



Growing as Disciples and Stewards

Introductory Comments

Many of the faith/discipleship practices, such as prayer, study, and worship have a major focus on nurturing and equipping the disciple for ministry. You might say that these practices set the table for living in God's grace each day of one's faith journey. In the same way, the faith/discipleship practices of invitation, serving, and giving reflect the living out of God's grace on a daily basis. As we think about what it means to live out God's grace in Christ, we begin with the faith/discipleship practice of Invitation and Hospitality.

As we consider the ministry of Jesus, much of what he did centered around invitation. We hear Jesus inviting his disciples to follow him. Invitation to live in God's promises and care are given to those who follow him on his ministry journeys. Jesus invites and welcomes people around him to the Kingdom of God. In the last verses of the Gospel of Matthew, we hear the words of Jesus we call the Great Commission. Here, Jesus instructs his disciples in a ministry of invitation. He sends his disciples out with good news of God's life giving and transforming love and grace, inviting those they encounter into a faith journey with God at their side.

The Apostle Paul frames this practice of invitation and hospitality in another way. In the theme verse for this faith/discipleship practice from 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, he describes it as being "ambassadors for Christ." It is the living out God's grace in Christ with a life that brings the joy and delight of God's grace to others we encounter in life.

The faith/discipleship practice of invite, is how one connects the dots of faith and life. It is how one lives out the joy, delight, and reality of God's grace and making it known to others. Invitation and hospitality become a significant connecting point in life as one seeks to live out their faith journey.

The faith/discipleship practice of invitation and hospitality does not require us to be gifted orators or profound theologians. Simplicity works much better! Yes, invitation and hospitality is fostered by our verbal interaction with others, but that doesn't mean it's the only way. Our actions toward others is a great communicator as well. In our actions, we can invite or disinvite by how we respond to others. Hopefully, as one grows as a disciple and steward, as we become more aware of what it means to be immersed in God's grace, it is reflected in our lives as we relate to others. That's what Jesus calls upon his disciples to do. That all we say and do can be an act of invitation and hospitality to another into the joy and delight of God's rich grace in Jesus Christ.

Bible Study



2 Corinthians 5:20-21, John 1:45-51

Our 2nd Corinthian text addresses the faith/discipleship practice of “invite” in an interesting way. It describes this practice in terms of being an ambassador or “messenger”. These verses are a part of a larger passage, all of chapter 5 which proclaims the reconciling love and grace of God in Jesus Christ. Central to the proclamation of reconciliation is that in Christ, we are a new creation. Each day we live in the good news of God’s forgiving and life - giving grace in Jesus Christ. So where does the practice of invite come in this text? Paul says that as people who are reconciled in Christ, we are ambassadors, we are messengers, those who share the good news of Christ with others through what we say and what we do. It is in the sharing the message that invitation finds its center. By being the messenger and sharing the message, opportunities for invitation occur and with invitation comes hospitality, receiving those invited as Christ receives us – in grace.

The faith/discipleship practice of invite can be as simple as a message to “come and see.”

Come and see. Two very simple words but words that transformed a person into a disciple of Jesus. That person, as our gospel text tells us, is Nathaniel. The story of calling Nathaniel is set within the larger context of Jesus calling his first disciples in the last half of John 1. In this passage from John 1:35-51, there are actually two “come and see” invitations. The first being in verse 39, an invitation offered by Jesus to the followers of John which ultimately resulted in the invitation to discipleship for Peter. The second is recorded in verse 46 of our Bible study text. Philip has just been invited by Jesus to discipleship. Philip then goes to Nathaniel, sharing the message that they have “found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” The text tells us that Nathaniel wondered about this pronouncement and that Philip responded with a very simple but profound invitation, “come and see.” Come and see, an invitation to discipleship. Come and see, an invitation to life. Invitation can be a simple word or action but, yet it can have tremendous impact in a person’s life. Just consider Nathaniel!

Bible Study Discussion Questions

- In our text from 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the Corinthians and us that we are ambassadors for Christ. What do you think Paul means here?
- How do you think this pertains to the discipleship practice of invitation and hospitality?
- In your journey of faith, how are you an ambassador for Christ? What do you think this means for your discipleship?
- John's gospel tells the story of Jesus calling his first disciples (there's that word again!). Specific to the story are two instances where John uses the phrase, "come and see." Why is this phrase important in a conversation about invitation and hospitality?
- How do you think this invitation impacted the life of Nathaniel? Go beyond the calling to discipleship. Dig deeper.
- How do you think the faith/discipleship practice of invitation and hospitality relates to growing as disciples and stewards?
- In what ways have you engaged in the faith/discipleship practice of "invite" this past week?

