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# If You Invite Them, They Will Come

by [Dave Earley](#)

I help my family lead a group of high school students. In the last two years, we have seen almost two-dozen unchurched kids come to Christ. About half of them have become regular church goers, and many of those now bring their parents. We do several things to attract and win so many seekers, but the single biggest factor is inviting.

When it comes to inviting, we follow one simple principle: If you invite them, they will come. Occasionally I have heard leaders say that they do not invite people "because they might not come." When people tell me this, I always ask, "If you invite them, what is the worse thing that could happen?" They generally respond, "They might not come."

Then I reply, "If they are not coming anyway, how have you lost anything? After all, they just might come." It is exciting to know that if you invite them, they will come. Not all will come. Not all will come right away, but if you invite them, some will come.

According to Richard Price and Pat Springer, "Experienced group leaders . . . realize that you usually have to personally invite 25 people for 15 to say they will attend. Of those 15, usually only eight to 10 will actually show up, and of those, only five to seven will be regular attenders after a month or so." <sup>1</sup> This means you can grow a new group of ten to fourteen regular members in a year by inviting one new person each week! If a whole group catches the vision of inviting, a group can experience explosive growth.

If you will invite enough people, some will come. When I start a new group, I start by asking two to five times the number of people I expect to have at the first meeting.

Some ask, "Where do I find people to invite?" There are at least four good places to look for people to invite:

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Coworkers or fellow students.
4. Neighbors

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## **The Earley's not-so-secret plan for meeting new people to invite:**

I work on a church staff with thirty other Christians. My wife is a stay-at-home mom. We spend most of our free time doing things with our three boys. Therefore, we have found that we must be very intentional about building relationships with

unchurched people or it will not happen. We have found that the easiest way to build relationships with the unchurched is by getting to know the parents of the children with whom our boys come in contact. Find an avenue to get into the world of the unchurched and build some eternal relationships.

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## **KEYS TO EFFECTIVE INVITING:**

### **1. Saturate the situation in prayer.**

God knows the "what, when, where, and how" of an effective invitation. Prayer helps us to cooperate with what He is doing.

### **2. Keep them saying "Yes."**

Once someone has said "No" to an invitation, it can be easier for them to say "No" to the next invitation, so it is valuable to get them to say, "Yes" and to keep them saying "Yes." If possible, build a bridge of "Yeses" until they are regular attenders of your group.

For example, some people invite a person to a group before the person is ready to say "Yes" to a group. However, the person may be ready to say "Yes" to allowing their children to attend a children's activity at the church. A progression of "Yeses" may look like this:

- Yes to accepting cookies you made for their family
- Yes to having you pick up their mail while they are on vacation
- Yes to allowing you to pick up their kids for a function at your church
- Yes to desert at your house
- Yes to having them come over and watch the Superbowl at your house
- Yes to letting you pray for their sick mother
- Yes to attending your group

Obviously, different people have different progressions of "Yes." Pray about finding the thing they will say "Yes" to, and start from that point.

Let me encourage you not to make the mistake of taking it personally when people you invite say "No." Too often, we get our feelings hurt and withdraw from the person we feel has rejected us. Instead, we need to keep caring for and loving them.

### **3. Perseverance.**

Too often, we invite people once, and they say "No," so we do not invite them again. Too frequently, we invite them to come and they say "Yes," but do not show, so we do not invite them again. Sometimes, we invite them to come, and they come but do not come back, so we do not invite them again.

Many times we are guilty of giving up on a person too easily and quitting too quickly. Persistence makes a difference. I find that many people who do not come at the first invitation often come after the third or fourth, if I have continued to build a caring relationship.

I knew Todd for several years. He had not shown much interest in attending church. However, he had allowed his kids to attend our Vacation Bible School. Over the years, I had earned his trust and had planted the seed. I invited him to a Friend Day at church. He told me that he was busy jet skiing with his family on Sunday's, so I waited until the weather got too cold to jet ski and invited him again. This time, he said "Yes" he would come, but he never showed up. I kept working on building our friendship. Not long after that, he told me his wife wanted a separation. This time, he asked me about coming, and he has been consistent ever since. God has wonderfully changed his life. I am glad I did not give up.

#### **4. Practicing the principle of "Six to Stick"**

Realtors tell us that it takes about six solid contacts to fix their name in the minds of prospective house buyers. I have found it also takes about six contacts by a group leader to fix their group in the mind of a potential member. You want to help them think, "If or when I ever go to a group, I want to go to that group."

Some people make one attempt at getting people into their group, and when they do not come, they think their effort was a failure. Maybe it was not a failure; maybe it was a step in the right direction.

#### **5. Praying for and capitalizing on opportunities.**

I was at a baseball game watching my fourteen-year old son play shortstop. I had planned to invite someone to a Friend Day we were having at church that week, but I had not had any opportunities. I quietly asked God to give me one. There was a single mom whose son was pitching for my son's team. As I walked by her, I felt the prompting of God to invite her. The next thing I knew, I was telling her about our group and asked if she would like to come. She said yes. The next game I told her more about it, and the next week she came.

Afterwards, she said, "I am surprised to say it, but I have to admit that I absolutely loved it." They came back every week. A few weeks later her son was saved. Three months later she was saved and was not only a regular attender at our church, but also a member of my small group.

#### **7. Team inviting.**

Inviting is easiest when inviting is done in concert with a team of people, a posse of prayer, and a healthy group and church. You do not have to do it all by yourself. It is especially powerful when the person you are trying to reach already knows and likes someone else in your church or small group.

## **8. Capitalizing on the seasons of the soul.**

People have seasons of the soul when they are more open to the Gospel. Most adults come to Christ, or come back to Christ, out of one of these seasons:

- Death of a loved one
- Move to a new neighborhood, city, job, or school
- Divorce
- Marriage
- Family problems
- Major illness
- Birth of a child.

The wise leader is sensitive to these seasons. Lovingly use them to increase ministry to the person you hope to invite ...because if you invite them they will come.

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\*This article is adapted from chapter three of the book, [Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders](#), by Dave Earley, Houston TX: TouchUSA: 2001.

1. *Price and Springer*, *Rapha's Handbook for Group Leaders* (Houston, TX: Rapha Publishing, 1991), p. 132

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