**Who We Are: Invest & Invite**

**Text: 2nd Corinthians 5:14-21; 1st Corinthians 15:1-11; 1st Peter 3:15**

**Big Idea: Be ready to INVITE TO JESUS those people into whom you INVEST YOUR LIFE.**

**Ice Breaker:** BRIEFLY tell the group what your favorite book (aside from the Bible) or movie is, and why you think they might enjoy it as well.

This is the final week of our “Who We Are” series, in which we’ve examined the 9 values that Point Church is working to build. #9 is Invest and Invite - We intentionally invest our lives into people who are far from God and invite them to know Christ.

The sermon stated strongly that, while investing in people’s lives is one of the most important things a Christian does, our interaction with non-Christians MUST in some way work toward an invitation to meet Jesus. It seems to many that investing in another life can be demanding, but that actually speaking to that person about following Jesus is intimidating to the degree that few ever actually do it. In this session, we hope to help you be ready to move into the “Invite”.

As many have observed, an invitation to meet Jesus ought to have at least two parts -- His Story and Your Story. His Story is an explanation of the Gospel. Your Story is an explanation of what Jesus has done in your life, how God has changed you. BOTH OF THOSE HAVE TO BE IN THE INVITE.

There are all kinds of ideas or actions that we encourage people to take up, from books and movies to diets and exercise programs, and on and on. For most of those, our major pitch is to tell what it has meant to us, or has done for us. But an invitation to meet Jesus has to include something more. It has to include certain eternal truths about sin and salvation. It has to include His Story -- because if His Story isn’t true, then you don’t have a story to tell that will help give anyone what they most need -- to meet Jesus.

In his letters to the church in Corinth, Paul gives us insight into both his MOTIVATION for inviting others to meet Jesus, and an EXAMPLE of doing that:

**(1) Paul’s Motivation for Evangelism**

*2 Corinthians 5:14-21 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. (15) And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (16) So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (18) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (19) that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (20) We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (21) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Q:** Vs. 14-15 is the “His Story.” **Why is Christ’s love the compelling force for inviting people to know Jesus?**  [See the note below for vs. 14]

**Q: How does verse 15 provide further motivation for us?** [“that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him”]

**Q:** Verse 16-19 is Paul’s “Your Story” -- and ours, too. **Share some of yourself, if you will -- how does your “new creation” look different than your “old [that] has gone” creation?**

**Q:** Verse 20 talks about being “Christ’s ambassadors”. Have someone look up a definition of “ambassador”. **How does this definition help you understand your calling and privilege to be appointed by God as His ambassador?** [See the note below for vs. 20.]

**Q: In vs. 18 and 19, Paul tells us that God gave and entrusted a couple of things to us. What are they?** [LEADER -- answer not by just saying, “the ministry and message of reconciliation”. Talk about what those actually are. What is the message of reconciliation? It’s the gospel. What is the ministry of reconciliation? It’s inviting people to meet Jesus.]

**Q: The fact that these things were entrusted to us by God -- how does that motivate us to invite people to know Jesus?**

**(2) Paul’s Example of Evangelism**

*1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. (2) By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (3) For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. (6) After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (7) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, (8) and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (9) For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (11) Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.*

**Q: What is the “His Story” in this passage?**  [vs. 3-4]

**Q: What is the “Your Story” (Paul’s story) in this passage?** [vs. 8-10]

**Q: How would you define this “gospel…of first importance”? Be as simple and brief as possible.**

**Q:** In these verses, Paul speaks very strongly, emphasizing that THIS is the gospel. **In inviting people to Jesus, why is it important that the essence of the Gospel is clearly communicated?** [See the note below on vs. 2.]

**Q: What is the strong message that YOU get from “Paul’s story” in this passage?**

**(3) So what’s YOUR story?**

*1st Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with*

If you’re going to tell Your Story, it will help greatly to have it ready when you need it. Telling what God has done in your life shouldn’t be simply reduced to a rote formula, but thinking through it in a systematic way can help you sort it out, to confirm that you understand it well yourself, and to know that it makes good sense when you tell it. What follows is a series of questions that can help you do that.

***[LEADER --*** *Well before your group meets, give the following set of questions to two of your group members who are willing to answer them in front of the group. Give them the questions far enough ahead of the group meeting that they’ll have time to pray, reflect and prepare how to answer them for the group. Let them know that in the group meeting, you may have time for only one of them, depending on how the rest of the study has gone. If you DO have time for more, you might ask if others in the group would be willing to answer the questions spontaneously for the group. You should probably also be ready to answer them yourself.]*

**Q: How would you describe your life prior to your personal pursuit of Christ?**

**Q: What was it about Christ that caused you to realize your personal, spiritual and eternal need to trust Him for salvation and reconciliation with God?**

**Q: When and how did you actually trust Him as Savior and receive the gift of His forgiveness and grace?**

**Q: What changes have occurred as a result?**

**Q: How would you describe your relationship now as a result of trusting Christ as Savior and following Him as Lord?**

**NEXT STEPS:**

**1)** Write down “Your Story”. Then add “His Story” in a way that you can briefly and simply explain it. When you have them together, organize it all and make it ready in a way that you can tell it to someone. (The Point church website has another guide you can use to organize and prepare Your Story. Give it a look, at www.pointchurch.com, under the “Resources” tab.)

**2)** Practice your Invite with someone close. Allow them to suggest ways it might be more clear or effective.

**3)** Pray that God will show you clearly someone who you can tell it to.

***FURTHER STUDY NOTES***

This study was prepared with lots of inspiration, and uses some parts, from a document published online by Forest Hill Church in Charlotte, NC. Reading through Sections 2 & 3 of that document can help you fill in your thinking about how to approach this study. You can find the complete document at this link:

<http://www.foresthill.org/assets/img/Downloads/I-3.LifeGroup%20Curriculum.Participant%20Version.pdf>

**2nd Corinthians 5:14** “The primary focus was on Christ's love for us and not our love for him. The belief that on the Cross Christ acted on behalf of the whole human race became the foundation of Paul's thinking and action. When the implication of the statement, "He died for all", began to get hold of Paul, it changed permanently his feeling about every person in the world. The fact that every person he met was the object of God's eternal love and was one for whom Christ died defined the nature of his ministry. This is why Paul's evangelism never exploited or manipulated people. He had come to love them the way Christ did.” [The Preacher’s Commentary]

**2nd Corinthians 5:20** George Shultz, when Secretary of State during the Reagan administration, kept a large globe in his office. When newly appointed ambassadors had an interview with him and when ambassadors returning from their posts for their first visit with him were leaving his office, Shultz would test them. He would say, "You have to go over the globe and prove to me that you can identify your country." They would go over, spin the globe, and put their finger on the country to which sent--unerringly.

When Shultz's old friend and former Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield was appointed ambassador to Japan, even he was put to the test. This time, however, Ambassador Mansfield spun the globe and put his hand on the United States. He said: "That's my country."

Said the secretary: "I've told that story, subsequently, to all the ambassadors going out. 'Never forget you're over there in that country, but your country is the United States. You're there to represent us. Take care of our interests and never forget it, and you're representing the best country in the world.' “ [Dr. Wallace Alcorn]

**1st Corinthians 15:2**  “Ask people today what the gospel is...and this is often what they will say, "Well, Jesus lived and died." No, that is not the gospel. . . there is no good news in that. The good news is Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That is the good news, that his death accomplished something for us. It changed us, it delivered us, it set us free. . . That is the good news, that God did something for us in that marvelous event of the cross. As we contemplate the cross, and the dying of Jesus in our place, we see that the good news of it is that God takes it seriously, and he is prepared to treat us in an entirely different way than we deserve to be treated on the basis of the death of Jesus on our behalf. That is the good news. There on the cross, we are told, he dealt with our failures, he dealt with our rebellion, he dealt with our sinful, guilty lives. He did something about it so that besmirched and dark and stained past does not any longer need trouble us. It has been set aside by the death of Jesus, and with that fact we enter into hope and freedom. [Ray Stedman]