

How to extend an invitation to church

Let's ask ourselves when the last time we extended an invitation to an unbelieving friend to come to church was. If the answer is "I can hardly remember," then perhaps the reason is either we haven't enlarged our circle of community to those who may need it, or there is something keeping us from it, although it may be slightly tugging at our hearts.

It's interesting, isn't it, that we tend to hurt, be fearful of, and least urgent about those who are nearest and dearest to us? Perhaps it's because we have established roots with each other and anything that may damage or remove them would be a painful process.

However, even forests need fires for greater growth.

How can we expect to grow in community if our community isn't growing? There is some validity to the fear we experience as Christians who constantly combat apathy, anxiety, and arrogance. However, the urgency is much greater for those who have yet to experience the light, and that begins with us. If we truly care about others, if we truly want to love as God loves, if we want to experience growth in ourselves and in our communities, then we must step out in boldness.

We cannot have an honest invitation without an interest in a relationship. Yes, the argument stands that tracks can be handed out, flyers for church can be freely given to strangers, but it carries the weight of meaning something when one person reaches out to another on a personal pace. Something wonderful happens in the frame of humanity: it is pierced with eyes that see and a heart that desires to know.

Christianity is not just a religion, it is a relationship with God and with others. We've tasted and we've seen the goodness of God's love. The result? To not withhold good. It's too good that it overflows. It's too good not to share. It's too good to keep to ourselves. This is why we extend the invitation.

With this motivation, how can we be mobilized into bold movement? It starts with one small step toward the other and simultaneously toward God. Start with your local area. Can your acquaintanceship with your next-door neighbor move to a relationship of one not of closed garages, but open doors? What about with the barista at the local coffee shop you visit on the regular? Or your



kid's friend's parent that you see everyday after school while waiting?

It can be easy to fall into the trap of either sitting around and doing nothing, praying that someone else will do something, or that extending the invitation is a one-time deal. Like any relationship, invitations take time to be written, sent, and received. Sometimes it requires gentle persistence despite immediate rejection. Sometimes it warrants more effort and time and discomfort on both parties' side. The pay off? Worth it, definitely. Why? Because we are called to fellowship with God and with his children.

Let us be doers and not mere hearers of God's call to daily pick up our cross and follow him. To die to self and to live in pursuit of eternal community with our Father, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Start extending the invitation today.