

Jesus-Invitation

A mainstay in worship services of evangelical churches around the world is that thing we do at the end of the services called the invitation. In recent years some have questioned its relevance, appropriateness and importance. Some have even discontinued the practice. But we here at New Hope have continued to offer invitations since our beginning almost eleven years ago for virtually all regular and special events where the Word of God is proclaimed in any form or fashion.

I'm curious. How many of you (raise your hands) accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior at a worship service, VBS, revival, youth event, camp, etc. where the gospel was presented in a group setting and an invitation given?

For those of you who may be new to this church or new to the way most Southern Baptist Churches appeal to worshippers to respond, let's consider the question: "What exactly is the purpose of the invitation?" There are several..... **Salvation**

Prayer- personal and intercessory

Repentance and reconciliation

Renewal and dedication

Respond to call to ministry

Move membership from another church of like faith

My personal opinion is that we should give an invitation as much as possible, as often as possible, to as many people as

possible, wherever and whenever possible. Any time God's Word is proclaimed in any form or fashion to any individual or group of any size, it is appropriate to invite the hearers to respond to what they have just heard. If the leader, teacher, or pastor does not challenge the hearers to respond in some specific and definite way to the message through the Word of God, that may have been the only chance that person would have had. And, for all of us, I believe the sooner we are challenged to respond in some tangible way to the truths of God's Word the more likely we will become "doers of the Word" and not just hearers only.

I believe it was the Lord that impressed me very early in my ministry that it was my responsibility any time I had a group assembled for any kind of activity that I should present the gospel in some form and offer an invitation to respond to that message. Many people, young people in particular, have come to Christ in the most unexpected places because of that commitment:

Two girls on visitation

Witness training

Knocking on strangers

Retreats, campouts, lock-ins

This is all fascinating, or at least interesting to you, but I hope you are more interested in what Jesus did or has to say about the invitation. Is the invitation we offer at the end of services even biblical? Is it appropriate for 21st Century worship? Or, does it

need to be replaced by a less threatening, more personal and private format?

10 Invitations of Jesus:

1. Rest

28 "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. **30** For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." **Matt 11:28-30 (HCSB)**

2. Trust

22 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. **23** After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. **24** But the boat was already over a mile from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. **25** Around three in the morning, He came toward them walking on the sea. **26** When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and cried out in fear. **27** Immediately Jesus spoke to them. **"Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."** **28** "Lord, if it's You," Peter answered Him, "command me to come to You on the water." **29** **"Come!"** He said. And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. **Matt 14:22-29 (HCSB)**

3. Salvation

1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables: **2** “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. **3** ‘The banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. **9** Therefore, go to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.’ **10** So those slaves went out on the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding banquet was filled with guests. **Matt 22:1-3, 8b-10 (HCSB)**

4. Eternal life/heaven

31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. **32** All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. **34** Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **Matt 25:31-34 (HCSB)**

5. Children can come

13 Some people were bringing little children to Him so He might touch them, but His disciples rebuked them. **14** When Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me. Don’t stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** I assure

you: Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”¹⁶ After taking them in His arms, He laid His hands on them and blessed them. **Mark** 10:13-16 (HCSB)

6. Repent

31 Jesus replied to them, “The healthy don’t need a doctor, but the sick do. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” **Luke** 5:31-32 (HCSB)

7. Check Him out

35 Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. **38** When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, “**What are you looking for?**” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?” **39** “**Come and you’ll see,**” He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about 10 in the morning. **John** 1:35-39 (HCSB)

8. Be filled (thirsty, hungry, empty, searching?)

37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “**If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink!** **38** The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” **John** 7:37-39 (HCSB)

9. Live

38 Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. **39**

"Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told Him, "Lord, he already stinks. It's been four days." **40** Jesus said to her, **"Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"** **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, **"Father, I thank You that You heard Me. 42 I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me."** **43** After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, **"Lazarus, come out!"** **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, **"Loose him and let him go."** **John 11:38-44 (HCSB)**

10. Fellowship

10 **"Bring some of the fish you've just caught,"** Jesus told them. **11** So Simon Peter got up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** **"Come and have breakfast,"** Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" because they knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. **John 21:10-13 (HCSB)**

Invitation is appropriate:

1. Anytime, anywhere-Jesus gave invitations- Hillside, temple, street, shore, on the water, grave, well, ... **We should**-10AM, 12PM Sunday, Sunday evening, Wednesday, Tuesday visitation, on break at work, talking to neighbors, Cuba, Guatemala

2. For everyone- Jesus invited fishermen, tax collectors, sinners, religious, diseased, crippled, poor and outcast. ... **We should** invite to Christ- family, friends, children, youth, co-workers, enemies

3. Many purposes-Jesus invited people to repent, salvation, rest, trust Him, be healed, delivered, live, experience eternal life and heaven.....**We should** invite/respond to invitations- The vast majority of Sunday morning worshippers have already been saved. If one person accepts Christ because of the message and invitation given it is worth offering the invitation, but those of us who are saved and are here faithfully should be the ones who respond the most.

We need to: repent, renew, restore, be reconciled with God and with each other, commit, pray for ourselves and others,.... If we would respond in a more immediate and tangible way to God's speaking and moving, more would probably be saved.