

Why do we invite these people into our church? (part 1)

Our congregation has a history of inviting the poor, lost, homeless, addicted and sick into our fellowship. It's not firm enough to begin calling it a tradition, but it exists.

We've welcomed addicts to our worship services from the addiction recovery center (GRN) then across the parking lot. We've welcomed back our own family members as they've struggled with the same addictions.

We've helped the helpless come over from the nursing center across the street to worship God with their fellow believers. And we are visiting them over there even this week.

We've provided housing for the hopeless and homeless who were trying to restart their lives with Jesus Christ as their new foundation. Both in a separate house in the past, and, more recently, within our own church building.

We've clothed and fed the needy. And continue to do so.

We've encouraged inmates to bring themselves and their families to fellowship as well as worship with us. And each week we take the gospel and the scriptures to them where they are unable to come to us. And to church family members who have committed the same transgressions.

And that's the point. Addicts in recovery, families in distress, inmates incarcerated, all are unable to worship God in their present circumstances. So we take the gospel to them, we intervene with material necessities, we take the church to them. And we let them know that they, despite their afflictions and problems, are welcome to our fellowship. Not to continue in their previous ways but to shed them as they take on Christ.

Why go? And why bring them into our fellowship?

First and foremost, because we are sent. Not by the church but by the Son! The church doesn't send. The church goes. And then all the new believers fellowship together. This is clear from Mathew 28 and Acts 2. If we are to go and take the gospel, then we are obliged to fellowship with the new believers, whether formerly addicts, alcoholics, sick, imprisoned, homeless, helpless, single parents or broken up families. In fact, obligated is not the best word. More like privileged. Because that's where Jesus Christ will be found.

Another reason we invite them to worship with us is to provide them with what they've been missing. As an example, consider this.

At the Gwinnett County Detention Center (Jail), over 2200 men and women are cut off from worship experiences that we take for granted.

Sunday morning, a group of believers will be out there to help them worship, but they won't be able to partake of the Lord's Supper, security and logistics the primary reasons. So we urge them to send their families to us while they themselves are still incarcerated and to join us in worship when they are free to do so.

Sunday evenings, fellow Christians from Campus congregation will bring the gospel to them, but they will be unable to be obedient in baptism, again because of security, logistics, health and separation requirements. And so we offer to baptize them as soon as they are released.

Christians from Snellville and Buford lead Bible studies on Thursday and Friday nights. We give them lesson summaries to follow the lesson and to study on their own after we leave. On the bottom of that sheet are the address and telephone number of our congregation, along with the times of bible study and worship. So that they can find us and worship God with us in Christian fellowship.

And, we tell them this, "If you wish to be baptized, then call this number. Someone will call you back and make arrangements for you to be baptized in our baptistery, in our building, within our fellowship".

And we want them to continue in fellowship with us after their new birth.

These needs extend to recovering addicts and alcoholics, single parent and broken families, the helpless and homeless, the sick and infirm, the lame and the lost

So that's why we go out and invite them in, much like the servants regarding the great banquet described in Luke 14. To include them in the celebration of the greatness and goodness of Jesus Christ and God our Father.