

## Christian Perspectives

The simple invitation is maybe not so simple. In fact the act of inviting someone to an event is really a social art. Engaged couples stew over potential wedding guest lists trying to come up with a list that stays in budget and causes the least amount of offence to uninvited relatives.

Parents put endless thought into birthday party invitations carefully considering all scenarios that will lead to a fun and successful party, while causing the least amount of property damage.

Husbands and wives expend incredible amounts of brain energy putting together dinner party invitations that will ensure a correct balance is struck for dinner table conversation between interesting and boring.

Extending successful invitations is truly courageous work! From beautiful cards that appear in your mailbox with a stamp attached to an elegant envelope, to a Facebook event invite, to a good old-fashioned phone call, invitations have become a timeless and important social custom among people.

How much more timeless and important is an invitation sent directly from God? Jesus tells us about God's invitation to us by means of a story in Matthew 22:1-14. It's the story of a wedding invitation that reveals so much to us about who God is.

The story involves a king who invites a group of people to a wedding for his son. When the wedding preparations are completed, the king sends out messengers to tell the invited guests to come as everything is ready. But there is a problem. The invited guests are too busy or just can't be bothered to attend, so the king tells his messengers to go out to the highways and byways and invite everyone they meet.

This wedding would now involve the most unlikely guest list! The rich, the poor, those who seemed to have it all together and those who obviously did not were all welcomed to an extravagant party.

God is represented by the king in this story that Jesus told and in telling it, Jesus was revealing some really important things about God and the invitation He extends to us to be a part of His family.

It's so important to recognize that the king sent his guests invitations to attend the wedding and not a summons and that is an incredibly important distinction. As the king, he had the power and authority to have summoned his guests to attend the wedding much like a judge summons people to serve for jury duty. A summons is a demand to attend something and comes without choice, but an invitation is very different. When we invite someone to an event we are hosting it is a very personal experience. We think of the person's name, we picture their face and we desire their presence with us. We don't force the person to attend, rather we simply invite them and leave it as their choice.

To be invited means to be honoured and chosen. Listen to how the Bible describes our invitation from God to be a part of His family in Galatians 1:4-5. "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

God doesn't invite us to be in His family begrudgingly or impersonally, rather it's His pleasure to have us and it's in accordance to His will. He wants us there!

The perfect God of creation could have summoned us to appear before Him in judgement, but instead in His love and grace He invites us to a banquet!

Listen to how this party is described in Isaiah 25:6-9. "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, and the Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove his peoples disgrace from the earth. The Lord has spoken." Now that sounds like a party I don't want to miss!

God invites us to the wedding of His kingdom as He thinks of us, pictures our face, puts our name on the invitation and sealed the envelope by allowing His Son Jesus to die on a cross for us.

We are all invited, and like the people in the story we

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