INVITING PEOPLE TO CHURCH

John 1:43-51 (Read later)

Purpose: To prepare us to become inviting Christians.

Introduction:

# I received an email from a pastor. I want to read you what he said and how I responded: “We are constantly told (at seminars) that there are millions of people in the U.S. who are just waiting to be invited to church. But, it more often seems that when we do invite we get the brush off. Can you give us some tips on how NOT to feel like quitting or giving up when someone rejects our attempts at inviting them to church or sharing our faith? Perhaps you could even give us some tips on why we feel so dejected when this happens. I really do desire to share my faith more, but get shut down so often that I find myself wondering, ‘Why should I try to share it again?’ I don’t mean to feel that way but, rejection is extremely difficult to take time and time again; it wears even the most zealous person down to total exhaustion (and at times cynicism) after a while.”

My response: We understand we will always experience more rejection than acceptance. Witnessing stretches our faith in the following ways:

1. We trust God for fruit;
2. We continue to invite the unchurched believing God wants us to do so;
3. We count on God continuing to work where we cannot;
4. Our invitations are expressions of praise to God; He is the focus of our good deeds, not our well being.

We can also seize the principle of large numbers. We are to sow largely and frequently. We are to stretch ourselves to touch lost or people in order to reach some.

Jesus’ parable of the talents reveals the danger of being paralyzed by fear. The one talent man refused to sow for fear of losing. What he had was taken from him. Refuse to make decisions on the basis of fear.

You may want to evaluate your invitations. How can they become more personal or winsome? Non-church people want to be invited, but they also want to feel good about attending church. The unchurched come to worship when they trust the people who invited them and if they know they will not be embarrassed, singled out or put on the spot. Churched people need to brag on their pastor and other strengths the local church possesses. Frequently church people are embarrassed and make excuses about their church before people even decide to try worshiping with them. For example, “Our church is not that big.”

Instead excited church people tell about how God is answering prayer, people are getting saved, and everyone is accepted. When church people are saying, “The pastor is down to earth; a tremendous preacher; makes us laugh and cry; or helps us live life better,” the congregation is inevitably growing.

(Read John 1:43-51) I. Jesus’ interaction with Nathaniel gives us some insights into how we can engage people. A. Jesus complimented Nathaniel (47)

 1. We too can affirm the worth of people. 2. We can comment favorably about their strengths. B. Jesus predicted a preferred future (50-51). 1. Anyone who comes to Christ walks toward a bright future. 2. We can anticipate God will reveal Himself to Christians. 3. We can honestly predict how God will work in other’s lives. # Jesus called Peter, a rock, long before he became one.

II. How do we apply this passage? A. Do not pressure or guilt people into following Jesus or attending church. # “You ought” or “you should” is a counter productive message. B. Try the following: 1. Friendship affirmed—“I’d love to have you worshiping with me.” 2. Enthusiastic recommendations-- a. “You will enjoy . . .” (what connects with you). b. “Our church provides . . .” (programming, acceptance, biblical preaching). c. “Our church’s strengths are . . . “ 3. Personal testimony—“I go to church because . . .” 4. Positive prediction—“You will find . . .”

 C. Be assured God is working behind the scenes dealing with the hearts of people.

Conclusion:

 Elia told how her mother influenced her to walk with God. “My mom raised us kids. She did the best she could to support us. Even though our life was not overloaded with creature comforts, Mom made sure we were spiritually fit. She made sure we were on the church bus every Wednesday and Sunday. Mom didn’t always go with us though. “We grew up in that church and I know if it had not been for the church family there, our bills would not have been paid, and there would have been times we did not have food. Without the church, we also would have missed out on all the wonderful memories of church functions; the times spent learning and growing with our spiritual brothers and sisters. They loved us as Jesus does, with a spiritual love that cannot really be fully described. You just have to experience it. With the help of my mom and the church, I was able to build a solid spiritual foundation. “Eventually I grew up and had kids. We moved to another town. Every day while driving to work I would drive by the Church of the Nazarene. I would say to myself, “I should go there some time.” Well this went on for four years. God kept working on me until one Sunday I just got up and went. I dressed the kids and was on my way to God. I did not know where to go, or what to do, but I was greeted by so many nice people. “I will always remember the sermon the pastor gave that day. It will always be with me. He said God loves me and knows me better than I know myself. I remember he gave a demonstration about how big the world is, and the universe and the galaxy. Then he said, ‘With all the things God has made, I am his greatest creation!’ That was it for me! From then on I knew I had found what I was missing. “On August 20, I completely gave myself to the Lord. He wrote my name in the Lamb’s book of Life. Since then I feel the Holy Spirit has inspired me and I know I am led by the Lord. I have a renewed passion for people and for God.”