

Extend An Invitation – John 1:35-46

(Thank Garth – message; ministry)

Speaking of which, this past Wednesday was our SM kick-off

375 students showed up; 30 of them made first-time commitments to Christ, and 15 more re-committed their life to Christ

That's in addition to about 20 people who responded to the invitation in our services 2 weeks ago

- This week, we're taking a break from our Issues series in 1 Corinthians, and won't return there until mid-October
That's b/c I want to make the most of the start of our new ministry year . . .
And then teach on some topics/issues that have been clamoring for our attention for some time now
The first of which comes from John 1:35-46 (turn there; **Title Slide**)

The purpose of this message is to teach you and exhort you to invite someone to church
To extend an invitation – hence the title
That's the entire purpose of this message, b/c that's the precedent in Scripture, *and* the urgent need of our day

Gone are the days when everybody goes to church

In fact, LifeWay Research conducted a study and found that 256m people in this country attend church sporadically, if at all

Even though most of them believe in God and say they're a Christian

Add to that, the fact that fewer and fewer churches preach the gospel . . .

And you have a problem of biblical proportions, that requires a biblical response

And that's where John 1 comes in – it's one of the best examples we have in Scripture, of people extending an invitation

And I hope that as we study this passage, your heart will be stirred and challenged, to do the same

That's the goal of all this, just like it was for John the Baptist in v35-36 (**outline slide**)

- *John was standing with two of his disciples* – two of his followers; undoubtedly, two of his closest friends, who heard what he had to say
But had he not been with them, his comment would have fallen on deaf ears

So the first step in extending an invitation, is to . . .

Get involved in people's lives, and start with those closest to you (v35)

Whether it's those who are geographically close to you, like on your street or in your neighborhood . . .

Or those who are relationally close to you in your family; Or those w/ whom u work . . .

Whoever it is, the first step in extending an invitation to them, is to spend time with them
To interact with them; To hang out with them

If you've skipped the family reunions the last 5 years, it's not likely that Uncle Harry will respond too favorably

Or if you sit in a corner by yourself at your daughter's basketball game, it's not likely the other parents will sit with you in church

You have to get involved in people's lives, and the natural place to start is with those who are already close to you – either relationally or geographically

And as you do . . .

Pay attention to your situation, and speak up when opp's present themselves (v36-37)

Like John the Baptist did in v36 where it says – *he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"*

He paid attention to his situation – he saw Jesus walking by . . .

And spoke up when the opp presented itself

What if he had been so caught up in his day that he was oblivious to the presence of Jesus?

What if he was so focused on his to-do list, that he missed the divine opp right in front of him?

And what if he had remained silent?

Or said something safe like, "Wow, there goes a good guy"?

Chances are, we wouldn't be sitting here, would we?

Or God would've used someone else, and John the Baptist would have missed out

But that's obviously not what happened b/c v37 says . . .

John paid attention to his situation, spoke up when the opp presented itself, and two of his own friends, two of the people who were closest to him – decided to follow Jesus

And so will some of *your* friends if *you* speak up

If *you* pay attention to *your* situation, and speak up when opp's present themselves

That's the 2nd principle for extending an invitation

- The 3rd comes from v38-39 where it says . . . (38)
IOW we want to learn from you; We want to know what you have to say
There's something different about you, and we want to know what it is
They were soft of heart

And the same is true of those around you; Not all of them, but more than u might imagine

They *want* to know the truth, but have no clue where to start, and no means to tell what's real and what's make believe

So whatever you do . . .

Don't assume they're hard of heart, and want nothing to do with you (v38-39)

Don't; Jesus didn't (39) . . .

He recognized their sensitivity to spiritual things, and invited them to come and see

To come and hear more; To join him where he was at; And they did

And many of those around *you* will too, if you give them a chance, if you extend an invitation

They'll follow you as you follow Christ

But they won't, if you write them off from the get-go

Assuming that they're hard of heart and want nothing to do with you, or the One you follow; Don't do that

People are more interested than you might imagine . . .

But often times afraid to ask, and leery of getting sucked into a cult or something

Assume they're soft of heart until you know otherwise, and then . . .

Waste no time, and get to the point (v40-42)

V40-42; Andrew wasted no time and got to the point

V41 says – *He first found his own brother Simon*

That is, he wasted no time in going to one of the people closest to him . . .

And then got to the point – telling him that they had found the Messiah, the promised one, the one who would save his people from their sins . . .

And then he *brought* Simon to him; He found him, he told him, and he brought him

And that's the point – the point of extending an invitation is to bring people to *Jesus*

Not to fill seats or parking spots or build-outs or satellites . . .

But to enable people to see for themselves, and hear for themselves, and believe in *Jesus* for themselves

That's the point we need to get to, and waste no time in doing so just like Andrew

- B/c you never know what God is going to do with it; Andrew didn't
There's no way he could have foreseen that Jesus would set Peter up to . . .
Lead his disciples, contribute to the NT, oversee the early church, and change the course of history
All b/c he wasted no time in extending an invitation, getting to the point, and bringing him to Jesus

And the same is true for you and I – we have no idea what God might do with our simple invitation

How he might change a person, or a family, or even the generations that follow them

In fact, you have no idea how he might change *you*

All b/c you wasted no time in introducing someone to him [THIS FAR IF POSSIBLE]

That's the 4th principle for extending an invitation

- And then John says in v43a – *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee.*
Did you catch that? He decided to *go* (**map**)
He was *east* of the Jordan in Bethany, not to be confused with the Bethany near Jerusalem . . .
And decided to *go* to Galilee – the area W. of the Sea of Galilee, and N. of Samaria****

The point being, instead of expecting people to come to *him*, he went to *them*

Instead of assuming that they knew all about him, and the church he was establishing, and the salvation he was offering – he went to *them*, to *tell* them

And therein lies the 5th principle of extending an invitation . . .

Go to them, instead of expecting them to come to you (v43)

We cannot expect people to come here, to us – when we won't go there, to them

Wherever there is – whether it's the house next door, or the next cubicle over, or your next of kin

It's rare for people to walk into a church without a personal invitation

And they certainly won't do so if they don't even know we exist, or think we're a book publisher or something

Not to mention those who think we're out there just b/c we're passionate about the Lord and all that he's doing in our church

If we don't go to them, they won't come to us

Which is why we've printed 7500 invitations like the ones in your bulletin, for you to give out as part of the national **Back to Church Sunday** campaign

It's Sept 11-12th, coinciding with our ministry year kick-off . . .

And I want to challenge each and every one of you to invite at least 2 people to our church that weekend; At least 2

That doesn't mean if your spouse invites 4, you're off the hook

I want you to invite 2 as well, b/c you need to stretch yourself by *extending* the invitation, as much as your friends need to *be* stretched by receiving it

We must overcome our fear of man, and extend an invitation

- The impetus for which began several months ago in my heart, to make *more* of our ministry year kick-off this Fall
It's one of the few remaining times in our culture when people tend to think about church, and therefore we *need* to make the most of it

So as I was trying to figure out how to best do that, I ran into this video, and jumped at the opportunity – take a look (**Video – Back To Church Sunday**)

- Only 20% of Americans attend church regularly, and even fewer a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church
Meanwhile, 82% of those who *don't* attend, said they'd be open to visiting if a friend or family member invited them; That's astounding to me

That means 260k people in the QC's alone, are open to an invitation

That's 2 out of every 3 people in your neighborhood or workplace

It doesn't mean that they'll come, but it does mean that they'll consider it

The problem is, only 2% of you have ever extended an invitation

According to these stats, 98% of you invited no one to church last year

And even if that number is 80% or 50% – that's still not good

B/c it usually means you're either ashamed of the One for whom you live, or you don't really live for the One who bore your shame

In which case, you need to do some serious soul-searching before it's too late – for you *and* for them

- And just so you know what to expect on that weekend, I'm going to be introducing the new theme for our ministry year from Lk 9:23-24
That's where Jesus says – *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

And while I won't be giving an invitation, we *will* be sharing communion, and the gospel will certainly be woven in . . .

Along with what it means to *deny* ourselves, take up our cross *daily*, and *follow* Christ

So whether your friends are non-believers, near believers, new believers, or mature believers – there's something for everyone *****

The question is, will you go to them, at least 2 of them, and . . .

Invite them to come and see (v44-46)

That's the last principle here from v43-46, for extending an invitation

Instead of assuming that Nathanael didn't want to hear it . . .

Instead of beating around the bush and somehow massaging the situation . . .

Instead of being deterred by Nathanael's stubborn skepticism . . .

Instead of expecting him to get the message on his own, and come of his *own* accord . . .

Phillip followed the pattern of those before him, and went to *him*, and found *him* – and *invited* him to come and see; to come and see Jesus for himself

That's the biblical *precedent*, and we should do the same

For the love of God, literally – we s/b extending an invitation to those closest to us, that they might come to know the Messiah just as we do

Out of love for your neighbor – you s/b extending an invitation that they too might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

Out of a passion for souls – we should *always* be inviting people to church; always

Not just on special weekends, but every chance we get

And if a love for God, and a love for your neighbor, and a passion for souls doesn't compel you – then do it b/c others did it for you

Starting with Andrew and Phillip, and then countless more over the centuries, who were fired up and obedient just like them

- Will you do that? Will you invite at least 2 people to . . .
Come to church and see for themselves – our love for the Lord and one another?
To come and experience his presence among us in worship?
To come and respond to his truth just like you have?

That's what the 2 **invitations** are for in your bulletin – they're not for you, you're here
They're for someone else

And if you'd like more, the ushers will have them in packs of 5 at the door – take as many as you'd like

- In addition to that, if you'd like to go door to door in your neighborhood, and want to leave something for those who aren't home . . .
We made 2000 **door hangers** and put them in bundles of 10 – also available as you leave, or at Books and Things

And then finally, to reinforce and remind people of the *personal* invitation they received from you . . .

We're putting an 8'x16' **banner** on the southwest corner of the building, facing 53rd St.

So that hopefully, on September 11-12th, Back to Church *Weekend* around here . . .

We will fill this place for the glory of God and the joy of his people

Including those who don't yet know him *****