

Message Series: **The Invitation: what will you do with yours?**

Message Title: **Influential Invitations**

Scripture Source: **2 Timothy 1:3-7, John 12:1-10, and Matthew 11:28-30**

Date: Sunday, June 17, 2018

Teacher: John Garner

Think Carefully...

Who or what first inspired or motivated you to consider seriously...Jesus and a life of following him? Rarely does a person turn Godward without some jarring life experience triggering the turn or a connection with someone who is respected and trusted.

When you think about the beginning steps of your journey to Jesus, and with him, what event or who was it that got the ball rolling? Exercise: a 'who' or a 'what'? or a combo of both?

What was it about the 'what'/'who' that God used to get your attention and create a spiritual interest within you?

What specifically influenced you? Influence is defined as: "the capacity or power of persons and things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behaviour or opinions of others...verb: to move to some action...synonym: sway, direct, rouse, persuade"

It may be that you are just beginning to investigate the Christian faith and Jesus. Maybe, even without knowing it, a 'what' or 'who' has been the source of questions, wonderings and doubts, please pay attention to what is going on within you!

The Power of Influence: Beginning Days: Timothy's story: 2 Timothy 1:3-5

Here was a younger man, seeking to follow Jesus in the midst of some challenging life and ministry situations and Paul reminds him of the influence of his mother and grandmother. A genuine faith was active and real in this man's life. Paul encourages him to remember those used of God to inspire him to consider the invitation of Jesus to follow him.

Who might that have been in your life? Especially in the beginning days.

Who and what was it about them that spiritually inspired and instructed you?

Here is my list:

- Olivia Piper-Garner: manifested grace and truth, expressed with love.
- Harvey and Vera Kellar: older church couple, hospitable and encouraging to 'a soul in disarray.'
- Hal Dyck: a fellow employee at Jack Nash's: he listened and listened and refused to write me off!

Your turn! Names and reasons. And thanksgiving to God and that person if still alive.

Those beginning days of spiritual interest can be fleeting and fragile. Thank God for people who engaged with us wisely, gently, and firmly when needed.

"It's a matter of perspective – I can fan sparks into a flame or blow out a flickering flame in the lives of those around me. What do I see? A spark that could become a flame or a flicker beyond hope?" I am grateful for those who saw what could be, by God's grace and not only what was. That may be the same for you.

The Power of Influence: The Ongoing Journey: 2 Timothy 1:16-18

I love this story...one man encouraging with deeds, words and presence another man.

Who has God been using to inspire and instruct you as you seek to keep saying 'yes' to the call of Jesus to follow and serve his purposes? What is it specifically about that person in your current journey that 'refreshes' and 'helps' you? Illustrate: thoughtful listener, wise insights, warm and encouraging 'yes' face (tell story!)

The Power of 'What': John 12:1-10

Sometimes it is a 'what' of some sort that grabs our attention and makes us think deeply about life, faith and God in ways we never have before. The story of Lazarus as recorded in John 12, the profound power of an unexpected 'what' to turn people's hearts toward Jesus.

Lazarus died. Jesus raised him from the dead. A dinner party in Jesus' honour. Lazarus is at the party. Now note what happens as recorded in verses 9 and 10. The story of the resurrection of Lazarus...an unexpected 'what' compelled people to come and see 'dead man walking.' The 'what and who' joined forces and notice what happened. *"on account of him (Lazarus) many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him."*

Sometimes God uses a life jarring 'what' to grab our attention spiritually. It is often the 'what' of a loss of some sort...a failed marriage, a lost job, a health crisis and the list goes on. Was it a 'what' that got your attention? What was it specifically?

Sometimes it an unexpected good 'what' that humbles us, and causes us to turn our hearts towards God in a life changing way. James 1:17 *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."*

Often, God brings into our 'what' a 'who' who helps us understand and discern what God may be up to and how we could respond to God in specific ways.

The Power of Your Life, used by God

As we are committed to following Jesus and living out his purpose for our lives, God will use us to influence others to consider Jesus and his life giving invitation. Yes, that can include you and me, with our regrets and failings. Yet, God knows the deepest desires of our minds and hearts. Men, on this Father's Day, tell God that you are ready to be a voice of encouragement and support to others, starting on the home front and moving out from there. Let your story be unedited and honest. What you may wish were different, God can use to build a bridge into someone's life in a meaningful way. Through Jesus our sins are fully forgiven. We are given strength to address consequences and move forward with faith, hope and love. And through us, some people, not all, but some will be moved to consider the warm and compassionate invitation of Jesus. Matthew 11:28-30. And some will say their own heartfelt and genuine 'yes' to the leadership and authority of Jesus in their lives. And we will be glad...grateful for the who's and what's God used in our lives to turn our hearts to him, and grateful to be used of God to be a voice and life of influence in the lives of others.