally, it sits at 10-20 percent. Churches with a real system routinely pull it far higher, not because Sunday got better, but because Monday through Saturday finally started showing up.

Three more numbers sharpen the picture: how fast the first contact goes out, what percentage of guests reply, and how many take a named next step in six weeks. But the chapter refuses to let measurement become the mission: “The numbers don’t shame you. They point you.” A return rate is just a way of asking whether “the people who reached toward us” are “finding a hand reaching back.”

Discussion Questions

The chapter opens with a test: how many of our first-time guests from the last three months came back? Does anyone in this room know? What does our silence or our certainty tell us?

“You cannot improve what you refuse to measure.” Why do we resist measuring the rate at which guests return? What obstacles are in the way of us measuring this?

Of the three supporting numbers, speed of first contact, reply rate, and next steps taken, which would expose our biggest weakness right now? What is our evidence?

Replay the volunteer-and-the-prayer-card moment: twelve cards to go before lunch, and one says “My daughter has stopped talking to me.” What do we want every volunteer at our church to do in that moment, and have we ever actually told them?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

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Who owns it?

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By when?

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When They Text Back

The Big Idea

Everything in the book funnels to one moment: the reply. “A reply means a stranger just decided you were safe enough to answer.” The follow-up did its job.

Replies fall into three buckets your team can prepare for: the quick thank-you, which is an open door held slightly ajar; the logistics question, which usually signals someone planning to come back and quietly nervous about doing it wrong; and the disclosure, the one that stops you cold - a divorce, a diagnosis, a loss. Build a one-page playbook with one rule above the others: “A real person always answers a real person.” Give volunteers permission not to know answers, because “Not knowing is fine. Disappearing is not.” And the final word on urgency: “The only unforgivable response to a guest who reached out is silence.”

Discussion Questions

When a guest texts our church back tonight at 9 p.m., where does that message actually go, and who sees it? If the answer is nobody, what did the guest just learn about us? What can we do about this?

Practice the three buckets out loud, and write starter scripts for our volunteers and team. One person plays the guest: a quick thanks, a logistics question, and then a disclosure like “my wife passed away last month, and I don’t know why I came Sunday, but I did.” How did we do? Where did we freeze?

“A reply means a stranger just decided you were safe enough to answer.” Have we been treating replies like ministry moments or like customer service tickets? What is one reply we mishandled or missed?

The shared inbox fixes the exhausted-pastor bottleneck: replies land where a whole team can see them, and the first person free responds. Who would be in our shared inbox, and what response speed will we commit to out loud?

Draft our exit ramp right now: the grace-filled message we send when someone says they are not interested. Read the book’s version, then write ours. Why does how we leave matter as much as how we pursue?

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?



Before Next Sunday & Your First Thirty Days

The Big Idea

The closing chapters return to the guest you were asked to picture at the very start. Next Sunday, someone like them will walk into your church carrying something you cannot see. “Here’s what’s different now. This time, they won’t disappear.” Because you built something that will not let them. Follow-up was never administration: “It is the first act of ministry, the moment your church looks a stranger in the eye and says, ‘You matter to us, and we are not going to let you slip away.’”

Your First Thirty Days gives your team the fork in the road, and the book is honest that “the system matters more than the software.” Path one: build it yourself in four weeks, with an audit, a tracker, templates, and a handoff, remembering that on the manual road there are no weeks off. Path two: let Text In Church set up the entire six-week plan in about an hour. Two paths, one promise: no guest slips through the cracks. Either way, start before next Sunday turns into next year.

Discussion Questions

Go back to the guest each of us pictured at the start of this study. If they walked in next Sunday, walk through exactly what would happen to them now versus what would have happened before we started. What has actually changed, and what have we only talked about changing?

Two honest paths: build it ourselves in four weeks, or have the whole thing running in about an hour. Which path fits our team, our tools, and our track record with manual systems? Decide in this meeting.

Assign the pieces before anyone leaves: who owns the audit, the tracker or setup, replies, and the human touches? Names and dates, on paper.

The book calls follow-up “the first act of ministry.” Six weeks from now, how will we know a guest at our church felt known, noticed, and loved? Describe the story we hope to be telling each other.

Before Next Sunday

What we will do?

Who owns it?

By when?

Gather

As you work through Sessions 2 through 4, capture every gap and decision about how your church collects guest information: the seven minutes, the Welcome Talk, the connect card. This page becomes your Gather plan.

Gap or Decision	Owner	By When

Connect

As you work through Sessions 5 through 8, capture every decision about how your church personally reaches guests: your red balloon, your lobby owner, your response to the drift. This page becomes your Connect plan.

Gap or Decision	Owner	By When



Build

As you work through Sessions 9 through 17, capture every piece of the system itself: the plan, the messages, the automations, the owners, the numbers you will watch. This page becomes your Build plan.

Gap or Decision	Owner	By When



Now Build the Thing

You made it through the book and the questions. What comes next is the part your guests will actually feel.

The free Boomerang Kit includes every follow-up template in the book, the Guest Follow-Up Blueprint, and the printable Boomerang Calendar. Text KIT to 816-482-3337 to grab it.

When you are ready to go further: BoomerangBuilder.AI generates a six-week plan customized for your church in minutes, free at boomerangbuilder.ai. Text In Church is the platform that runs your six-week plan while you sleep; start the Boomerang Challenge free for 30 days at textinchurch.com/challenge. And First Impressions Academy is Ali's online coaching community for churches that want to keep getting better at guest care, at firstimpressions.church/academy.

Every guest who walks through your doors is looking for a place to belong. Throw it well. Trust the arc. And watch what comes back.



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