

# Invitational Church – Included & Involved

Continuing on being an invitational church . Last week : You have to invite someone; have to understand the mind set of an un churchd person, their perceptions, feelings, fears

The need for people to feel included and need to feel involved - people are included and involve. Have an attitude that communicates both these things, This is deeply rooted in Gods plan of redemption.

Rom 15:7 Receive one another;

**Q- how did Jesus receive you?** When you came to faith how were you received? When we come to faith in Jesus, He receives us just the way we are with all our baggage and issues, our fear our insecurities.

He receives us with our baggage. We don't have to do anything to be accepted because we are accepted anyway in the beloved by trusting in Jesus who took our sins upon him self and hence by receiving Jesus we receive the gift of salvation. He paid the price for our sin.

**By being received by Jesus you get changed.** You don't get changed and then receive Jesus!

We have got to receive one another as Christ has received us and therefore everyone of us is in a process of change. When you received Jesus some things changed immediately and some others change through a process of receiving Jesus. Some fears are broken immediately, burdens lifted immediately, some issues associated with guilt can go immediately, but some things can take time as you journey can be a process with Jesus you learn to take territory and break through situations in your life.

The foundation for change is based on fact that you already have been accepted, already been received. God received each and every one of us despite our pasts and each of us have had very different past lives.

If we are to be an invitational church then we ought to receive one another as Christ has received us and therefore when someone colourful or different to us or weird looking walks in, without passing judgement on them lets learn to appreciate them and receive them and include them.

We are all the same in Gods eyes and the same word applies both to the believer and unbeliever.

Jesus says in Matt 5 in the sermon on the mount that if you are angry with your brother you are guilty of murder and call your brother an idiot (Raca - empty head) you are in danger of hell fire! phew! I know I have not physically murdered my brother but boy have I got angry in my heart and called someone an idiot or stupid and Jesus says that you are in danger of hell fire!

Then again Jesus says , you know it has been said that you shall not commit adultery but I

say to you whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart. In other words Jesus is saying you know people sleep around and commit adultery but I am saying that if you look at a woman and desire her in a way that in your head you are there you've committed adultery in your heart. So none of us can point a finger at each other.

Jesus brings a level playing field and so we realise that we all need grace and forgiveness and we all need God in our lives because maybe we have kept the outside looking nice but the inside needs transformation.

God engages the heart, He transforms the heart. So we have got to learn to include people from what ever walk of life and the greatest people who are inclusive are those who have been received and included by God because they know that there was nothing they did to deserve such amazing grace. We all need a clean slate and therefore Paul is encouraging the people ( Rom 15:7 ) in their relationships not to be judgemental.

So if someone has an issue in their life don't be judgemental or look down on them rather show compassion and love. Show love and acceptance and that way everyone is included. God loves to include people. God is an inclusive God. The message version Rom 15:7 *So reach out and welcome one another to God's glory. Jesus did it; now you do it! Jesus did it! Now You do it!*

Jesus always reached out to the people who were never included: tax collectors Harlots, Publicans, Lepers, every person who was excluded from the religious society Jesus reached out to. V8-9 tells us Jesus, staying true to God's purposes, reached out in a special way to the Jewish insiders so that the old ancestral promises would come true for them. As a result, the non-Jewish outsiders have been able to experience mercy and to show appreciation to God.

Do you know in every group there are insiders and outsiders? What we want is to make every outsider feel that they are an insider. A lot of this is to do with attitude of heart. People who are accepting give of a vibe and you know that they are inclusive and accepting. People who are judgemental give out a vibe too.

We got to develop an attitude of inclusion with people because Jesus included everybody. This does not mean that we don't challenge people to change or address issues where there's been inappropriate behaviour, it does not mean we don't challenge those things it just means we don't disqualify people because of those things. All we are saying is let's go on a journey together where you are included.

The process of transformation comes in the journey. Jesus said Follow Me and I will make you.

So as we are all following Jesus we often find that we are challenged by Jesus or we should be! Eg:(Luke 9:49)

Let's be a church that not only invites people but includes people. That's why we have hospitality because that's a good way of showing inclusion. Being Hospitable and inviting

someone helps to bridge gaps and create relationships that makes the outsider feel included. Shane joined Hillsong because he felt he was included when people took him out for a coffee.

The only way to include someone is to open up your heart and then open up your world. But if in your heart you've already drawn the boundary of "*I could never do that, no I can never do that*" then it becomes an obstacle, but who said you could never do that? was it written somewhere? Why have you told yourself that? Why not make a shift in your thinking and be more outward looking to create more inclusiveness in our hearts and in our homes?

Fostering for us is 24/7. Is it easy? No. Does it change children's lives? Yes! I have heard some say "*Oh I could never do that*". Who told you that? That's what we first thought until we started doing it and till today we are still doing it. Our evangelism is 24/7.

When you look at 1Tim 3 one of the attributes of aspiring to be a leader is to be hospitable. Being hospitable is an important qualification and it is repeated in Titus where he talks about Eldership that they should not be quick tempered, not given to wine, not violent nor greedy for money BUT hospitable.

So hospitality is all about opening up our hearts and our homes. So wouldn't be amazing if when we invited someone to church or saw someone new in church that we asked them to come over for lunch or took them out and treated them? Isn't it a great feeling when you get invited to a meal? to a wedding? How do you feel? Wow! I'm included. I'm on the list.

Whenever we get invited to something we feel special. Everyone is special!.

One of the reasons we do hospitality in the church is that we are trying to say you are included, we receive you into our fellowship, we value you, we believe God truly loves you, he has a plan for you life and we want you to feel special. That's why we invite new people to go to the table first and serve themselves or we ask them what they would like to drink and give them their preferred drink. It is to add value to their experience of coming here to the Lighthouse Church.

When you put Jesus in the centre of our lives and everything we do we suddenly realise we have room for others because Jesus had room for others.

Lets find practical ways through hospitality to invite people into our world. 1Pet 4:9 be hospital to one another without grumbling. Why without grumbling? Be hospitable to each other without secretly wishing you hadn't got to be! (Phillips trans) Have you been in a situation where you have had to put up with someone showing up at your door when you wished they had not? We have to learn generosity in spirit. Let someone else have my place, take my food, take my time, take the rewards.

**Q: who has God put in your world who can be invited in to be inclusive?** People will never change until you find the grace to love them and accept them as they are.