

The Power of an Invitation

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. There is something about an invitation

1. An invitation makes us feel special
2. It makes us feel wanted and accepted
3. It is a common way for one person to reach out to another
 - a. a young man invites a young lady out for a date
 - b. a business man invites a client out for lunch
 - c. a housewife invites a friend over for coffee
 - d. a family invites another family to supper
4. Giving and receiving invitations are powerful elements in our society

B. Invitations are important in the Bible too

1. I want us to look at some of those invitations to see what they teach us
2. When I want to encourage you to consider some special invitations that can change people's lives

I. GOD'S MESSAGE IS OFTEN IN THE FORM OF AN INVITATION

A. Isaiah 1:18 -- "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. NASU

1. Sometimes God does scold sinful men – his words are harsh for sin deserves it
2. At times, though, God is extremely tender
 - a. "Come" – let's sit down and talk this through
 - b. we are invited to reason it out

B. Isaiah 55:1 -- "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. NASU

1. This is the coming Messiah's invitation to the world
 - a. those who thirst will be given water
 - b. food and drink are available without cost
2. These are spiritual blessings – but the invitation is plain – come and receive what you cannot provide for yourselves

C. Matthew 11:28-30 -- "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." NASU

1. This is Christ's invitation to the world
2. An invitation to exchange burdens
 - a. give Jesus the one you cannot bear
 - b. take upon yourself the one you can bear
3. This kind of invitation gives hope

D. Luke 14:16-24 -- But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now.' "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' "Another one said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' "Another one said, "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' "And the slave said, "Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' "And the master said to the slave, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. "For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'" NASU

1. Come for all things are ready
2. People offered excuses
3. Invitations were given to others
4. Emphasis is on the thoroughness of God's preparation

II. SOME CAME TO KNOW JESUS BY INVITATION

A. Andrew invited Peter to meet Jesus

1. John 1:35-42 -- Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). NASU

2. We know little else about Andres
 - a. no doubt but that he was a disciple
 - b. tradition – he preached in Jerusalem and was martyred because of his faith
3. Peter became an apostle, leader in the church, vital to taking the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles
 - a. Peter is well-known, but not Andrew
 - b. but Peter may well have never been know had it not been for Andres

B. Philip invited Nathaniel to meet Jesus

1. John 1:43-51 -- The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." NASU
2. Philip was also one of the apostles and, no doubt, important to the church
3. He invited Nathaniel
 - a. some believe Nathaniel to be Bartholomew, named in the other gospels
 - b. if so, then he also became an apostle as a result of an invitation

C. An invitation might be considered the most consistent means of introduction to Jesus because It is consistent with how God deals with people

1. God never forces people to obey
 - a. he may chastise, even condemn
 - b. he will always allow man to respond freely of his own will
2. In essence, God is an inviter
 - a. through the gospel he calls us – invites us
 - b. we can accept it or reject it

III. AN INVITATION CAN BE POWERFUL

A. We can say that because we have seen it work

1. God invites us to come to him
2. Disciples gave and received invitations to others

B. What about us – have we not received an invitation?

1. Most of us have heard the invitation of the gospel and responded
2. When we responded, God forgave our sins, placed us in the church, and gave us the hope of eternal life
3. In a very real way, we are what we are because of an invitation

C. We need to participate with God

1. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 -- Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NASU
2. We need to extend some invitations
 - a. invite people to become part of our lives, that we might influence them for good
 - b. invite people to study the Bible
 - 1) personally
 - 2) classes, small group setting, etc
 - c. invite people to worship that they may be exposed to what God's will is
3. Our invitations should be given as freely as the one in Lk 14
 - a. when you start inviting people to meet Jesus, many of them will make excuses
 - b. they will disappoint you time and again
 - c. but we must be like the man who gave the big dinner party – if the first ones don't come, invite more, then invite yet others – for eventually we will find those who will be glad to accept the invitation

CONCLUSION

A. Peter's eternal destiny was changed because Andrew gave him an invitation

B. Your invitation may do the same for someone else

C. In all your life, you will do nothing that is as important, that has eternal consequences, that has the potential for changing a person's entire life – than inviting people to meet Jesus

D. The Lord's invitation is open today