**Series Big Idea**

“‘*Come, follow me,’ Jesus said…” -Mark 1:17*

Jesus extends an invitation to every person...an invitation to a life-changing relationship. He wants to make our lives better and make us better at life. He wants to give hope and a future. He longs for every single person to find their way back to him.

That’s why “helping people find their way back to God” is the mission of our church. Everything we do around here is about that mission.

* We live out the B.L.E.S.S. practices to help people find their way back to God.
* We host events like StuCo Camp to help people find their way back to God.
* We participate in Summer Serve to help people find their way back to God.

We want to be a community of people who are on mission together so that more and more people accept Jesus’ invitation and find their way back to God.

A number of years ago, we created an annual initiative that is aimed at this mission. We call it “Show Up Sunday.” This is one Sunday in mid-September when we challenge everyone who calls COMMUNITY their church home to invite 5 friends and to show up and be introduced to Jesus.

We don’t invite people to fill up auditoriums. We invite people because Jesus has extended an invitation. We invite people because Jesus makes our lives better and makes us better at life. We invite people to help them find their way back to God.

This series is intended to motivate and equip people to invite their friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers to Show Up Sunday. We’ll challenge people to invite 5 people they know to join us on Sunday, September 16.

**Message 1  | August 26, 2018 | Identify**

**Scripture: John 4:1-19, 25-42**

**Message Big Idea**

Inviting starts with identifying people we know who might be ready to receive Jesus’ invitation.

*Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.* *4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.* *7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)* *9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)* *10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”* *11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”* *13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* *15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”* *16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”* *17 “I have no husband,” she replied.* *Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”* *19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.*

*25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”* *26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”* *27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”* *28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.* *31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”* *32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”* *33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”* *34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”* *39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers.*

*42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”*

**Message Description**

Early on in this message we’ll want to set up the premise of the series: We invite people to help people find their way back to God (see Series Overview above).

Inviting starts with identifying people we know who might be ready to receive the invitation.

Jesus was always attuned to the people around him. In John 4, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman and engages her in a conversation. Jesus saw the woman at the well when he had every reason not to see her. Their conversation exposes not just her challenging life circumstances, but the spiritual hunger in her heart. She was ready to receive his life-giving invitation and as a result her life, and the lives of many others, were forever changed. (Previous Message - [“Come and See”](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1jOs5yKXImDDgyc7wNRs05tdX6jF8KdZH) might be a resource for telling this story).

At times we might be hesitant to invite because we assume people will not be receptive, yet a [2016 Lifeway Research Study](http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/BGCE-Unchurched-Study-Final-Report-1_5_17.pdf) found…

* 51% of unchurched people said a personal invitation from a friend or neighbor from the church would be effective in getting them to visit.
* 55% of unchurched people said a personal invitation from a family member from the church would be effective in getting them to visit.

In this message, we’ll challenge one another to identify people we know who might be receptive by talking about three “Cues to Invite” (Possible Resource for this section: The Three NOTs - North Point Church (Clay Scroggins) <http://northpoint.org/messages/the-three-nots/> 28:10):

* Something is changing.
* The person is facing a new life circumstance and they don’t feel prepared.
* Examples: new parents, empty nesters, getting married, kids becoming teenagers, new to a community, recently divorced.
* Something is breaking.
* Something in the person’s life is not going well.
* Examples: health, marriage, finances, kids, job, anxiety.
* Something is missing.
* The person seems dissatisfied with their life.
* Examples: not in church, not connected with others, not fulfilled in their job.

The challenge in this message is to pray and ask God to help you see the cues and identify 5 people you will invite to Show Up Sunday. (We can decide whether to overtly identify this as the first step in the B.L.E.S.S. practice or let people figure that out as the series goes on.)

**Docent Requests:** No brief for this message.

**Message 2  | September 2, 2018 | Invest**

**Scripture: Matthew 9:1-33**

**Message Big Idea**

Jesus continually invested in relationships to help people find their way back to God.

*Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. 2 Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”* *3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”* *4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 6 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” 7 Then the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.* *9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

*10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* *12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* *14 Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”* *15 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.* *16 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. 17 Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”* *18 While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” 19 Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.* *20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”* *22 Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.* *23 When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, 24 he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep. ”But they laughed at him. 25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. 26 News of this spread through all that region.* *27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”* *28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”* *“Yes, Lord,” they replied.* *29 Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”*

**Message Description**

Jesus invested in relationships. When you read through the Gospels, his life is filled with story after story of meaningful relational encounters.

To get an idea of how relationally centered his life was, let’s take a look a snapshot of the daily life of Jesus with a quick overview of Matthew 9. In this one account, Jesus…

* Healed a paralyzed men.
* Extended an invitation to Matthew to follow him.
* Shared a meal with Matthew and all his disreputable friends.
* Spent time answering John the Baptist’s disciples’ spiritual questions.
* Healed a woman who had bled for 12 years.
* Raised a synagogue leader’s child from the dead.
* Healed two blind men.
* Cast a demon out of a demon-possessed man.

All that in just 33 verses! Now, no one expects you or me to be Jesus (if you’re only able to heal one blind man today, not two, it’s ok. Ha!). Yet how people-centric Jesus lived his life should challenge us to ask ourselves: How am I investing in people as I go through my days?

How did Jesus invest in people?

* He was attentive to them listening to their stories and their needs.
* He spent time with them. He shared meals with them.
* He helped them in ways that met their specific needs.

(We can decide whether to overtly point out these are the middle three steps in the B.L.E.S.S. practices or let people figure that out as the series goes on.)

In this message, we’ll challenge one another to invest in the 5 relationships we identified in week 1 in very practical, specific ways.

Some ideas:

* Listen to your 5 by texting or talking to them this week letting them know you are thinking about them and asking, “How are you?” and “What can I be praying for you?”
* Spend time with your 5 by sharing coffee or a meal with one or more of them in the next two weeks.
* When you identify a practical need in one of your 5’s lives, serve them in some way to help meet it!

**Docent Requests**

* Commentary Matthew 9:1-33.
* What happens in the brain and body when we actually take time to invest relationally with others.
* What are some of the trends away from deep, relational engagement.
* What are some helpful theological categories regarding the significance of relational investment?
* Any word pictures, analogies, or metaphors that help convey this big idea.

**Message 3  | September 9, 2018 | Include**

**Scripture: Luke 14:12-24 (Context Luke 14:1-11)**

**Message Big Idea**

Everyone is included in Jesus’ invitation to find your way back to God.

*12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”* *15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”* *16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’*

*18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’* *19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’* *20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’* *21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’* *22 “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’* *23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’” -Luke 14:12-24*

**Message Description**

Have you ever considered what a tragedy it is that there are any empty seats when our community gathers on a Sunday? God can’t do much with an empty seat. When there is an empty seat…

* No one is connecting.
* No one is being mobilized for the mission.
* No one is taking next steps in their spiritual journey.
* No one is finding their way back to God.

An empty seat is never just an empty seat...it’s a missed opportunity.

In Luke 14, Jesus told a parable that is often called “The Parable of the Great Banquet,” but it could also be called “The Parable of the Empty Seats.” In this parable, Jesus is comparing the Kingdom of God – life with him - to a banquet. God is the host, and he has gone to great lengths to prepare something fabulous for people to enjoy. When many of the initial invitees fail to show up, the host sends his servants out to compel people to come “so that my house will be full.“ And in a culture that had become preoccupied with who was “in” and who was “out”, the host sends these servants out with an inclusive invitation, inviting even those the world had deemed “out” to come feast at the banquet.

Jesus doesn’t want any empty seats. He wants everyone to be included.

Jesus was talking about inviting people to a new and amazing way of life that’s full of grace and hope and forgiveness. -- But you know what? Every weekend, God prepares a banquet, right her at COMMUNITY.

* A banquet of God’s Word.
* A banquet of God’s music.
* A banquet of God’s presence.

It’s a banquet for adults, students, and kids. It’s a banquet designed to bring hope, joy, and life to all who attend. It’s a banquet designed to help people find their way back to God.

And…every weekend, hundreds of thousands of people have yet to experience this banquet. Our host, God, can’t bear the thought of his banquet being wasted. And so he sends us – his servants, out to compel people to join us.

And his banquet is meant to include all people:

* Young and old.
* Rich and poor.
* Republican and Democrat.
* The religious and the irreligious.
* Every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9).

We need to start taking the open seats around us personally...to feel it deep within us – “Someone is missing out on the banquet!” And ask God, “Who am I to include?”

The challenge in this message is to go out and invite all people (including the 5 you have been praying for) to share in what we are experiencing here as a community of Christ-followers.

Resource: Previous COMMUNITY Message “[Invite](https://drive.google.com/open?id=10132q5kspftMHup5ajSStDtqGx3Zs3wJ)”.

**Docent Requests**

* Commentary on Luke 14:12-24.
* What are the reasons we often don’t include?
* Humorous examples of what exclusion looks like/feels like.
* What did other ancient writers/historians say about the ways these Christ-followers included other?
* Any word pictures, analogies, or metaphors that help convey this big idea.
* The physiology and brain science behind what happens when we invite others to participate in something with us, especially others different from us.