**The Power of Personal Invitation**

*Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being* is a 6-session course that encourages disciples to practice basic financial planning skills. Churches that offer this course give people the tools to move toward financial freedom.

Unfortunately, while there are many who can lead this course, they may not be asked in a compelling way or personally asked to lead at all. Some churches offer invitations to serve in enews or Sunday morning announcements and hope that someone will say “yes”. Leaders are disappointed when there are no volunteers and exclaim, “No one will help with anything in this church!”

What can be done? The practice of personal invitation. Now, there are some who will object to the simplicity of this suggestion. “I’ve asked everyone, and I can’t get one volunteer!” Perhaps, there are some questions that need to be answered before we offer a personal invitation to do ministry.

**Am I Asking for the Right Reasons?**

Whether we are looking for a course leader, filling church officer positions, reaching out for nursery helpers, or looking for someone to trim the landscaping, it is important to know “why”. We are quick to explain the “what” of a church task, but we may not examine why a task is important to the ministry of the church. This can be especially troubling if we’re simply trying to fill a position, rather than seeing it as integral to the mission of the church.

Why would someone volunteer to help with an outreach project? Why help with Vacation Bible School or worship planning? Why join the finance team or paint a room in the church? How will these and other tasks make disciples for Jesus Christ? How will the mission of the church move forward?

Before personally inviting a person into ministry, be prepared to explain why their contribution is important and will give glory to God.

**Am I Asking the Right Person?**

Just filling a position with any person who is willing is not helpful for the ministry of the church. In fact, not having the right person in place can undermine the effectiveness of ministry. In addition, people know when a task is a good fit for them. It gives them energy and hope.

Before offering a personal invitation, answer “yes” to the three questions.

* *Has this person demonstrated skills or potential for this ministry?* No one wants to be put in a position to fail or be frustrated.
* *Does this person indicate a passion for this type of ministry?* Has the person you’re asking expressed specific interest in children’s ministry, teaching, worship leadership, mission or leading teams?
* *Does this person possess spiritual gifts that will bless the ministry?* Ideally, a church would ask all congregation members to take a simple spiritual gifts inventory and keep the results in a database. Church leaders would know who has gifts for compassion, administration, teaching, hospitality, etc. Short of a spiritual gifts inventory, consider carefully what spiritual gifts you’ve seen lived out through this person.

**Am I Fully Prepared Before I Ask?**

When asking a person to take on a new ministry role, prepare carefully. First, pray. Sit with God and with the name of the person you have in mind. Ask God for a spirit of discernment and what will be best for the mission of the church.

Next prepare to clearly speak the “why” of your invitation. Why is this a critical role in the life of the church? How will this task make disciples or reflect the reign of God? Be prepared to answer the “Why me?” question with what you’ve observed of the person’s skills, gifts and passions.

Refrain from “selling” volunteer roles as “only” so many hours or so much responsibility. This approach diminishes the importance of what you’re asking a person to do. Congregation members are willing to do tasks that they feel are important and believe will make a difference.

Be prepared to offer space for the person to pray about serving. Give a specific time when you will get back to them.

**How Does the Church Prepare Leaders?**

The church, for the most part, has not intentionally equipped and raised up leaders. We wait until a position is empty and then desperately try to fill it. In preparation for needing strong, gifted leaders, consider starting “apprenticeships” for leadership positions in the church. Ask church officers and leaders of missions and small groups to name and encourage the person who will one day take their place. Give permission for passionate faith entrepreneurs to try new ministries.

Leading a *Saving Grace* course is just one opportunity that awaits the faithful disciples of your church. Honor those who are yearning to make a difference in the name of Jesus Christ with a personal invitation.

For more information about supporting those who are leading a *Saving Grace* course in your church, contact Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis, Sr. Director of Church Relations.