

EVANGELISTIC INVITATIONS

- Dr. Edward Watke Jr. -

I. WHY GIVE INVITATIONS?

- Invitations are normally a culmination of a message. The *drive or appeal* of evangelistic preaching demands a logical climax to its appeal.
- Without an invitation, preaching would be incomplete and the effect unknown.
- Invitations are an exalted form of persuasion. The burden of the message or sermon is not finished until the invitation is given.
- Here often the most energy and compassion is demanded in comparison to the message content itself.

A. They are Biblical:

1. The Bible is full of appeals, exhortations, entreaties, or pleadings.
2. Example: Gen 3:9 “*Where art thou, Adam?*” Exod. 32:36 “*Who is on the Lord’s side?*” Consider further Deut. 30:19-20, 31:11-13; and Isaiah 1:18.
3. In the New Testament we have the following list of Christ’s appeals, among many: Matt. 11:28-30; Matt 4:19; Lk 14:16-23
4. Paul and the other apostles wrote about persuading men: Acts 2:38-40; 10:48; 16:30-31; 26: 22-29; II Cor. 5:10-20
 - It is true that in modern times giving invitations publicly came into use in Finney’s and Moody’s day. For many years the inquiry room and anxious seat were used, as they were called.
 - We are told to *go and make disciples of all men*, (Matt. 28:18-20) this requires laboring to get decisions and giving invitations whether public or private. I think it is evident that Christ expects us to give invitations.
 - In the business world salesmen expect results from their appeals as they work at impressing the potential buyer.
 - In good, soul winning, fundamental churches invitations are expected by the person in the pew. In fact in many cases if the pastor or evangelist did not give invitations regularly the people would be very concerned.

B. They are Logical:

1. Sermons are for the purpose of winning people to Christ, moving them toward maturity, growth and godliness, and enlisting them for service for God’s glory.

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2. Good churches make every effort to create an atmosphere for decisions. What place is better than at the end of a powerful, Scriptural sermon?
3. The inclinations toward decisions wane quickly when conviction passes away. When the impulse is strong to deal with needs - that is when the person needs to move toward a decision. This is the end purpose of an invitation.
4. We live in a day of skillful, high-pressure advertising. People are accustomed to appeals or solicitations to see or to buy. The masses are invitation-minded because they are readily asked to sign on the dotted line.
5. In the fundamental, Baptist church people are educated to expect invitations at the close of the gospel message. Saved and unsaved alike must have opportunity given to them to make decisions.

C. They Appeal to the Will of the Individual:

1. *As we see how God made man*, we would note that giving invitations would be normal and fitting within the scope of man's nature.
2. When emotions are aroused (man is an emotional being) desires are stirred that soon pass away unless acted upon. The person generally needs an invitation to help him make the right use of the conviction of that moment.
3. Good impulses are harder to generate the second time than the first time.
4. When emotions are stirred up by the Holy Spirit's work and no outlet is given for action the people become used to being moved without response. This is damaging and renders the people more and more indifferent.
5. Invitations are generally made when there is a favorable mood, a convicting environment, and God is at work in the heart.

D. They are Practical:

1. They are the justified end to accomplish the gospel call, to win men to Christ at the earliest moment.
2. Today every outstanding evangelist uses them.
3. People need definite, vital Christian experience. Many lack assurance of salvation for they don't recall the time when they made a definite transaction with God. Evangelistic invitations bring them to the *crisis of committal or decision*.
4. Often the lost move when they see others move out in decisions. When Christians are willing, regularly, to do business with God at the altar then the unsaved are far more apt to also move forward for decision making.

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5. Invitations have been proven to increase the number of conversions, and additions to a Church.

E. They will be Honored:

1. Invitations will be rewarded in the hearts of the saved who have prayed for the unsaved to come to Christ.
2. Some of a church's layfolk will have been under the burden of concern for the lost. Invitations well-given and acted upon will bring great rejoicing to the hearts of the saved who love the Lord and the lost.
3. There is joyous anticipation that the Holy Spirit will honor the message, the testimony of the saved, and the intercession for the lost.
4. Often the unsaved consciously or unconsciously expect invitations at the end of sermons. They may not be ready to act, but they may admit they are thankful that there is concern for them.
5. Invitations are honored by the Holy Spirit, who also bears witness to the truth and is the One who moves on the heart of the lost and the Christian alike. (Jh.15:26-27)

II. WHEN SHOULD WE GIVE INVITATIONS?

- When the right kind of appeal has been made in the sermon.
- When you know there are unsaved present.
- When Christians should be moved to action.
- When you are reasonably sure someone will respond, even one.
- When you sense the convicting presence and power of the Holy Spirit on the audience.
- When you have had real victory in preaching.
- As the Holy Spirit would lead you.

III. HOW SHOULD THEY BE GIVEN?

- To quote Dr. Appleman, a great evangelist of the past, "*They should be given lovingly, tearfully, prayerfully, faithfully, expectantly, in humility and in faith.*"
- This is the most important part of the hour in most services. It is the crucial test of what has gone on before.
- It is often the hardest part and much forethought must be given by the preacher to the individuals there, the message and the aim.
- Far too often it is the most neglected part of a service. As a fisherman makes a study of how to land the fish, we ought to make a study of how,

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Biblically, to give an invitation that God can own and use.

- Consider that the invitation ought not begin abruptly without sufficient transition between the message and the invitation itself. Give time for people to change the place of their attention and to be touched by the Holy Spirit.
- There should be a very smooth transition from the message to the invitation itself. *If done abruptly, to the hearer you desire to reach, it may seem like it isn't important!*

A. Give It Clearly

1. Don't confuse the invitation by mixed propositions; be clear.
2. Each proposition (or appeal) should be stated specifically, and clearly separated from others.

B. Give It Confidently

1. Timidity will defeat an invitation time; as will carelessness or indifference.
2. Uncertainty about what the appeal or invitation is will defeat it.
3. Don't betray a lack of confidence. Maybe stepping down to the level of the people from the platform will show greater expectation. To get nearer to the people may make it easier for them to respond.

C. Give It Earnestly:

1. Give it as a dying man to dying men; realize eternal destinies hang upon the outcome.
2. Put aside frivolity, antics, or stunts, for the solemnity of eternity is in such an appeal.
3. With need to "*plead with Christ*", with "*holy concern*", with melting compassion.

D. Give It Courteously:

1. Respect the rights of your hearers.
2. Don't embarrass people by making them conspicuous, or use tricks, or deception.
3. Thank people for staying with you through any prolonged invitation; thank Christians for praying; but don't over persuade.

E. Give It Honestly:

1. Keep promises about number of songs, stanzas you will sing, etc., if such has been said.

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2. If you break a promise, apologize, dismiss those who wish to go or must go. If you stated, "just raise your hands", nothing more, then keep your word.

F. Give It Optimistically:

1. Be in a good humor; let the light of Christ dominate your life.
2. People will be impressed by your bearing as by your message.
3. Let nothing upset you, or put you in bad humor; don't scold or cajole, tease, criticize, chastise in word, etc.
4. Speak with love, patience, kindness, gentleness, in the spirit of Christ, with good cheer.

G. Give It Naturally:

1. Be yourself, not someone else.
2. Let the Holy Spirit use **you**.

H. Give It With Dependence on the Holy Spirit:

1. You can't give a successful invitation without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
2. Pray for His power upon the people -- depend upon Him, lean upon and listen to Him, and allow Him to lead you.
3. Try to discern the Holy Spirit's promptings about the invitation time.
4. It must be His work in lives, so make room for Him to work with expectation. Honor Him by looking to Him.

I. Give It Prayerfully:

1. Maintain an atmosphere of prayer; pray about the invitation as you do about the message itself.
2. Pray about HOW to give the invitation; **how to plead for souls**.
3. Teach the people to intercede for the lost during the service and especially during the invitation time.

J. Give It Positively:

1. Use positive statements; suggest positive steps, etc.
2. Be thorough, do not stop too soon. Be thorough in your presentation.
3. Cut down the sermon a bit to make time for a good invitation.

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4. Vary your appeals and give the Holy Spirit time to perform His ministry of conviction, wooing, and illumination.

K. Give It Scripturally:

1. Use Scripture freely; rely upon the Word of God to accomplish the divine purpose.
2. Memorize Scripture to be given during the invitation.
3. Make it Biblical and make it crystal clear.

IV. HOW TO APPEAL TO VARIOUS MOTIVES:

- People basically make decisions out of motive, even if they can't articulate their motive. We are appealing to the will, for decisive, wholehearted, immediate action.
- We have a right to appeal to various incentives to bring action, to provide appeal in or on a high level. (I Cor. 9:22)

A. Appeal to Save the Soul:

1. The soul is at stake; appeal to **fear** as it is a powerful motive.
2. Appeal to the fact of **HELL**, eternal condemnation outside of Christ.
3. Eternal consequences are Biblical appeals that ought to be used.

B. Appeal to Find Relief, Release, Freedom From Guilt:

1. Matt. 11:28-30
2. Isa. 55:1-2, 6-7; Isa. 1:18

C. Appeal to Living on Life's Highest Levels:

1. To be able to live away from **defeat** -- broken and crushed by sinful habits and lusts.
2. Appeal to **aspiration**, often this will reach youth. (Jh 8:36; Phil. 4:13)
3. Appeal to the **best** that God gives. (Jh 10:10c)

D. Appeal to God's Love:

1. John 3:16-17
2. Rom. 5:6,8 etc.

E. Appeal to Mans' Highest Duty:

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1. Acts 17:30 Man is commanded to repent.
2. Our duty is to repent, turn from **Sin**, and obey the gospel. We have offended, grieved, and ignored the **rights** of a Holy God.
3. We owe it to God and others to accept the gift of God, not for our sake but because He has the right to our lives.

F. Appeal to Set the Best Example:

1. No ones lives unto himself; we influence others.
2. Parents ought especially to realize their great influence.

G. Appeal to Christ's Fellowship:

1. Th world is full of lonely people. No one need be lonely, if HE is known.
2. Jh 15:15. Christ is the true friend for every time of need.
3. Christians are the best people in the world; best friends, etc.

H. Appeal to Logic and Reason:

1. There is every good reason why the person should come to Christ.
2. There is no good reason to stay in sin, lost, undone, under the power of sin and in satan's family.
3. Marshall the reasons, appeal to good sense and sound logic or sane judgment. (Isa. 1:18)

V. WAYS OF GIVING AN INVITATION:

Invitations will be for both saved and lost and may be handled in a number of different ways.

A. Invite Them to Make the Decision Later:

1. Come to pastor's office next day, or to see the pastor or someone else after the service.
2. Settle the problem or need at home.

B. Invite Them to Remain for an After-service:

1. Invite inquirers to remain and gather in a room.
2. Remain for a prayer meeting.
3. Move to a room during the invitation for someone to help them.

C. Invite Them to Raise the Hand:

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1. For prayer;
2. About being lost and needing Christ;
3. Asking all the saved to raise the hand, and then pleading with those who could not do so;
4. Or about some decision they need to make as a Christian.

D. Invite Them to Pray at Their Seat:

1. There make a decision as a Christian.
2. Lead them in the sinner's prayer there, then ask how many made such a decision and indicate that with the uplifted hand.
3. Get them to make public their decision of accepting Christ at a later time.

E. Invite Them to Stand:

1. To indicate their decision to accept Christ, or perhaps some decision as a Christian.
2. Invite praying Christians to stand, who are praying for the lost, and then ask the lost to stand indicating their desire to be saved.
3. Invite those under conviction about the need of change, as a Christian, to stand. Maybe they need to make some decision to serve the Lord in the Church.

F. Invite Them to Come Forward:

1. Include requests or appeals to come to the front during a song, etc.
2. Invite deacons to lead the way, or a Sunday School teacher (in whose class they would be) to stand by the person who just accepted Christ.
3. Invite recent converts to step out publicly -- then invite the teacher of the class they would be in to come forward to stand with them -- or the deacon under whose *shepherd care* they would receive help.
4. Invite newly saved to come and give testimony of what Christ has done for them.
5. Invite all Christians to come forward to pray over a matter. Or invite intercessors who are burdened for the lost to come to Christ to come forward.

G. Vary the Methods, Plans, Purposes and Procedures:

1. At times employ a solo sung as part of the invitation time.
2. At times appeal to tithers, souls-winners, or to young people to go into full-time service.

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2. At times appeal to tithers, souls-winners, or to young people to go into full-time service.
3. Appeal to dedication to Christ, to purity, to godly living, etc.
4. Appeal to those who need to follow the Lord in obedience in baptism.
5. Appeal to those who need to become prayer warriors, etc.
6. There are as many appeals as there is variety in the Word of God or in sermons themselves.
7. The preacher must study over, pray over, agonize over and seek the mind of the Lord for the invitation time. It should be **PLANNED PRIOR TO THE SERVICE.**

VI. SHOULD I GIVE AN INVITATION?

- The results of an evangelistic ministry should preclude the need of invitations.
- The Holy Spirit has moved, the Word of God has been preached, the preacher has delivered his soul, therefore, an invitation is given for the purpose of drawing the net.
- There can be false forces. We can put too much emphasis on invitations and they become an end in themselves and not a means to the end.
- They can be strained to function beyond the purpose of God.

A. God Uses Men:

1. The pastor is called to do the work of an evangelist.
2. The preacher is to give invitations privately and in public ministry. It must be in both.

B. God Uses Varied Means and Methods:

1. That is clearly seen in a study of the Book of Acts.
2. We must be sure that we don't make any false representations.
3. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God -- not our own methods.
4. We must depend on the Holy Spirit -- not self as the messenger.
5. We must be sure our delivery of the message is very clear and decisions can be made logically and clearly.
6. If we have not given a clear delivery of the Gospel, we cannot expect an immediate acceptance of our message in the heart and life.

Yes, Give God-honoring, Biblical Invitations! Study, Pray To Do It Well!
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