

WEEK 8

AN INVITATION TO RESPOND (ACTS 17)

*This outline is adapted from "The Gospel Invitation" by O.S. Hawkins & Matt Queen



When we have a time of "invitation" at the end of a church service, what are we calling people to do during that time of invitation? The preacher/speaker has presented the truth from God's Word and they're calling people to make a decision based on what they've heard. They're not sharing the truth just for the sake of sharing it. They're calling people to respond – the unsaved person is being called to *salvation* and the believer is being called to *sanctification*.

And this is exactly what we need to do when we're sharing the gospel with an unsaved individual. Once we present the truth to them, don't just leave them hanging – invite them to make a decision based on the truth you've shared.

You see, God and His messengers have been doing this since the first humans sinned against God. In fact, there are lots of "invitations" throughout the Bible, but I'll just give you a quick look at four in the OT and four in the NT.

PUBLIC INVITATIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**1. God's invitation to Adam and Eve.**

Genesis 3:6–13; 21 "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I

heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”...²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”

Because of their sin, Adam and Eve attempted to cover their own shame and guilt, but it didn't work. Then tried to avoid God by hiding from Him.

And in verse 9, God Himself issued the very first “invitation” in human history when He called out to Adam, “Where are you?” You see, God already knew Adam's whereabouts and his wrongdoing. But God publicly invited Adam and Eve to come out of the shadows, stop hiding, and repent of their sin.

Then, as a foreshadowing of Jesus, God took the life of an innocent substitute – an animal that suffered death in their place. And when that animal took its last breath, it was the first creature in history to experience the terrible cost of sin. And from that animal's skin, Adam and Eve received a covering of God's own making.

But Adam and Eve had to respond to God's invitation in order to receive God's covering for their sin. And when we're sharing the gospel, we don't need to share the truth and then walk away without giving them a chance to receive the Substitute who died in *their* place. And that substitute is Jesus!

2. Moses's invitation to those who worshiped the golden calf.

Exodus 32:25–26 “And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies),²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me.”

Even though God performed a series of miraculous events to deliver the Israelites from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, their hearts quickly turned away from God and they worshipped idols. They wanted a god that they could see and touch – a god they could shape according to their own

liking. In other words, they wanted to make a god in *their* own image rather than God making them in *His* image.

So, in verse 26, Moses gave them an “invitation” to respond and repent of their sins – *“Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.”* They had to make a choice to either repent of their sins or remain in their idolatry.

3. Joshua’s invitation to those in the Promised Land.

Joshua 24:14–15 “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

When Moses died, Joshua took over as the leader of God’s people – the Israelites. And when Joshua had led them into the Promised land, he reminded them how God had faithfully led them to that point. However, many of the people in that new generation had never sincerely followed God. Then in verse 15, Joshua gave them an invitation – *“Choose this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Joshua didn’t just present the truth to them and walk away. He gave them a chance to make a decision and respond one way or another.

4. Elijah’s invitation on Mount Carmel.

1 Kings 18:21 “And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.”

In the same way that God, Moses, and Joshua had presented people with the truth, then gave them a chance to respond – Elijah did the same thing.

And these are just a few of the public invitations given in the OT. We could look at...

- Josiah’s invitation (2 Chronicles 34:29-33)

- Isaiah's invitation (Isaiah 52:7-53:1)
- Jonah's invitation (Jonah 3)

PUBLIC INVITATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. John the Baptist's invitation to his disciples.

John 1:35–37 "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus."

You see, when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" he wasn't just making a statement to his own disciples. He was calling for them to make a decision about Jesus. Would they also believe that Jesus was the long-awaited "Lamb of God" – the innocent substitute who would die in their place for their sins?

And if they really *did* believe it, then they had to respond and follow Him. And sure enough, those two men responded and followed Jesus from that point on!

2. Jesus's invitation to all who are lost.

Mark 1:14–15 "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Over and over again in the four Gospels we see Jesus giving public invitations for individuals and groups to make a choice. Either repent and be saved or walk away and face the judgment of God.

When we're sharing the truth of Jesus with people, we also have to call for a decision. They can either repent and be saved or walk away and face the judgment of God. The choice is theirs.

3. Peter's invitation at Pentecost.

Acts 2:36–38 [Peter said]"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of

you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

There were thousands of people standing there when Peter gave this public invitation, and 3,000 responded and were saved. There were others who made the choice to walk away unchanged. But Peter was calling for a decision.

4. Paul's invitation in Athens.

Acts 17:16–17 "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout [religious] persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there."

Each day, Paul was talking to people about Jesus – “reasoning” with anyone “who happened to be there.” And he was giving them a chance to respond to the truth they were hearing.

Now notice the responses he got...

Acts 17:32–34a "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed..."

You see, every invitation you give will be met with one of three responses...

- 1) "Some mocked" (vs32a).
- 2) "Others said, 'We will hear you again about this'" (vs.32b).
- 3) "Some joined him and believed" (vs.34a)

So, every invitation will be met with one of three responses, which are sometimes referred to as...

- **Red Light Response** – This is a hard stop. They want no part of hearing about Jesus or receiving Him as Savior. At that point, your job is to let them know you're always available if they change their mind. Then continue to pray that God would open their heart to the truth at some point in the future.

- **Yellow Light Response** - They're not yet convinced but they *are* interested in hearing more. At this point, your job is to *immediately* set a time to meet with them again. You could say, "Ok, how bout we meet here tomorrow at the same time, and we'll talk some more." Set a time and place before you walk away.
 - **Green Light Response** - This person is ready to immediately receive Christ. At this point, your job is to help them pray and receive Christ. You can either lead them in a prayer (remember, there are no magic words to recite), or you can let them pray out loud in their own words as they tell God what they're wanting Him to do in their life.
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So, considering what we've learned tonight, I would be wrong if I didn't give YOU a chance to respond to the gospel...

- Do you believe that you've sinned, and your sin has separated you from God?
 - Do you believe that Jesus died in your place on the Cross, was buried, and three days later, He rose from the dead?
 - Do you feel like God is calling you right now to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior?
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Small Groups