

“With every head bowed,  
and every eye closed”

COMING DOWN FRONT

Raising Your Hand

Walking an Aisle

Just As I Am

# THE INVITATION

PRAYING THE PRAYER

I Surrender All

“If you prayed that prayer,  
you’re a Christian...forever”

Inviting Jesus Into Your Heart

Justin Runyan



## The Invitation

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# 1

YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHY THERE ISN'T A TRADITIONAL INVITATION AT THE CONCLUSION OF OUR SERVICES. DO WE NOT BELIEVE IN EVANGELISM? DO WE NOT WANT PEOPLE TO BE SAVED? HOW ARE WE TO APPLY THE SERMON? ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS, AND PROBABLY MANY MORE, MAY HAVE ENTERED YOUR

MIND.

I am the kind of person who constantly has to relearn important lessons. I have those wonderful 'ah ha' moments when the truth clicks into place only to have that same realization three months or three years later. I am prone to forget what I just learned. One lesson I am continually relearning is that people can't read my mind; instead, I must tell them exactly what I mean.

This booklet is my humble attempt to live out that obvious lesson. To many Christians, a church without an invitation is, well, not really behaving like a church. It just doesn't make sense to them. So, since our church doesn't have one, it is extremely important to tell

you exactly why that is. After all, as I continually relearn, you can't read my mind.

In the pages that follow, I will explain why our church doesn't have a traditional invitation. I will define a few terms, examine the biblical evidence, and then lay out my reservations with the practice as it relates to both Christians and non-Christians. Hopefully, by God's grace, you will see the rationale behind our desire not to use an invitation, even if you are still not fully convinced.

# 2

SINCE I AM GOING TO PRESENT AN ARGUMENT AGAINST THE INVITATION, I MUST DEFINE WHAT I MEAN BY IT. WE CAN SEEMINGLY DISAGREE WHEN WE ACTUALLY AGREE (OR VICE VERSA) IF WE ARE OPERATING UNDER DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF THE SAME TERM. SO WHAT DO I MEAN BY THE INVITATION?

Fred Zaspel clearly explains what I mean by the Invitation. He says, "Immediately following the sermon the congregation will sing a hymn during which the preacher calls men and women to walk to the front of the auditorium (the 'altar') to make a public decision to 'accept Christ.' Salvation is offered to all who will but come to the front and take it. Those who come receive the personal attention of a counselor and are instructed what to pray, and so on." My simple definition is this; *"the Invitation is given at the conclusion of the sermon when those wishing to receive Christ are invited to come down front to do so."*

This practice is the custom of the American, evangelical world, and through America's missionaries it has spread to many parts of the

globe. It now seems like a universal practice. To not give an altar call, as it is also called, is perceived by many to not be evangelistic. After all, they will say, how can you defend not having a 'traditional' invitation? My response to them is to ask, what do we mean by 'traditional'?

In the evangelical world today, when we speak of the Invitation or altar calls, we talk as though this is a long-standing church tradition. We speak as if Paul (*1<sup>st</sup> Century*) and Augustine (*4<sup>th</sup> century*) and Martin Luther (*16<sup>th</sup> century*) all gave altar calls at the end of sermons. However, the practice of the Invitation is a relatively new phenomenon in church history.

This evangelistic practice was made popular through the ministry of Charles Finney in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its influence spread rapidly through the ministries of Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Bob Jones, and, most prominently, Billy Graham. However, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley, some of the world's greatest evangelists, never practiced (or had even heard of) what we would call

the Invitation. Charles Spurgeon, a powerful, evangelistic preacher, was strongly opposed to the practice.

We must be careful when we refer to the Invitation as if it is a time-honored tradition that has always been practiced by the Church. *It isn't*. It is a new practice that sprung up in the American church within the last two hundred years. To be honest, tradition is on the side of not having 'traditional' invitations.

While the church has not practiced altar calls throughout her history, tradition does nothing to settle the issue. If Scripture supports the practice, then we should do it. Tradition ultimately rests upon Scripture for authority. So, what does the Bible say?

# 3

A SUPPORT THAT IS ALWAYS GIVEN BY PROPONENTS OF THE INVITATION IS THAT CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES ALWAYS CALLED PEOPLE PUBLICALLY. JESUS IN MATTHEW 9:9 CALLED MATTHEW TO "FOLLOW ME" AND MATTHEW "ROSE AND FOLLOWED HIM." LATER IN MATTHEW JESUS SAYS, "SO EVERYONE WHO ACKNOWLEDGES ME BEFORE MEN, I ALSO WILL ACKNOWLEDGE BEFORE MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN." THE INVITATION, IT IS STATED, IS THE PUBLIC RESPONSE THAT SCRIPTURE DEMANDS.

I certainly agree that Christians *must* acknowledge Christ publically, but throughout the New Testament that is the purpose of baptism. When confronting this issue, we must ask if Jesus envisioned this public acknowledgement to consist of walking an aisle at the close of a service. How can walking an aisle during an invitation be interpreted as following Jesus' command when he continues on and says, "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me"? Clearly Jesus was referring to a life of sacrificial, Cross-bearing

obedience when he speaks of his disciples acknowledging him before men, and not a one-time response to the Invitation.

A key passage that is given to support the Invitation is found in Matthew 11:28. Jesus says, "*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Jesus is calling people to come to him. Some will say that Jesus is giving the Invitation here. He is calling people to come to him to be saved.

The question we must ask is how Jesus understood this act of coming to him. Did he see it as a physical coming to him or a spiritual act of submission and obedience? I believe that the call to come shouldn't be interpreted as a physical walk down the aisle. If you look at verses 28 and 29, there is parallelism happening here. The parallel statement that provides the meaning of "*come to me*" in verse 28 is found in verse 29. Jesus says, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.*" To come to Jesus is to take the yoke of Christian discipleship. The coming called for here is primarily understood as spiritual identification with Christ through discipleship. Therefore, I see no evidence for interpreting this verse as a reference to the Invitation.

Think with me of Acts 2. This is Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has just been given to the church. The Apostles and other disciples of Christ were praying together when *"suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance."*

This miracle, speaking in foreign languages, had a specific purpose. Luke continues on, *"Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language."* A great crowd gathers to listen to the Apostles speak. As verse 12 says, *"And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'"*

With that question, Peter stands up to answer them. He is going to tell them what this means, and he explains it by sharing the gospel. He talks about Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. He concludes by saying in verse 36, *"Let all the house of Israel therefore*

*know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*

Look at the crowd's reaction to Peter's sermon. Verse 37 says, *"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"* Essentially, how are we to respond to the truth of Christ's death and resurrection? In light of the reality that Jesus is Lord and Christ, what must we do? How do we respond?

Now pause here and think with me. Is this not the perfect time for an altar call? Peter is surrounded by a large crowd. He has just preached a powerful sermon. The audience wants to know exactly what they must do. Wouldn't it be a perfect time to call those who want to follow Christ down to the front to pray the prayer of salvation?

But what does Peter say? He says, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* He doesn't call them to repeat a prescribed prayer or walk to the front. He says repent and

acknowledge Christ publically through baptism. Peter doesn't give a traditional invitation. And yet, many were saved. Verse 41 says, *"So those who received his word (not came down front) were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."*

This is the pattern of Acts. In Acts 3:19, the response required for salvation is *"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out."* In Acts 10:43 Peter tells the Gentiles at Cornelius' house *"everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."* Paul says in Acts 13:38-39, *"Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."*

Again and again throughout the book of Acts salvation comes from believing the gospel. And this saving belief is not required to occur at the end of the sermon during the Invitation. In Acts 10:44 it says, *"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word."* While Peter was still preaching, Cornelius' household believed the gospel and received the Holy Spirit. They

didn't need to wait for the Invitation. They didn't need to come down front. They didn't need to pray a specific prayer. And they were asked to do none of those things. They believed in Christ and were saved and then publically baptized. No altar call was needed and none was given. They heard the gospel, believed the gospel, and were saved.

As I study the New Testament, I see no evidence supporting the practice of the modern invitation. I don't see a passage where there is a call to come to the front or pray a certain prayer. Although this practice has been engrained within church culture, I do not see it *required* by Scripture. In fact, I think that there are great dangers with this approach. Let me begin with my reservations concerning Christians and the Invitation.

# 4

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE OF EMPHASIS WHEN THE INVITATION IS DIRECTED TOWARDS *CHRISTIANS* AT THE CLOSE OF A SERVICE. IN MOST CASES THEN, THE GOAL OF THE ALTAR CALL IS TO PROMPT THE CHRISTIAN TO APPLY THE TRUTH OF THE SERMON TO HIS LIFE, OFTEN BY COMING TO THE 'ALTAR' TO PRAY OR BY 'REDEDICATING' HIS LIFE TO CHRIST. WHEN I CONSIDER THE INVITATION AS IT RELATES TO CHRISTIANS, I HAVE SEVERAL RESERVATIONS. THESE RESERVATIONS ARE NOT FULL-BLOWN OBJECTIONS, YET THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO WARRANT CAREFUL REFLECTION. LET ME BRIEFLY OUTLINE THEM.

First, I think there is **A MISUNDERSTANDING CONCERNING SACRED SPACE**. The front of the church is no more sacred than your seat. Our church building is no more sacred than your car or your work cubicle. Do you remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4? He said, "*Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*" With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the location of worship no longer

matters. There is no longer a physical temple complex because now all Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit within them (1 Corinthians 6:19).

The idea of 'going down front' to pray implies that going down to the front of the sanctuary actually does something, but it doesn't. God isn't down front. That isn't an altar down there; it is a stage. Our church building isn't a New Testament version of the temple building. By walking the aisle we are not somehow getting physically closer to God. At Jesus' death the veil of the temple was torn in two. In Christ, our bodies are temples. Wherever we are, we are in the Holy of Holies. This means that the prayer that is prayed at your seat in true repentance is just as acceptable as the one prayed down front. There is no reason to move physically because, in Christ, God no longer requires worship at a specific location. Calling people to come pray down front confuses the Bible's teaching on sacred space.

Second, the Invitation **CONFUSES TRUE APPLICATION**. I grew up in a church with traditional invitations. I cannot tell you how often I

felt I applied the sermon by going down front to pray. But I hadn't. True application is lived out in real, day-to-day life. You apply a sermon about purity not by simply praying at the stage during the Invitation, but by clinging to the Cross and pursuing purity with your boyfriend or girlfriend when you are alone together. You apply a sermon about forgiveness by truly forgiving the person who has offended you. So, if you don't forgive, then you haven't applied the truth of God's Word, even if you went down front to pray.

The Invitation is not application, but it is often misunderstood as such. The result, at least in my experience, is that people can respond to the Invitation and believe they have applied the sermon. Since it feels like true application has already taken place, those individuals then move past the sermon and don't think about it again. Disastrously, application gets left at the 'altar.'

Some of you may be leaving our services with a feeling of unfinished business. By God's grace the Holy Spirit convicted you through the message, but it feels like you weren't given an opportunity to respond. If only we had the Invitation, you may think,

then I could have done business with God. But since there wasn't an invitation, you leave feeling like the service was incomplete.

Good! That is exactly what I want. The service *was* incomplete. It awaits our obedience for completion, and that obedience cannot occur during three stanzas of an invitation song. When we close our service with prayer and get up to leave our building, I hope that we will all realize that true application is only beginning. We should leave unsettled. The message, by God's grace, should bleed into our Sunday lunch conversations and Monday's prayer time, and Tuesday's struggle with temptation. I fear that the Invitation blurs this reality and confuses true application.

Third, I fear the Invitation **UNINTENTIONALLY CREATES AN UNBIBLICAL PASTOR / CONGREGATION DIVIDE**. After the sermon is preached, and while the Invitation is given, the pastor stands up at front looking out upon the congregation. He is on one side; everyone else is on the other. This practice can't help but imply a sharp distinction between pastor and people. I fear this is unhelpful.

One of the main reasons why I now stand with the congregation instead of facing you during the closing song is because I want to minimize the pastor/congregation distinction. The Word that is preached is also preached to me. I am just as accountable for applying it as the congregation is. So, I want to join with the congregation in our response of praise to God for His Word.

By standing at the front facing you, I believe I'm subtly implying that your pastor and God are on one side and you, the congregation, are on the other. I believe this understanding is wrong. We, pastor and congregation, are humbly united as we corporately respond to God's Word in faith, repentance, and praise.

This brings me to my fourth reservation with the Invitation. I believe **OUR INITIAL, CORPORATE APPLICATION SHOULD BE PRAISE**. Whether the message is full of correction or comfort, our initial response should be to praise God for His Word. It is profound and undeserved grace that God has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures. God isn't compelled to, and yet He graciously gives us His Word. How glorious is it that we get to read God's Word in our own

language? Study church history and you will realize that many people died for us to have this book in English. Beyond that, millions of people today do not have this privilege right now.

At the end of our service, after sitting together and hearing the Sovereign God speak to us in His Word, we should always respond with praise. We magnify God's rich kindness in revealing Himself to us in Scripture. So, we do not want the Invitation to by-pass our initial response of praise for this awesome privilege.

# 5

WHILE I DO NOT HAVE STRONG OBJECTIONS CONCERNING THE TRADITIONAL INVITATION INVOLVING CHRISTIANS, I MUST SAY I DO HAVE STRONG OBJECTIONS WHEN IT INVOLVES NON-CHRISTIANS. THE ALTAR CALL OR INVITATION WHEN IT IS DIRECTED TOWARD NON-CHRISTIANS IS SOMETHING I WOULD COUNSEL ALL CHURCHES AND PASTORS TO AVOID.

That is a pretty weighty statement to make. After all, the Invitation is an established practice within churches throughout America. To counsel all churches and pastors against it would require that there be significant dangers to its use. I recognize the weightiness of my statement, and I say it because I believe there *are* significant dangers with the practice of the Invitation. Let me delineate my objections.

First, I believe the Invitation **MINIMIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH**. My fundamental objection to this approach is that it equates repentance and faith with walking an aisle. It muddies the water of conversion. Evangelists and preachers call

listeners to come down front *to accept Jesus*. Yet, the act of coming down front is never prescribed as a biblical way of coming to Jesus, while faith and repentance are.

Preachers will say things like, "*Come down front if you want to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.*" After the individual has arrived down front, the pastor will lead him to pray the prayer of salvation. Then after the prayer has been prayed, assurance is given to the person. "*You are now a Christian. You have accepted Christ into your heart. You are forgiven of all your sins.*" It is often easy to conclude that by coming down front and reciting a prescribed prayer this person became a Christian.

Yet, if that is how a person becomes a Christian, why didn't Peter call the listeners at Pentecost to come and pray? When addressing the Gentiles in Cornelius' household, why didn't he have them repeat a certain prayer? Instead he called them to repent and trust in Jesus. Repentance and faith, the very things required for salvation, are overshadowed by the 'sinner's prayer' and coming to the front in the Invitation system.

When external actions are prescribed for true salvation to occur, we find ourselves in a dangerous place. We are forced to ask ourselves difficult questions. What of those people who are willing to come to the front and by this very action are confused into thinking they are coming to Christ? What of anxious souls who are told they won't go to hell if they just come down front? What of those people who are willing to walk an aisle, especially if it gets them to heaven, who are trusting in the act of walking the aisle instead of the person of Christ for their salvation?

These questions lead me to the second danger of the altar call – **IT LEADS INDIVIDUALS TO PLACE THEIR FAITH IN AN ACTION AND NOT A PERSON.** Saving faith is placed in the person of Jesus Christ. We believe that he died on the Cross for our sins and through his resurrection we are declared righteous. We are not saved by undefined faith, but faith *in Christ*. Anything that will lead us to put our faith in anything besides Jesus must be avoided.

I fear the altar call does exactly that. It leads individuals to put their faith in the act of walking the aisle and praying a prayer. By

intentionally implying that these actions are how one comes to Jesus, individuals are tempted to trust in these actions. When they are questioned about salvation, they respond with confidence. Why? Because they prayed the sinner's prayer, as if the act of praying that prayer saved them. If they are Christians, they were not saved by the sinner's prayer, but by Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross and their absolute dependence upon *him* for salvation.

We are saved by Jesus Christ. He alone is the object of our faith. This is true even if you never repeated the sinner's prayer or walked the center aisle. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works, especially not the religious works of walking an aisle and praying a prayer.

This overemphasis on external actions leads to uncertainty and fear. If saving faith is centered on a certain prayer or action, Christians begin to wonder if they 'did it wrong.' Did I say the right words? Did I pray the right sinner's prayer? When I told my friend to repeat after me, did I mess it up? All those anxieties arise from a mindset that has

overemphasized the action of praying a certain prayer in a certain way at a certain part of the service.

In all these anxieties and fears the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has been pushed from the center of our faith's gaze. It is a subtle but dangerous shift that Satan delights in. What better way to short-circuit salvation than to get people hung up on the external actions that are meant to give evidence to the internal, spiritual realities? How clever it is to deceive a person by getting him to place his faith in the prayer of salvation instead of Christ, the giver of salvation!

Faith in the sinner's prayer or the act of walking an aisle does not save. And yet, I believe that the great danger of the altar call is that it leads people to put their faith in these acts. But saving faith is faith in a person, not an action.

The third danger that I see with the Invitation is that **IT IS DECISION DRIVEN**. Conversion is all tied up in your decision. The preacher needs to ramp up his effort to make sure he can get a decision. Just get them down the aisle. Just get them to pray 'the

prayer.' Just make sure they make a sincere decision and if they do they will be saved forever.

And since the goal is to get a decision, the Invitation is therefore prone to manipulation. We do whatever it takes to get a decision. We will turn the lights a little lower during the Invitation. We will sing soft, slow, emotionally stirring songs. The preacher will call for the final verse to be repeated 5 additional times. He just knows that God is doing business with someone here today.

If still nobody responds, some preachers will press on. *"You may never have another chance. You could die today in a car crash on your way home. You are not promised another moment."* And if none of that works, the preacher will turn his attention to those who want to 'rededicate' their lives to Jesus. Usually, after so much time and energy, a person will respond to the call for rededication, if for no other reason, then to save face for the preacher.

The altar calls emphasis on decisions which sometimes result from manipulation leads to the fourth great danger – **FALSE CONVERSIONS**. How many people have come down an aisle to make

a decision for Christ only to disappear from church completely? When conversion is equated with a decision, false conversions result. A decision for Jesus that never produces lasting fruit that perseveres to the end is false conversion.

Think of Matthew 13 regarding the parable of the four soils. The seed of the gospel is sown in the soil of four different human hearts, and only one rejects it entirely. The other three soils all initially receive the Word. We could say that they made decisions. The text says that the seed sown on rocky ground stands for "*the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.*" However, it doesn't last. It only endures for a while because "*when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*" What was immediately received with joy is immediately abandoned in the face of difficulty. Although he made a sincere decision, this person is not a Christian. The same holds true with the thorny soil. Again, there is an initial reception of the gospel; however, "*the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*" The

only Christian of the four soils is the final soil that hears and understands the Word and bears fruit in keeping with repentance.

We must conclude from this parable that a decision, even a sincere decision marked by joy, is not always genuine conversion. The danger of the Invitation system, which simplifies salvation to an initial decision, is that it assures the rocky soil and thorny soil that they are Christians, when they are not. Only those who bear fruit and persevere to the end are truly saved.

You know, that may be some of you reading this little booklet. You may have walked an aisle or prayed a prayer, but some of the dangers related to the Invitation are revealed in your life. You may be trusting in the act of praying for your salvation instead of Jesus Christ. Some of you may have made a decision to accept Christ, but that decision has born no genuine fruit in your life. At the heart level you are still the same person. Your initial joy in Christ may have been dried up by difficulty or chocked out by worldly pleasures, but the effect is still the same – you live just like a non-Christian.

My friend, I encourage you today to trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation. You and I have sinned against God. We deserve to be punished in Hell for our sin. But Christ, in great love, suffered our punishment on the Cross. He died in our place, bearing our sin. Through his death and resurrection he has canceled our debt. By repenting of your sins and clinging to Christ in faith, you can be saved.

So repent and believe! Set aside all of the religious accomplishments that you are hoping will make you acceptable to God. Turn your back on the sins you embrace, and turn instead to Jesus Christ. Look to the Cross and trust that salvation is only available through Jesus. Repent and believe. Put your hope in Jesus Christ and not an aisle or a prayer, and you will be saved. Isn't that awesome news!

As I hope you can see, my word of caution to every pastor and every church against using the Invitation has not been done flippantly. I believe that there are great dangers in the practice. In my estimation these dangers are too significant to justify the use of the Invitation, even if it has become a staple of American church life.

# 6

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL CHAPTERS, I HAVE BEEN UNFLINCHING IN MY CRITIQUE OF THE INVITATION. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS A DANGEROUS PRACTICE. YET, I MUST BE VERY CLEAR ABOUT A FEW THINGS I AM NOT SAYING. AFTER MAKING SUCH A POINTED CRITIQUE IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO OFFER A FEW POINTS OF CLARIFICATION.

First, I want to be clear that I am **not** saying that it is impossible to be saved during the Invitation or altar call. I am **not** saying that if you repeated a prescribed prayer you are not a Christian. I believe many people have been saved during invitations. Please do not misunderstand me on this point. I am convinced that my own wife was saved during an extended invitation at a church service when she was fifteen years old. People **do** get saved during the Invitation, but the Invitation –praying a certain prayer or walking an aisle – does not save them. Instead they are saved by their grace-inspired response of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection.

Let me be abundantly clear: all those individuals, who have been genuinely saved during the Invitation, are actually Christians. If they walked the aisle and repeated a prayer with repentance and faith in the person of Christ, they are Christians. Please don't misunderstand that.

Second, please understand that I am not saying that a pastor who uses the Invitation is ungodly, manipulative, or unwise. If the church you grew up in used the Invitation, please recognize I am not calling your church evil. There are many godly, gospel-preaching pastors and churches who would disagree with my assessment of the Invitation, and I love them as my family in Christ. I do want them to wrestle with my objections. I do hope that they are persuaded against the practice. But if they are not, I still love them, respect them, and would gladly partner with them in many aspects.

Third, I want to give you my alternative to the system of the Invitation. Some of you may be asking, if not the Invitation, then what? How do people get saved at this church if there are no invitations? My answer is simple. People get saved at this church the

same way they would at a church with invitations – by putting their faith in Jesus Christ and repenting of their sins. Every Sunday, I try to share the gospel, which concludes with the call to repent and believe in Jesus for salvation. But that proclamation of the gospel by the pastor on Sunday should not be the extent of our evangelism.

Instead of evangelism occurring once a week, we want the gospel to be proclaimed continually. Daily we are to share the gospel with one another. Daily we are to call one another to repent and believe Christ. We share the gospel at work and at home and in all of our relationships. So, instead of the pastor doing evangelism for the congregation through the Invitation once a week, we have hundreds of people doing evangelism every day.

The reality is that it is our mutual privilege to share the gospel. The Great Commission wasn't given merely to pastors, but to all of Christ's disciples. It is your great privilege to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, from the jungles of Nicaragua to the freshly cut grass of your neighbor next door. We are united in this Great Commission task together.

So, following the service, we should be gathering around meals to talk about God's Word. We should be engaging our guests and building gospel-driven relationship with them. On the ride home, we are asking our non-Christian friends about the service and the gospel. Individually and personally, we are all taking the truth of the gospel and fleshing it out in countless conversations and relationships. And when, by God's grace, the eyes of our friend's heart are opened to the gospel truth, we invite them to respond with repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. You get to enjoy that awesome privilege!

I get excited just thinking about it! Hundreds of people, week after week, in application to God's Word, are taking the glorious news of God's grace out into their daily lives. I ask you, what church will make a greater impact for the kingdom than the one where each member is serious about sharing the gospel?

May God graciously make every church like that!

# 7

AS I SAID AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS BOOKLET, I AM THE KIND OF PERSON WHO MUST CONTINUALLY RELEARN THE OBVIOUS LESSONS OF LIFE. JUST THE OTHER DAY I TOLD MY WIFE THAT I NEEDED TO GO TO 'THAT ONE PLACE' TO PICK UP 'THAT ONE THING' ONLY TO RECEIVE FROM HER A BLANK AND CONFUSED STARE. AS SHE ALWAYS DOES, SHE PATIENTLY REMINDED ME THAT SHE CAN'T READ MINDS AND THAT I NEEDED TO TELL HER *EXACTLY* WHAT I WAS THINKING. DUH! OBVIOUS LESSON ONCE AGAIN RE-LEARNED.

Not wanting to perpetuate my failure in that area, I have put together this small booklet. I hope that I have clearly explained why we do not have a traditional invitation. I hope that I have told you exactly what I am thinking on this issue.

If you still have questions, or need further clarification, I would be delighted to talk with you.

With much love and grace,

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