

A VISION FOR EVERYONE

John 1.35-46

Invitations are a part of life. Hang around long enough and you are sure to receive one. Hang around me and you are bound to get invited for coffee or dinner. If you keep hanging around I'll probably invite you to read a book I have found interesting. If that doesn't scare you off, I'll probably invite you to go for a run. That usually does it for most people.

What I have noticed is that in my life I have a pattern of inviting, inviting people into a deeper relationship with myself. As people say "yes" I invite them deeper. You can probably see the same in your life. By nature, we are "inviters." Jesus was an "inviter." As he went about, he invited people into a deeper relationship with himself. Hang around and you would probably get invited to a party. If you were still there you would get invited to a meal. If you hung around you would get invited to be a disciple. This was Jesus' deepest invitation, deep because of what it meant and what it would do. You see accepting the invitation of discipleship meant a life of continually hanging out with Jesus, a hanging out that would in the end transform you so completely that you lived as Jesus lived. That's some invitation. It's an invitation many of us have accepted, the invitation to follow Jesus. As I think about the outcome of that invitation and my own life, I often wonder about how it is supposed to work in real life.

Accepting the invitation of Jesus means that I am accepting a relationship that will change my life, change me to look like Jesus. I wonder sometimes how well that change is happening. Let's take inviting as an example. I invite people to coffee, to read a book, to go for a run, but do I invite them to follow Jesus? If I am following Jesus shouldn't this be part of my inviting as it was part of his inviting? I can look at my life and say that I am growing in this area, but it wasn't always so. For a long time I thought that inviting others to follow Jesus was someone else's job. I have been learning that really it is my job, simply part of who I am becoming, one who looks like Jesus. The tipping point for me came when I realized that inviting people to follow Jesus could happen even as I invite them into my life. In fact, I have discovered that the two actually have to go together. Only as I invite people more deeply into my life, am I able to invite them into a life-changing relationship with Jesus. Coffee. Dinner. Runs along the lake. They all become opportunities for me to share my life with others so that I may share His life. So, as I think about inviting people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus it doesn't scare me anymore. I don't push it off on others. I don't even have to dream up interesting ways to do it. It is simply part of who I am, one who is becoming more like Jesus every day.

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Inviting others into your life:** Inviting others into a life-changing relationship with Jesus can't start until we invite them into a relationship with ourselves. This week, consider whom you could invite to be part of your life, someone who does not know Jesus or needs encouragement to take a next step with Jesus. Invite them to be part of a family meal or activity. Seek to bring them close to yourself in a way that fits the character of your family. Share your life with them and begin to ask God to provide opportunities to invite them into a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

We encourage you to take one of the following next steps on your faith journey. . .

- **Inviting Jesus into life:** As we follow Jesus, we become more like him. This means, among other things, that we grow to invite as he invited. Often we do not grow in this area for we do not think of Jesus as being part of our everyday life. This week consider inviting Jesus to be part of your life. Each morning as you rise, invite him to be with you through the day. As you move about your day, invite Jesus to be part of every activity, every conversation. As you go to bed at night, thank Jesus for being with you. As you grow to see Jesus with you, you will find it is natural to introduce others to your companion, to encourage others to come to know Jesus as you know him.