

Message Series: **'Invite: because people matter'**

Message Title: **'Let's Invite People to Alpha'**

Scripture Source: **John 1:35-51**

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### **Invitations Matter**

It may be a beautifully crafted wedding invitation, a simple but heartfelt email, an unexpected phone call, a chance encounter with someone on the street, a text that catches you off guard...you are invited to some event, to connect with someone or a group of people, to share a meaningful experience or mark a memorable moment...it starts with an invitation from someone to someone.

What makes invitations important to us are the people involved, the histories and journeys of life shared.

And, we know how much it means to us to extend an invitation to someone because we want them to share in a moment that matters to us.

### **Spiritual Invitations Matter**

Many of you have acknowledged that someone invited you to come to church with them, or some other spiritually and relationally oriented event. When you think about it, the realization that you mattered to them can be heart warming and humbling. Someone cared enough about your life, your souls' well being to invite you to consider the message of Jesus and how God can be personally involved in your life. My Story

### **The Transforming Potential of an Invitation: John 1:29-39**

John the Baptist is pointing people to Jesus and explaining to people the core ministry responsibility of Jesus "who takes away the sins of the world" because he is the "Lamb of God." As a result of this some of John's disciples leave John to investigate Jesus. John 1:37-38. Jesus asks a question, they respond with a question and Jesus responds with an invitation. "Come and you will see." Vs. 39 They said 'yes' to his invitation and little do they know that the direction and purpose of their lives is beginning to change, profoundly so. "...and spent that day with him." Can you imagine the table time, the meals shared, the laughter, the reflective moments. All because Jesus extended an invitation and they said 'yes.'

Pause to consider: Jesus invites people to follow him because people like you and me matter to him. Consider the countless invites Jesus offered: John 6:35; 7:37; 8:12...and there are many others, read through a gospel like John and see Jesus engaging with people and inviting them to consider him, follow him and trust him. These invitations have the potential to transform a life...if responded to. A 'yes' is essential, a consideration is not enough.

Jesus invites us into a deepening relationship with himself, to experience his grace and truth in genuinely transforming and sustaining ways in our life...forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with God. Revelation 3:20

### **The Invited Invite Others: John 1:40-47**

Having experienced something magnetic and mesmerizing about Jesus, have 'tasted' something of the grace and truth of Jesus and seeing how it intersects with their lives, they offer spiritual invitations to people in their lives. They can't hoard the experience with Jesus; they want others to consider and experience Jesus personally.

First invitation: John 1:40-42 – Andrew to his brother Peter. Family was his priority. And Peter (Simon) said 'yes' to the invite to meet Jesus and then change began in his life with a pronouncement made by Jesus to Simon. 'Things are about to get interesting Simon and it starts with a name change!'

Pause to consider: is there someone close to you that an invitation to join you at Alpha could be extended to? Who might that be?

Second Invitation: John 1:43-51 – Philip finds Nathaniel and invites him to meet Jesus. Nathaniel reacts with a skepticism that is refreshingly honest. “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Vs. 46. And I love Philip’s response...a gutsy and direct invitation...“Come and see.” Vs.46

Pause to consider: friends, this is a deeply encouraging and instructive moment. Philip isn’t thrown off by Nathaniel’s initial reaction. He doesn’t chide his friend or shrink from the moment. He warmly and boldly challenges his friend to check Jesus out for himself. I love that. Let us not be thrown off by questions, doubts or cynicism. Let’s rise to the moment and extend an invitation for personal exploration. This is the heartbeat of Alpha, creating settings around tables where honest and real questions can be raised without the fear of being shot down or shut down. People need to be reminded that they will not lose their seat at the table for what they believe or the questions they ask.

Back to the story: John 1:47-51 – Jesus affirms Nathaniel in specifics, there is not a hint of judgment coming from Jesus to this guy.

Pause to Consider: We too must follow Jesus example and affirm the spiritual curiosity, questions, and doubts that people bring to us, one on one, Sunday mornings, or settings like Alpha.

### **Insights for Inviting People**

1. Move from recommending people to check out Sunday church or Alpha to extending an invitation with a specific date, with you joining them. Use the Invite card, personalize it!
2. Move from praying for people in general to naming specific people you want to invite to Alpha or a Sunday am service and praying consistently for them...and for yourself. Colossians 4:2-6 Ask God to ‘open doors’ for you for conversation to happen.
3. Engage and extend the invitation, with grace and warmth. Invite them to check out the website ‘TryAlpha.ca’ so that they can check things out in advance to get a sense of what this is about.
4. Trust God to guide you with what to say and how to invite specific people and remember only God can change a heart. Ours is to invite and engage relationally, sharing our story of faith; God is the only one that can enable a person to understand and grasp his grace and truth...we partner with God, but he is the managing director!  
When people decline our invitation, be respectful and continue to build into the relationship the best you can...you just never know when a ‘yes’ may come, and remember, never say someone’s ‘no’ for them!

### **Be Grateful for the ‘Yes’**

Take note of how God is working in your life and the life of a family member or friend when the invitation is accepted and acted upon. Be encouraged and seek to be the voice and touch of Jesus to people along the way...seeking to point them to Jesus, to consider him, to trust and follow him.