

# GUEST OPINION: Public invitation to accept Christ is a must

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We need to rediscover the public invitation in worship services across America. Skepticism and criticism from various parties and persuasions have discouraged pastors and churches to such a degree that it has led many to modify or even discontinue public invitations in worship services.

When polls and surveys determine the way churches do worship services, we are on a downward, slippery slope. Whatever happened?

Whatever happened to the convictional proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord that calls for personal response? Whatever happened to the preachers who had the vision, heart, passion, conviction, and urgency of the Apostle Paul when he said, “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16 KJV)

When we proclaim the Gospel with this kind of conviction, people will be led to respond to the message of God. Biblical

preaching is not some dead, intellectual unloading of your study time that parades your personal pride before the people of God in a public worship service. When pride walks on the platform, God walks off.

Convictional preaching and leadership will lead people to respond to God personally and publicly. I realize there is no one way to do this, and this will vary from church to church. However, each church and pastor should set the goal of consistently calling people to respond to God in an *effective, intentional* way.

We must issue this appeal to follow Jesus. When the preacher stands behind the pulpit to proclaim God's Word, he must do so with the depth of spiritual conviction that all people need Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.

He must issue this appeal to follow Jesus unreservedly and unashamedly. With fire in his bones and with an expectant spirit, he should call all people to repentance from sin and to faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone for salvation.

An invitation should also be a call to follow Christ in baptism, which is the first step of following Jesus. It must be an appeal to walk in holiness by being the Christ-follower God wants them to be.

The invitation also should elevate the importance of the local church in a believer's life by calling them to unite in fellowship with the church. Furthermore, this invitation must be a clear call to people of all ages that God may be calling them into the ministry of the gospel, or even to the mission fields of the world.

I recognize each church may give the public invitation to respond to God in different ways. For clarity, these things are important for giving any effective public invitation:

- Be clear about what you want them to do and how.

- Be intentional and convictional.
- Be urgent in your appeal for them to respond to God.
- Be expectant that people will respond to the public invitation.
- Be prayerful in your preparation not only with the message, but also about giving the public invitation

You must not rush giving the public invitation, nor can you tag it on at the end of your message. When a preacher preaches the Gospel, the entire message is one ongoing invitation to respond to God. We need to rediscover the public invitation in worship services.

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