

### Season of Invitation - Background

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Provide some context to your group as far as why we'll be entering this dialogue of being invitational over the next couple of months.

We want to spend some time as a community trying to figure out how we can collectively be more intentional about inviting people into God's story. We're not necessarily trying to create a formula or a specific method, but we do need to figure out how we can share God's story and effectively connect people to Christ.

#### Luke 14 – Parable of the Banquet

Jesus shares a story about his invitation for people to join his party. What is this party and what are we being invited into?

#### Paradigm – Eternal Life and the Kingdom of God

Eternal life (i.e. life to the fullest), the kingdom of God, God's original vision begin after Christ arrived, not after we all die - the good news is not about life after death, but how we live life now.

**Overarching Question:** How do we invite people into God's story?

*<You could also provide context by explaining the upcoming schedule of what we'll be doing in 4 sessions over two months (schedule below).>*

### Session 1 Objectives

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These objectives might be helpful in shaping and guiding the discussion to a healthy landing spot by the end of the night.

- a. be more hopeful about inviting others into God's story
- b. affirming each person's uniqueness of being invited into God's story and our ability to invite others as well
- c. awareness to be more intentional about being invitational
- d. expand to a more healthy view of evangelism

### Personal Experience

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Listen to each other's experiences of being invitational. We want to be careful not to turn this session into a rehashing of negative experiences and deconstructing the process and expressions of evangelism.

#### 1. What comes to mind or what feelings surface when you think of the word invitational? (or "evangelism")

*<don't spend too much time going down this trail if people have more negative experiences and feedback>*

#### 2. How were you invited into God's story?

*<this is a chance to hear people's stories and connect a little deeper>*

### Gospel Examples of Jesus Being Invitational

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Reflect on the positive examples that Jesus demonstrated in his own life. Think through different stories and encounters that Jesus had.

#### 3. What are the stories in the Gospel that show Jesus being invitational?

*<You could pick one of the stories that are suggested and read the passage for people to reflect on>*

#### 4. What sticks out to you in the different stories of Jesus inviting others into God's story? What is attractive? What is challenging for you?

Some examples:

John 4:1-30 The Woman at the Well

Luke 5:1-11 The First Disciples

Luke 18:18-27 Rich Young Ruler

Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus

## Unique Flavor of Invitation

It would be helpful for people to understand that being invitational is core to our spiritual formation and it's not something that's outsourced to those in leadership or those who are "gifted in evangelism"). We may think there's a certain "way" that evangelism is done, but that's simply not true. We need to embrace the gifts and uniqueness in how each of us can be invitational.

### Read the following quote:

"Think of the quite different ways that Jesus encounters people in the Gospels. Some are simply invited to follow him, some are engaged in Socratic dialogue, some are given provocative parables as answers to question, some are healed, and some are told their sins are forgiven. There has never been one standard way to meet God." (*Benner, David. The Gift of Being Yourself, p103*)

### 5. How have you invited others into God's story?

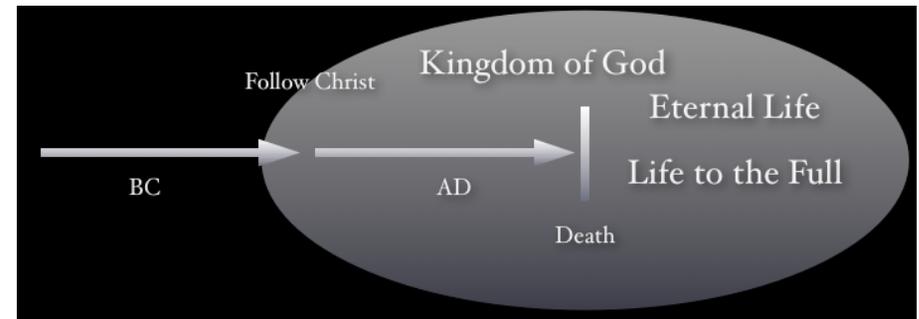
<This might be a good opportunity to hear how others have done it and to even jumpstart ideas and approaches that others had not considered before. You could also use this opportunity to affirm others in the group in how they've been invitational.>

## Prayer

Close your time in prayer for any reflections that came from this time of dialogue and also allow space for any personal areas that require care.

## Other Resources

### Diagram of Kingdom of God Paradigm



It's not just life after death, but Jesus coming to earth is what brought the kingdom of God and for us to experience life to the full here and now.

### John 10:10 - abundant life

The stories in the Scriptures of Jesus being invitational don't seem to focus primarily on life after death but on life now. Life to the full now. Talk through what the implications of that are related to being invitational.

### John 20:21

Sent-ness of Christ- as God sent Jesus as an invitation to all to be brought back into his kingdom story, so are we sent to do the same. This is a part of our faith as followers and sent ones in Christ.

### Scene from *Where the Wild Things Are*

"I really want to show you something."

**McSweeney's Blog** – Article on Conversion (we're all being converted to something, all the time)

<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/conversion>

### Potential "Homework" Activities

1. Invite someone who has yet to encounter Christ to share a meal with you this week. Ask them to tell you their story. As you listen, seek to learn more about who God uniquely created them to be in their specific temperament, passions, and shaping experiences.

2. Simply do an act of kindness towards someone this week. The act itself is the gospel in living out kindness and allowing others to experience God's love in a practical way