

INVITATIONAL EVANGELISM MADE EASY

by

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(A model based on Matthew 22:9-10)

"Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet. Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests." (Matthew 22:9-10, NRSV).

Invitational Evangelism is really quite simple. It can be done in any size congregation by any individual or group. And to make matters even easier, it can be done in a great variety of ways!

I. The Command: "Go and Invite"

The Biblical mandate to followers of Jesus is clear: "Go and invite." God has prepared a sumptuous banquet for all people and followers of Jesus are called to invite others to that banquet. We are **not** cooks, who stay in the kitchen. We are **not** called to stay in the banquet hall and serve tables. We are "extenders of the invitation." Our job is to leave the banquet hall and go to where the people are and invite them to attend the banquet God has prepared for them.

Our job is **not** to sit in judgment. Our job is **not** to validate reasons or excuses. Our job is **not** to sit around and wait for others to come to use. God commands us: "Go and invite!"

How do you and the members of your congregation invite others to attend God's banquet? What methods do you use to extend the invitation to others? Which of the following could be used in your

congregation?

- **Media: radio, TV, newspaper, billboard**
- **Yellow Pages ad**
- **Brochures, posters, hand-outs**
- **Signs: Off-site to direct people to the church building; and on-site to direct people once they arrive on the church grounds**
- **Visitation by pastors, staff and members**
- **Word of Mouth/Community "grapevine": People are invited to the banquet by way of what the community says about your congregation. Your congregation's reputation may precede the invitation you extend.**
- **Telephone calls/survey**
- **Mailings: church newsletters; flyers; magazines; publications**
- **Ministry programs: (e.g. Sunday School; Vacation Bible School; church socials; choirs; youth and adult fellowship groups, etc.)**
- **Service projects: (e.g. Food pantry; homeless shelters; soup kitchen; literacy programs, etc.)**

II. The Context: "The Main Streets"

God's command gives us specific directions for fulfilling our mission with our local context: "go into the main streets." We are **not** asked to go "off the beaten path." We have an invitation which we are to extend to as many people as possible. The best way to do that is to go

to the busy places where people are.

1. Where are the "main streets" in your life? Where are the places where your life intersects with the lives of others?

2. Where are the "main streets" in your community? Where are the places where your congregation has the opportunity to reach out to others?

3. Once you have identified the "main streets" for you and your congregation, how might the invitation to attend God's banquet be extended in those places?

III. The Guests: "Invited everyone you find/both good and bad"

To whom is God's invitation to be extended? Once again, the Biblical text is clear: "Invite everyone you find. . .both good and bad." God's banquet is a banquet for **ALL** people. God is the host; we are God's servants. We are the ones sent to invite those on God's invitation list: namely, everyone we find.

We are **not** called to be selective in issuing the invitations. We are **not** called to invite only "good" people or people we think will make "good" church members. God's banquet has been prepared for **ALL** people and our mission as followers of Jesus is to invite those whom God wants invited.

- 1. Name three unchurched people you know personally and invite them to attend a church-sponsored activity with you.**
- 2. What kind of people would benefit from ministry programs and service projects sponsored by your congregation? What kind of new programs and projects would help your congregation reach out to those in the community?**
- 3. Who is absent from your congregation? What group(s)/kind(s) of people are present in your community, but missing from your congregation?**

IV. The Event: "The Wedding Banquet"

The wedding banquet is a sumptuous feast which God has prepared and wants us and others to enjoy. Invitational evangelism is the process by which we invite others to attend the banquet which God has prepared.

- 1. Describe the kind of programs/activities sponsored by your congregation that have been a blessing to you?**
- 2. What kind of sumptuous feast has God helped your congregation prepare in order to share God's blessings with others?**

3. What kind of events/activities sponsored by your congregation would be a blessing to those currently unchurched? What kind of new programs/projects could your congregation develop that would be a blessing to those in your community?

V. The Response of God's Servants: "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all"

The command to "go and invite" demands a response from those to whom the call is issued. The call issued to followers of Jesus is one that calls for faithful obedience. The followers of Jesus must respond to the call to invite others to attend God's banquet.

1. In what ways can you personally respond faithfully to God's call to "go and invite?"

2. What would make it easier for you to invite others to God's banquet? What kind of training and/or resources could your congregation provide for you?

3. In what ways can your congregation become more faithful in extending the invitation to attend God's banquet to others?

VI. The Response of the Guests: "The wedding hall was filled"

The invitation to attend God's banquet also demands a response from those to whom the invitation is extended. It may well be that some will respond negatively to the invitation extended by you on God's behalf to attend the banquet. That does **not** mean that there will not be a banquet. God's banquet will take place! Those who respond favorably to the invitation to attend God's banquet will enjoy the blessing that God has prepared for them.

- 1. What can you or your congregation do to encourage more people to accept God's gracious invitation?**

- 2. How can you or your congregation invite others to God's banquet in ways that will help them respond enthusiastically to God's invitation?**

- 3. What would happen if you or everyone else in your congregation invited at least one person per week to come to the banquet God has prepared through your congregation?: Would the wedding hall become full?**