**7 Reasons First Impressions Matter**

**By Chuck Lawless**

You’ve heard it said (and I’ve written it on this site) that people often give a church one shot to make an impression. We may not like that fact, but it’s reality. Here’s why:

Some visitors are anxious about attending any church. They may be coming because they recognize a need, but they might also be anxiously looking for a reason not to come back. Nervousness about attending church only magnifies anything that is not top notch and turns it into an excuse not to return.

Many first impressions really do tell us about the church. For example, a church that has no obvious greeters at the doors might well be less than friendly to outsiders—whether or not they recognize or admit it.

People shop churches. We might wish that weren’t the case, but ignoring it doesn’t help us reach people. The family that has a bad first impression of a church can usually find another church nearby.

People form impressions even before they enter the building. In fact, people driving by your building (whether or not they’re looking for a church) often form some impression quickly. If they see a rundown building with a grass-filled asphalt parking lot, they’ll make assumptions about your congregation, too.

We’re trying to reach people who are often impatient and judgmental. That’s the nature of lostness – and we can’t expect non-believers to act otherwise. They’ll give us one shot, and we need to give them our best for God’s glory.

The witness of the gospel begins with the first church face somebody sees. If the first person you see appears to be angry and unfriendly, it’s hard to forget that face. On the other hand, an energetic greeter can set an entirely different tone for the guest.

Churches concerned about first impressions often have an outward focus. That focus may not be as strong as a pastor wants, but the church emphasizing strong first impressions is typically thinking in the right direction.

What other reasons would you add to this list?

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”