

# INVITE + + +

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How many of you across all campuses, by a show of hands, how many of you have ever been invited to something at one time? Go ahead and raise your hand if you've ever been invited to something at one time. Okay, seeing that and also campus directors at other campuses, I just wanna invite anyone that those of you that didn't raise your hand, you're welcome to come to my house for dinner tonight. Now you've been invited to something, I'm sorry it's taken you this long in life to have an invitation.

You know what? What if we said that there was an invitation that we all would want, like there's an invitation that we get that we go, that really mattered to me. Like invitations can make all the difference in how we feel in the world. I had an invitation that, well, it just mattered a lot. It changed the way I felt about a person, it changed just how I felt about that event, it changed everything about it.

It was an invitation by Lori's cousin to come and experience the Detroit Lions opening the season against the Kansas City Chiefs. It was the first game of the year at, it was on Prime TV at Arrowhead Stadium, and Tim invited me to come down and watch the game in his suite and enjoy this amazing and epic game. So I tell Lori about it and she goes, well, he's my cousin, like did I, am I invited? And I said, I don't know, I forgot to ask. So I texted him and said, hey, Tim, is Lori invited? And he, praise the Lord, said yes, because in my head I thought, okay, if he says no, I'm still going, so how do I get forgiveness? I don't know how to do that, but we'll figure it out. So anyway, he said yes, everything was good.

You know, a personal invitation is something that we hold and we're thankful for and we're likely to say yes to. Did you know this, that you are the most invited generations in the history of humanity? Think about that for a minute, just let that settle. You're the most invited generations, meaning this, that you're invited to all sorts of things, text message blasts, hey, come to my show, email blasts, hey, come to this, this and that, dinners, hey, we got this, come on out to dinner tonight, right, you know, whether if you're on open table, there's invites to open, all these things that are mass marketing, emails, text messages, right, groups, Facebook groups, hey, y'all come out to this for your neighborhood party, everything like that.

I mean, we can blast everything, we even use it in church sometimes where we say like, hey, it's really simple, just send out this mass text or social media to an invite. But those don't really work, do they? Like you don't find yourself saying I'm gonna go because this was a mass marketed text and I feel special.

We would take invitations to Super Bowls, to World Cups, to World Series, to World Championships, we take invitations from a friend saying, hey, I know the owners of the restaurant that just opening up or hey, we've been really wanting to try this restaurant, would you guys come with us? Hey, we'd like to go in this place, will you come with us? Personal invitations, we can accept all the time. And we like to

give personal invitations to those that we love and that we care about to hang out and to do something special and something cool with us.

What about personal invitations to church or into spiritual conversations? That's where the hesitation begins, the friction starts to rub. But yet we actually find that personal invitations to church and spiritual conversations can lead to amazing conversations, community and transformation. We've been working through the My Four over the past three weeks where we've talked about what it means to identify, to know your four people that are fans of God or far from God, to include those people in your daily rhythm and routines of prayers and reaching out and getting to know them.

And today we're talking about what does it mean to invite them? And so as you are starting to identify and know these four as they are on there, these now are leading to you saying, I want to invite you when the time is right and in the place where the Spirit has opened your heart and my heart to have a spiritual conversation or an invitation to come and see who Jesus is. Because the truth of the matter is the harvest is plentiful. The problem isn't that people are saying no to the invitations, it's that we're not asking. We're not inviting.

Barna just released a study and I want to invite you to really be challenged in this study. The study says that 82% of people would come to church if a friend invited them. Here's my question for you everywhere right now, I want you to think about this. Only 2% of Christians invite their friends. Are you in the 2% or the 98%?

And let me ask this question, like as you're thinking about that, here's the way to do that. Who was the last person you invited to church that was a friend? Who was the last person that you actually invited? And if you're like, well, I can't remember, then you're in the 98%. Or if you're like, well, it was a really long time ago and it was so-and-so, then you're in the 98%. And maybe today you're saying to yourself, yeah, but all my friends are already Christians. Then I think God's challenging you and calling you today right now to get more friends.

And I'm being serious about that. Like, please don't think and say, because here's one of the problems that I think we have, and this is why we have to even talk about this. Because I think Western American Christianity has become a country club Christian faith. That we've said, well, like I'm good, I like my church things, I like all the church stuff. Like if my friends, I don't know if I want, I don't know if they'd be comfortable coming. I don't know if I want them to come.

And yet Jesus called us to resist everything against country club faith. He said, do you go and make more disciples? Baptizing them and teaching them everything I have commanded you. Get more friends. This is why my four matters, that we've identified four people that are fans of God or far from God and yet not followers of God. And so we're trying to invite them into what it means to be a follower because we know what happens.

And so that leads us to God's open invitation for us. And there's something about having an open invitation that makes us feel special. My friend in Michigan, Ron, bought a lake house on the other side of the state in Muskegon. And one day he said to me, he said, Greg, you and Lori and the girls, why don't you guys go for a weekend? So I found a weekend where we could go and we went and it was amazing. It was beautiful. It was peaceful and tranquil. Muskegon, probably one of the best farmers markets in the nation. It was awesome. All this great stuff.

And I got back and was at Ron's house and I just said, dude, thank you so much. That was a wonderful time. And I would get together with Ron almost every week. And so the next week after I got back, he hands me this key and it's painted Michigan State. He's an alumni of Michigan State. I'm a go blue. He's a go green, go white. Now I'm a go red, but go big red, but he had that.

But here's what this key is. He handed me this key and I said, Ron, what's this? And he said, Greg, that's the key to the lake house. Anytime you wanna go, it's yours. Just text me so I know and can make sure our family's not there, but it's yours. Our house is your house. And man, I was like blown away. Like, I mean, it just was this amazing generosity of love and kindness. And it let me know that what an amazing invitation.

God through your my four is saying to each one of your my four, here's the key to the kingdom of heaven. Here's the key. Give it away. Let them know they're always welcome.

And Isaiah 55, one through three. And again, across all campuses where you see the words in red, I want you to read those with me. And so as these words come up together here, we're gonna actually start together as we read Isaiah 55, one through three, let's go.

Everyone who thirsts to the waters and he who has no money, buy and eat. Buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and to me, hear that your soul may live and that I will make you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Come and see, come and see.

Notice what doesn't happen here. God isn't saying, hey, come when you're all put together. Come when you've got everything figured out. Come when you have enough money to actually make a difference. Come when you know the answers or you have no more doubts or you have no more fears or you have no more heartaches or you're no longer broken, then come.

You see, church and the kingdom of God is not a become, believe and belong or a believe, become and belong. It is a belong, believe and become. You belong already. So come, bring your brokenness, bring your heartache, bring your doubts, bring your fears, bring your hesitations, bring all the things, bring yourself the way you are, just come.

The invitation is come. That was the invitation given to you. That is the invitation given to your fore, come. It's not a country club. It's a house that is wide open with the arms of Christ in the victory over sin, death and the devil for everyone.

Because the Easter tomb is the open door for that everlasting covenant of the steadfast love of God, the Father for everyone, everywhere, every day. Everyone, everywhere, every day. Come, come, you're welcome here. That's the invitation we give.

And that invitation then leads us to have conversations where someone's brave enough to ask you, why do you believe what you believe? Why do you care so much? Why do you wanna know how I'm doing every week? Why do you wanna know what I'm celebrating all the time? And where you're bold and brave enough to share because I love you, because God loves you, because God loves me.

And that leads a conversation into a community where they experience a welcomeness and a belonging, where they experience a sense of reality of being people that are just like them, struggling with the same things they're struggling, celebrating the same things they're celebrating.

And those communities are the ones and those communities lead us to see conversions, faith testimonies and stories, where we talk about what has God been doing in our lives? Because the invitation is personal for you. It's not, God doesn't do mass market emails. God doesn't do mass texting. God doesn't say, you know, yeah, you're all welcome. Like it's personal, it's by name. It's your name. It's your four's name. And those open invitations lead to open conversations.

My best friend in high school growing up was a guy named Mike. And I'm gonna be fully transparent with you. Like Mike and I had no business being friends. We both were super different, but somehow some way God brought us together and we were like friends to the hill.

And one night we were out at a party and we dropped his car off at the school, taking my car to the party, came back. It was late about midnight, something like that. And we go to get in his car and we were gonna caravan back to his house, stay the night.

And as we go, he does this where he checks and he goes, Griff, I don't have my keys. And I'm like, well, he's like, the car's... So we figured out, let's just get the car locked. We'll lost him somewhere. We'll get your stuff. We'll figure this out tomorrow. So pre-cell phone, aging myself.

So we head up to the school to a pay phone called AAA. They're like, it'll be a couple hours till we can get there. So there are Mike and I on a curb. And now Mike, Mike's a stellar athlete. One of the best athletes in the school. He's yoked to all get out. I'm like average, kind of frumpy, little mullet thing going on in the back.

Mike was a great athlete. Matter of fact, he was drafted out of high school by the Houston Astros in the fifth round. And to put that in perspective, Mike was the 137th pick out of the entire nation of college and high school athletes.

So as we're sitting there on the curb, Mike says, hey Griff, like, what do you think about God? Now Mike is far from God, a fan of God, not even like we've never even had these conversations. And I was at a moment where I was like, do I tell him what I believe?

And so I did tell him. I said, I believe in God. I said, I've seen him working in my life. I said, from a kid that should have been aborted, that should have been died after birth due to a kidney issue that was adopted into this amazing family with given more opportunities than I ever would have had, to a kid with foot issues that had to wear weird boots to now this awkward young man that's friends with a guy that like we really have nothing that we should be friends about. And we had an open conversation where I saw Jesus working in my life.

And it was a come and see moment. In John 1, 39 through 46, he said to them, come and you will see. So they came and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about the 10th hour. And one of the two had heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon. And he said to him, we found the Messiah, which

means the Christ. He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and he said, you are Simon, son of John. You will now be called Cephas, which means Peter.

And the next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, follow me. Now, Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. And Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him whom Moses and the law and also the prophets have written about, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said, can anything good come out of Nazareth? And Philip said, come and see, right? And here's the thing, notice what Nathanael did. Nathanael asked the question, like, what do you mean? Tell me more, like, can this really be good?

And notice what Philip didn't do. Philip didn't defend it. Philip didn't argue with him. Philip didn't make a case. He just simply said, come and see.

And here's the thing for your four, you don't have to have the answers. You just have to have the invitation. Come and see, come and hear my testimony because Jesus is the come and see. Jesus is the follow me. You're the person who simply says, you've got to meet this guy. He's changed my life and he wants to change yours.

And what they experience and what they see is the same thing the woman at the well saw that messy people can become bold inviters. Don't overthink the invitation. You're just simply saying, come and see, and you get to be a bold inviter like the woman at the well.

And we've talked about the woman at the well because she encapsulates all four of the my four. She was identified, she was included, she was invited. She did some inviting and some inspiring. And in John 4, 28 through 30 and 39, the woman left her water jar.

She went away into the town and she said to the people, come and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? And they went out of the town and they were coming to him. And many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, her story.

She's not a theologian. She's not a pastor. She's complicated. And she's transparent because her invitation, it's not eloquent, it's just honest. He knew everything about me, come and see.

And that's where we got to listen to our four before inviting them. Like, I want to challenge you what's happening in your four's lives right now, and then gauge your invitation around that.

So if like one of your four is like, hey, I'm going through a divorce. Don't be like, hey, I actually just heard about a marriage conference, you want to come? That's a wrong thing to invite them to.

But to invite them to say, hey, you know what? I've heard, or I also know that divorce is probably the most difficult thing you'll ever go through. Why don't you come and see with me in church and not be alone on a Sunday? And let's sit together. And let's just find some moments of solitude in the midst of all the chaos that you're walking through right now.

See, that invitation of constant relationship changes everything, and open conversations lead to welcoming communities.

I have a young man that I'm really good friends with that was one of my students growing up. And the only reason he was one of my students at our church growing up was because the pastor at the time knew his dad, who was an atheist. And he invited him every single week to have breakfast together, and they would talk about life. They would talk about marriage. They would talk about all the things going on. They'd talk about business. And occasionally they'd have spiritual conversations.

And then one time he said to him, he said, Chuck, why don't you come to church? It's Easter. And Chuck said, you know I don't believe. He said, I know, but I know you have nowhere to go after Easter, and I'd love for you to join my family for Easter. So come to church, sit with my family at the last service, and then together we'll all go out for an Easter dinner.

And Chuck took that conversation and went into a welcoming community. And now his son knows where his dad is because he became a believer. And that's where we continue to use the invite when God gives us the open door to say to one of our four, come and see.

Let the Holy Spirit do the work of the conversion, but I'm gonna be the one who continues to be inviting and inviting and inviting. Come and see. And it's a personal invitation because it's relational because I care about you, I love you, you matter to me, I know your name and God knows your name.

In Acts 2 41, those who received his word were baptized and they were added to that day about 3,000 to their number. I always kind of in my head go 3K1D, 3K1 day. 3,000 in that day because they saw, they saw the miracle and the work of God happening in their very midst.

They saw the transformation of the lives of the disciples and the lives of other believers. And they were added to that number. And in Romans 15 17, therefore welcome one another as Christ has. Welcome to you.

He welcomed you broken and weary and heartbroken and a mess. He welcomed you with every imperfection you have and you've been welcomed here, every one of us. And we welcome those in our my four to come and to experience the same thing we experience, the transformation, the celebration, the peace, the walking together in hurt and heartache for needs of healing, of brokenness and emotionally, spiritually or physically, we're transparent.

We have those that we know and who know and love us because we're also know that we're no longer alone. We're not so journeying on our own, Ephesians 2 19. So then you are. And aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and the members of how the household.

And so strangers become family, outsiders become insiders. It's the transformation that we continue to see. And it's why we here at King of Kings across all of our campuses, we have easy invitational Sundays, like easy invitational Sundays for you to invite the people of your my four.

This is why we do a super sweet Sunday where we're like, if you have kids and they wanna dress up, come dressed up and have more candy here at any of our campuses, then you'll get anywhere else.

It's an easy invite Sunday or game on Sunday where we take a character or a scripture story of the Bible and connect it to video games of kids and families and where we learn more about what's happening, but we learn about Jesus in easy invitational ways that are winsome, that are saying, I wanna hear about that, come and see.

Or baptism Sundays where we invite and we say, look, look at all the people getting baptized. Look at all the people remembering their baptism. Baptism truly does change and make a difference in lives.

It's why we've connected baptism Sundays to our VBS Sundays to say, yes, we've got all these kids coming in for VBS, but our real matter about VBS isn't about the character, isn't about the fun, it's about Jesus.

And it's about connecting them to Jesus and those who aren't yet connected to Jesus get connected to Jesus. It's why we look around and we wanna have these invitational Sundays to lower the bar and to make it easy to step into a place where they see a welcoming community and they experience a transformational conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit to transform their lives.

Now, this My Four isn't a four-week program. It's really about your people, that God has entrusted to you. And so I want you to sit and say, the power of the Holy Spirit doesn't work on my time, but it is at work.

I got a call eight months ago from Mike, I hadn't heard from him for a long time. And he called me and he said, and he called me and it was like we were back to being those two high school best friends walking down the hallway.

And he goes, Griff, you're not gonna believe what happened to me last Sunday. And I was like, Mike, what happened?

He goes, bro, I got baptized. He goes, I finally get it. Like, do you remember that night when we were at my car? Remember the key? That's what we called that night from then on. And I said, Mike, of course I remember that night.

He goes, bro, you told me all about this, God. He goes, I didn't get it. He's like, good for you, that's nice, but I didn't understand any of it.

And he said, I've been living the last 31 years not understanding any of it and walking and chasing all the things of the world and all the darkness and all the stuff that's happening. And he goes, dude, I wasn't even alive.

And he goes, bro, I got baptized last Sunday and I'm alive now. I get it, Greg, it's amazing.

Holy cow, like I've lived this 31 years and I can't believe what I've missed out on. I can't wait for the next because this is awesome.

And like, then we just cried together. Because 31 years later, I saw God do what he started on that night when I began an open invitation through an open conversation.

And now we're praying for Mike's wife because she doesn't get it yet. She doesn't understand why he's doing the things he's doing. And Satan's been attacking.

And Mike called me this last week and we'll continue to pray and talk. But he's starting to see what it is to be one of God's people and to be a part of God's people.

He's the one who has the key to the kingdom of God. He's living out a life in the Acts 2 church that you and I get to live today as they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the breaking of bread and to the prayers and came upon every soul.

Oh, like, are we in awe as we gather of what God's doing in this place? Oh, are we in awe of the wonders and the signs that are being done through the apostles?

And all who believed were together and had all things in common and they were selling their possessions and their belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as caring for one another day by day, attending the temple together, breaking bread in their homes, and they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day, and the Lord added to their number day by day, those who are being saved.

That's the power of the Holy Spirit at work, which is an open invitation that leads to an open conversation.

And that open conversation leads to a welcoming community.

And that welcoming community becomes a place where lives are transformed.

And that's what we see as followers of Jesus, where he began by inviting 12 people, 12 disciples to follow him, who identified those to follow him.

And from those 12 were now to billions upon billions of followers, which include you and me, and will prayerfully someday include your four, and their four, and their four.

And that's where we see the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

And every time you walk by your campus and see those locks and those four, and the key hanging down, you know that that key is an invitation for someone to have the key to the kingdom of heaven, to be invited, to come and see Jesus for you and for me.

And know this today, that one invitation, one person for one reason is why you have your four, because someone one time invited you as well to receive the key to the kingdom of heaven.

Will all campuses please stand to pray with me.

Heavenly father, we thank you and praise you through your son, that you've invited us in to the kingdom of heaven, and that it's an open door through the power and the work of your spirit and through the victory of your son, Jesus Christ. So Lord, right now we pray for our four.

Open those invitation moments for us to invite them to come and see the goodness and the love and the mercy, the grace and the victory for all of eternity and all God's people everywhere said, amen.