

A PLAYBOOK FOR CHURCHES & MINISTRIES

The Church Visitor *Follow-Up Playbook*

Turn first-time guests into returning members — with the simple 72-hour system that makes sure no one who walks through your doors is ever forgotten.

WHY THIS MATTERS

First Impressions Get a Second Chance — Only If You're Fast.

Every weekend, God brings new people through your doors. The question isn't whether they showed up. It's whether they'll come back.

For most churches, the deciding factor isn't the sermon, the music, or the building. It's something far simpler — and entirely within your control: **did someone follow up, and how quickly?**

When a first-time guest is personally followed up with **within 24 hours**, about **85% return** for a second visit. Wait more than **72 hours**, and that drops to just **15%**.

Source: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, citing church-growth research by Bill Easum.

That's the difference between a guest who becomes part of the family and one you never see again — and it usually comes down to a single follow-up that either happened, or didn't.

The hard part isn't knowing what to say. It's **remembering to do it** — for every guest, every week, when your team is already stretched thin. This playbook fixes that. Inside you'll find the exact timeline, ready-to-use message templates, and a simple checklist to make warm, timely follow-up something your church does *every single time*.

The 72-Hour Rule

TIME SINCE THEIR VISIT	RETURN RATE	WHAT IT MEANS
0–24 hours	~85%	The golden window. A warm, personal touch here changes everything.
24–72 hours	~60%	Still strong. Don't let the weekend slip by without reaching out.
After 72 hours	~15%	The trail goes cold. The guest assumes they weren't noticed.

Your goal: make first contact the **same day**, then a planned series of warm touches over the next two weeks.

THE SYSTEM

The 2-Week Follow-Up Timeline

Six warm touches, mapped out so nothing is left to memory. Mix automated messages with one genuine personal touch from a leader.

WHEN	CHANNEL	PURPOSE
Same day (within hours)	Text	Thank them warmly. No agenda, no ask — just "we're so glad you came."
Day 1	Email	A proper welcome. What to expect, who to contact, a simple next step.
Day 3	Personal text or call	From a real pastor or leader. This is the human touch that earns trust.
Day 7	Email	Invite to a clear next step — a connect group, newcomer's lunch, or class.
Day 14	Email	Offer value (a devotional, a sermon link) and a gentle invitation back.
Day ~21 (if no return)	Text	"We'd love to see you again." One last warm, low-pressure door left open.

The principle behind the sequence: **be warm before you're helpful, and helpful before you invite.** Lead with genuine care. People can tell the difference between a church that wants them in a seat and one that actually noticed them.

On the next two pages are templates for every one of these touches. Copy them, swap in your details, and make them sound like *your* church.

The Message Templates

1 · SAME-DAY WELCOME TEXT — WITHIN A FEW HOURS

Hi [First Name], this is [Your Name] from [Church Name]. It was such a joy to have you with us this morning! There's no agenda here — we just wanted you to know you were seen, and you're welcome anytime. If there's ever anything we can pray for, just reply to this text. 🙏

2 · DAY 1 — WELCOME EMAIL

Subject: We're so glad you came, [First Name]

Hi [First Name],

On behalf of our whole [Church Name] family — thank you for spending part of your weekend with us. We know visiting a new church takes a little courage, and we're genuinely glad you did.

No pressure to do anything next. But if you'd like to get connected, here are two easy ways to start: [Connect Group / Newcomer's Lunch]. And if you have any questions at all, you can reply right here — a real person reads these.

We hope to see you again soon.

Warmly,
[Your Name], [Role] · [Church Name]

3 · DAY 3 — PERSONAL TEXT FROM A LEADER

Hi [First Name], it's Pastor [Name]. I just wanted to personally say how glad I was to have you with us on Sunday. No need to reply — but if you're ever looking for a place to land or have anything on your heart, my door (and inbox) is always open. Grateful you came.

The Message Templates (continued)

4 · DAY 7 — INVITATION TO A NEXT STEP

Subject: One easy next step, [First Name]

Hi [First Name],

The best way to feel at home at [Church Name] isn't a bigger service — it's a smaller room. That's where you actually meet people and put down roots.

This week we'd love to invite you to [specific group / class / lunch] on [day/time]. It's relaxed, friendly, and a great place to ask questions and meet a few faces.

Want me to save you a spot? Just reply "yes" and I'll take care of the rest.

[Your Name] · [Church Name]

5 · DAY 14 — VALUE + GENTLE INVITE

Subject: Thinking of you this week

Hi [First Name], in case it's an encouragement this week, here's [a short devotional / last Sunday's message]: [link].

Whether or not we see you this weekend, we're praying for you and your family. And if you do come, find me — I'd love to say hello in person.

Grace and peace,

[Your Name]

6 · DAY ~21 — "WE MISSED YOU" (ONLY IF THEY HAVEN'T RETURNED)

Hi [First Name], it's [Name] from [Church Name]. We haven't seen you in a few weeks and just wanted you to know you're genuinely welcome back anytime — no expectations. If there's anything that made it hard to return, I'd honestly love to know. And if we can pray for you, we'd consider it a privilege.

MAKE IT EFFORTLESS

Make It Automatic — So It Never Falls Through the Cracks.

The system above works. But it only works if it actually happens — every guest, every week. That's exactly where most churches break down.

Automation solves the one problem volunteers can't: consistency. With the right setup, the moment a guest fills out a digital connect card, the system takes over:

- The same-day welcome text sends **automatically** — within minutes, not days.

- The full 2-week email sequence **schedules itself**.

- A task is created for a pastor to make the one **personal** Day-3 touch.

- Every guest's info lands in **one place** — no paper cards, no lost names.

- Nothing depends on a busy volunteer remembering.

Your Visitor Follow-Up Checklist

Print this. If you can't check every box, that's where guests are slipping away.

- A digital connect card (QR code or text-to-join) is offered every service

- Guest info lands somewhere central automatically — not a paper pile

- A same-day welcome text goes out within hours

- A 2-week email/text sequence is mapped and ready

- A real person makes one personal touch by Day 3

- A clear next step is offered (group, lunch, class)

- One person owns the system and reviews it monthly

LET'S BUILD IT TOGETHER

Want this running on *autopilot* for your church?

Ezra Solutions builds automated follow-up systems for churches and ministries — so no first-time guest is ever left wondering if they were noticed. We'll set up the connect cards, the texts, the email sequence, and the pastor's personal-touch reminders, all done for you.

[Book a Free Strategy Call →](#)

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"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." — Colossians 3:23