



To Infinity and Beyond: Contacting, Connecting and Keeping

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Contacting, connecting, and keeping folks is one of the challenges in all ministry. Depending on the class, the location, the leaders, the members, the teaching topic/how its taught, and how well people feel welcomed, loved, cared for, all affects the growth of your classes or groups.

People do not come back to your class/group for 3 reasons:

1. They came only for a handout or hand up and we got tired of handing out.
2. It's not where God wants them to be.
3. They didn't feel welcomed, included, followed up with, or that they belonged (because we didn't do something right).

Like in all ministry, it grows as we connect to Christ and to each other. Always remember to pray daily for who God would want you to connect too, connect outside your church, in the church and in your ministry.

CONTACTING:

As people find common interest, they connect. Here some ways or places (outside the church) that we can contact people in order to connect.

Proverbs 22:2 Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all.

- **Places:** Gym, sporting event, concerts, shopping, in our neighborhood, school, work, etc.
- **Who:** Kids' coach, neighbor, friends of friends, extended family
- **Those who serve us:** doctor's office, kids' teacher, drycleaner, waitress, mechanic, etc.
- **Activities/clubs:** Walking/hiking, art, meetup.com groups, garden, Mary Kay; block parties
- **What:** Give out business cards/info on your class/ministry; give out ministry tracks

Note: The key to successfully connecting to people outside your church it to have information to give them about your church and ministry but also, to get their info and follow-up.

CONNECTING IN THE CHURCH:

But what about those that are in your physical church building at an event or on Sunday morning but not in your class, group or ministry?

- **Take 5:** Make a decision before you come to church to not only pray about who God would want you to speak too but also, the courage. Take 5 minutes to talk to one person or 1 minute to talk to 5 people. The goal is to talk to new people or those you don't know well versus your friends.
- **Introduce yourself and ask how long they have been coming your church.** This way you avoid those who have been coming a long time and feeling embarrassed.

- **If they answer this is my first time**, take them to the welcome center and hang out to see if they need someone to walk them to your class or group.
- **If they are already a member**, ask them which class or group they are in and what they like about it. This gives you more info about them. Also, you could ask them how they are serving. If they are not serving, walk them to the welcome desk to get a list of areas that need help or suggest your own.
- **If they are a member but not in a class, suggest yours and walk them to it.** While you are walking them to the class you can ask them some questions about themselves/family such as if they are new the area or why did they choose your church or ministry today? You can also share about yourself.

Remember:

1. The more you know about your church, the other class, groups or ministry, activities that are going on, the better you will be at connecting people.
2. Try and get their info to follow up, so even if they don't end up at your class, you are helping the church in helping someone to belong.

CONNECTING IN THE CLASS/GROUP:

So, you invited them to your class or group, you walked them there or you see someone peek in for the first time, now what?

Note: Whether someone is new or a regular, this list applies to both.

- Greeters are important to a class; helping people to feel welcomed
 - Greeters often know the most about what is going on in the class or group such in how it's structured, socials or mission projects you might have planned, the calendar, etc.
 - Make sure your greeters are trained on how to be welcoming, including helpfulness; they are eyes and ears of the ministry.
 - Be sure to also exit greet by telling folks it was nice to see them or you look forward to seeing them next time.
- Have an icebreaker or set time for everyone to meet each other. Icebreakers are safe ways to connect and learn about others and what you have in common. If you don't do an icebreaker, be sure to sit new folks at tables where someone will talk to them. Save tables near the door for late/new people.
- Offer refreshments
- Having name tags (for everyone—Big first name, small last name; reusable)
- Have table discussion questions about the lesson; train a table host to make sure new people are allowed to talk.
- Encourage regulars to sit in different places each week to help meet others.
- Some people might not want to talk or share; it's ok; leave them alone but still follow-up.
- Invite new people to lunch; walk them to service; let them know about things going on in the class such as socials/mission projects. Ask open-ended questions.
- Get their info but also personally add them to your Facebook page or email list; let them know of other things going on in the church and invite them.
- Be sure to learn about their lives, their families, major life changes such as divorce, kids moving out, surgeries coming up, financial needs.

- Get them involved in the ministry of your class or group.

Remember:

The more you know about a person, the more you will connect, the more places, things you have in common, the less likely they will disconnect. The more likelihood they will belong.

Acts 2: 44-45 All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

KEEPING THEM IN YOUR CLASS; HELPING THEM TO BELONG:

Romans 12:5 ...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Q: What is the difference between joining and belonging?

Steps in connecting people so they belong, so they stay. Your class should:

- Be welcoming and inviting; it needs to feel good when people visit.
- Be organized. It's leaders, teachers and volunteers should be trained.
- Have great follow-up for new and for regulars' attendees.
 - You have to have a system that works on how you are following up with everyone from: new folks, fairly new, inconsistent, hardly ever there. And your system needs to be designed in such a way that others can also follow-up and know who else has contacted them.
 - Your follow-up is communicating you care about that person and their lives. You care about what you heard them say, what they shared about themselves; you care about who Jesus cares about.
 - You need to be willing to meet one-on-one, phone calls, text or add them to social media.
 - You need to remember things about them that they have told you such as if they have kids, married/single, where they are from, how they found out about your church, etc.
 - You need to connect them with others who they might have something in common with. Try walking them to service, to their car. Learning more about them. And vice versa, be sure to tell them something about yourself.
 - You need to connect them to other people in the church for resources or programs/events they might need.
 - You need to balance out responsibilities of your team so that you can follow-up but also visit them in the hospital, pick them up if they need a ride, listen to them, be their friend. This also helps if someone is extra needy.

Note: Be sensitive to singles/single parents (and those coming alone); plus, older adults who might not text or be on social media.

Remember: When people feel loved, cared for, included, they will begin to belong. When they belong, they get involved and serve, taking ownership of the class/group and the church.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers

What about those who attend but aren't connecting:

- Spend some time with them personally. Take them to coffee, meet at the church, talk/text
- Be prepared to ask them why they aren't involved; coming to your class. Sometimes is something personal and sometimes it's because they weren't asked.
- Find out if you can help them to get connected by asking for their help in a particular area.
- Ask them if they have taken a spiritual gift test.
- Pray with them (creates a level of intimacy and accountability).
- Follow-up with them on the things you have talked/prayed about.
- Affirm positive behavior.
- If they still are not involved or continue to be sporadic in attendance, wait on God to release them from you and move on to others.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

For more information on how we can help you with your church or ministry, go to www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org and/or www.TheSinglesNetwork.org. To bring Kris to your church/city in person or by zoom, call 919.434.3611 or swiatocho@gmail.com