5495 - Can we greet the kuffaar with a greeting other than salam?

the question

I would like to understand something about the greeting of the kouffar. I know that we don't have to give them sellem first but I have this question if we live in a kouffar country are we allow to greeting them first but no with sellem but with good morning like in the workplace, an another example some neighbours know me since I'm a child I always try to not greeting them first but sometime especially with old person I tell them good morning because I know them since I was born. I really would like to make this clear because sometime you have to greeting them like in a meeting you are not the first so you give them greeting when you enter or when you arrive at work, etc.
So can you explain me if the rule apply also for their greeting like good morning and we have to not forget that we live in their country so we are in weak position.
Thank you to explain me this issue (about the sellem it's clear) and is the hadith only apply for the sellem or also for the kouffar's greeting.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We appreciate your eagerness to learn; may Allah increase us and you in knowledge and acceptable righteous deeds. It was reported from Muaawiyah ibn Abi Sufyaan (may Allah be pleased with them both) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Whomever Allah wills good for, He enables him to understand the religion.

(Agreed upon).

In response to your question: His Excellency Shaykh Abd al-Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question:

Nowadays, as a result of dealing with the West and the East most of whose people are kuffaar of different sects and religions they say the greeting of Islam (as-salamu alaykum) when they meet us in any place. What should we do with regard to them?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) replied:

It was reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Do not initiate the greeting of salam to the Jews and Christians, and if you encounter them in the street, push them to the narrowest part of the road.

(Narrated by Muslim). And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: If the people of the Book greet you with salam, say Wa alaykum (and also upon you). (Agreed upon). The People of the Book are the Jews and Christians; the ruling concerning the rest of the kuffaar is the same as the ruling concerning the Jews and Christians with regard to this matter, because there is no evidence (daleel) to indicate anything different.

So we should not initiate the greeting of salam to a kaafir at all; if he initiates the greeting of salam, then we should say wa alaykum in response, in obedience to the command of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). There is no reason why we cannot then say, How are you? Or, How are your children? as has been permitted by some of the scholars, including Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him), especially when doing so serves an Islamic purpose such as encouraging him to take an interest in Islam so that he will be receptive to dawah, because Allah says (interpretation of the meanings):

Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Revelation and the Quraan) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better [al-Nahl 16:125]

And argue not with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner, inviting them to Islamic Monotheism with His Verses), except with such of them as do wrong [al-Ankaboot 29:46]

(Majmoo Fataawaa wa Rasaail Samaahat al-Shaykh Abd al-Azeez ibn Baaz Fataawaa al-Aqeedah, part 2, p. 1042)

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said, with regard to initiating the greeting with a kaafir: A group i.e., of scholars said: it is permissible to initiate the greeting for a purpose, such as some interest that one hopes to achieve, or because one fears his harm, or because they are related by blood, or for some other reason that dictates that.