



Welcome back to Growth Groups! I hope everyone had a great Spring Break and Easter. I know I am excited about what God is about to do at Journey Church. We have seen several new people come through the doors at Journey in the past couple of months. Several of these folks are now ready to take the next step to join a Growth Group. As a result, most of our Growth Groups will have the opportunity to add new folks within the next couple of weeks.

With the Easter Holiday, we begin a new series: *RockStar: Making HIM Famous*. In our Growth Groups, we want to take the theme for the week and help you use what we learned on Sunday as you seek to invest in the people around you and invite them into a relationship with God and the church. This week, we are discussing how Easter is the Ultimate Comeback Tour.

- **What bands/musicians can you think of that attempted a comeback tour after being “off the scene” for an extended period of time?**
- **Would you consider this “comeback” as a success? Why or Why not?**
- **READ: 1 Corinthians 15:17. What does this teach us about the importance of Jesus’ “comeback tour” through the resurrection?**
- **READ: Acts 3:1-16. What difference did the resurrection of Jesus make in the Lame Man’s life?**
- **On Sunday, we heard several stories of Life Change as people made the decision to be baptized. What is your story of Life Change as a result of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?**
- **Name a few people around you that are in need of Life Change through God’s power.**
- **How can your personal story of Life Change help them recognize Jesus as the answer to their need?**



Hey Growth Group Leaders!

It's been a while since we had a *Travel Guide* to work through for Growth Groups. With Spring Break last week and our fellowship time of stuffing eggs the week before, we are well overdue for a time of nourishment in our groups.

Over the next three weeks, we will be doing something just a little bit different in our Growth Groups. We will still be following the basic theme of Sunday's message. However, we will be intentionally focusing our discussion on how that theme will help us grow our **invest and invite** strategy at Journey Church. *As your discussion grows, encourage your group members to look to their own story of Life Change as the most effective tool they have to impact the people around them.*

At the end of this *Travel Guide* I have included the text of an article by Ed Young and Andy Stanley that talks about the **invest and invite** strategy. I strongly encourage you to read it and share the things you learn with your group.

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Again, be sure to lean your discussion heavily on how the things we are talking about help us **invest** in the people around us and **invite** them into a relationship with God and the church. The opening questions are just fun discussion-starters, so move through them quickly.

- **What bands/musicians can you think of that attempted a comeback tour after being "off the scene" for an extended period of time?**
- **Would you consider this "comeback" as a success? Why or Why not?**

You may want to insert a follow up question like, "How did the comeback tour affect your view of this band?"

- **READ: 1 Corinthians 15:17. What does this teach us about the importance of Jesus' "comeback tour" through the resurrection?**

Without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, everything else we believe about our faith as Christians is really meaningless. **I would highly suggest taking some time to discuss this as a group.** Our culture tries to reduce our faith to a set of morals or guidelines for living. Sometimes it is viewed as a motivation to care for other people. Other times, our faith is put on equal ground with any other belief system out there. **The resurrection of Jesus sets the Christian faith apart.** Where every other faith sets up standards to attain your own forgiveness, the resurrection of Jesus declares that Jesus Christ has already accomplished everything we need.

- **READ: Acts 3:1-16. What difference did the resurrection of Jesus make in the Lame Man's life?**

According to Peter's testimony in this passage, the power to heal the lame man's body came as a result of faith in the power of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. **You may want to take some time to discuss the idea of power in our faith.** Often today, our faith is simply a belief system in events that took place 2000 years ago. The church in America today doesn't really see much of the power we read about in the New Testament? I personally believe that we really don't believe God will do big things anymore. Our faith is just too small.

There are plenty of theologians out there that have explanations as to why the power faded away. Some of them have elements of truth to them. However, our unbelief is the bigger issue. We claim to believe that God still does miracles and heals people of diseases today, but when we hear of it happening, we are skeptical and want concrete proof that it happened. What kind of faith is that?

**Don't let your conversation get off topic, but challenge your folks to think about their perspective of the power of God and how that potential might change the way they view their faith.**

- On Sunday, we heard several stories of Life Change as people made the decision to be baptized. **What is your story of Life Change as a result of Jesus' resurrection from the dead?**

These next few questions are an opportunity for you to listen for clues of genuine faith and to coach your folks to use their own story to impact their world. **I strongly encourage you to admit that it is often hard to know just the right things to say to people.**

Our goal is to help our people simply tell their story and to use that story to invite people to join the journey of faith with them . . . by inviting them to church or by inviting them into faith in Jesus.

- **Name a few people around you that are in need of Life Change through God's power.**

**This may be a huge challenge.** In order for the *invest and invite* strategy to have an impact, we need to be meeting people who are disconnected, investing in their lives, and inviting them into relationship with God and the church.

If your folks have a hard time naming people far from God, discuss some creative ways to meet people around them. Encourage them to take a first step in **investing** in a life around them. Some suggestions:

- Host a neighborhood barbeque at your home/apartment
- Skip the "self checkout" and take some time to talk to a cashier, find out their name and a little about them. Go back to that cashier each time you enter the store and learn a little more each time you go in.
- Randomly pay for someone's meal at a restaurant and have the waiter give them a Journey Church invite card instead of their bill.
- Share a little about how Journey Church has impacted your life with the person who cuts your hair.
- ***I would love to hear other suggestions your group comes up with!***

- **How can your personal story of Life Change help them recognize Jesus as the answer to their need?**

Again, our goal is to challenge our folks to see their own stories as the key connection between the people around them and a relationship with God. They don't necessarily have to share the Gospel, but a piece of their story can add a load of authenticity to their attempts to invite folks to church.

## **Can We Do That: by Andy Stanley and Ed Young**

Section One Reaching Out

Invest and Invite - Andy Stanley

We partner with our regular attenders to reach the unchurched.

At North Point Community Church, our evangelism strategy is summed up in two words: invest and invite. From the very beginning, we've told our people that our desire is to partner with them in the process of evangelism. As I am fond of saying, "We will do what you are afraid or unequipped to do: raise the issues. You do what we cannot do: invite your friends." As a result of this partnership, we see a high percentage of our people participating in personal evangelism. Over 90 percent of the adults we baptize came to NPCC at the invitation of a friend.

### Fear and Ignorance

Let's face it, fear and ignorance are the two primary obstacles to personal evangelism. When I was growing up, leaders addressed these problems through training and motivation. In the 1970s and '80s, several excellent evangelism-training programs were developed to help believers overcome their fear and ignorance. Pastors preached compelling messages about reaching the lost and the need for all of us to personally embrace the Great Commission.

For some -- primarily those with the gift of evangelism -- it took. But most of us simply had to face the fact that we were cowards. We just could not bring ourselves to whip out a tract and present the gospel to our neighbors and friends. We accepted the fact that our Christian experience would include a measure of guilt regarding our lack of concern for the lost. Investing in Lives

North Point's invest-and-invite strategy has made it safe for hundreds of seasoned but scared believers to get back into the game. Instead of training our people in the art of personal evangelism, we instruct them to invest in the lives of unbelievers with the express purpose of inviting them to an event where they will be exposed to the gospel in a clear, creative, and compelling manner. Is there a need for training? Yes. But our strategy is not dependent upon training. It is dependent upon purposeful relationships.

Believers are responsible for leveraging their relational influence for the sake of the kingdom of God. That's the part they can do that we -- the church -- can't. I have gone so far as to tell our folks that if they are not willing to leverage their influence for the kingdom, they are attending the wrong church. I don't want to raise money and build buildings so we can seat more note-takers. Our mission is to lead people into a growing relationship with Christ. We operate off the premise that all regular attenders have embraced that mission as their own.

They are not responsible for knowing the answers to every question their unbelieving friends may throw their way. But they are responsible for exposing them to an environment where they will be presented with the gospel. Anybody can do that, assuming there is a church close by that is designed with the unchurched in mind.

### Extending an Invitation

What we have discovered (and we certainly aren't the first) is that far more personal evangelism takes place if believers feel the freedom to invite their unbelieving friends to church. It is easier to invite people to an event than it is to confront them about their personal belief system. It is easier to include them in on something you are excited about than it is to convince them that their entire worldview is incorrect.

While we do not do "seeker services," we do design our weekend services with the "investee" in mind. We assume that every Sunday morning hundreds of our people are going to show up with that friend, neighbor, or family member with whom they have been cultivating a relationship. Often people will introduce me to their guest and, without saying it directly, let me know that this is their investee. What they are really saying is, "I finally got 'em here. Don't blow it for me!" The Eye of the Beholder

Our goal for our unchurched guests is to create a comfortable environment where they are confronted with the intensely practical nature of the Scripture. I want them to leave thinking, "I didn't know that was in there. That was actually helpful."

Evangelism is a process. Establishing the relevance of the Bible is often a necessary precursor to convincing people of its divine source. Our church is inundated with people who have not yet put their faith in Christ for salvation but whose lives are slowly being transformed by the application of God's Word.

Exposing unbelievers to the relevance of Scripture is something the church can do a better job of than the individual believer. This is why partnership evangelism is so effective. Back to You

At the end of our worship services, we place the responsibility of evangelism squarely on the shoulders of our people. I do this as conspicuously as possible. I say things like, "If you have any questions about what you have heard this morning, ask the person who invited

you. They will do a far better job explaining it than I did." Or, "The person who invited you this morning would love to discuss this with you over lunch."

On several occasions members have come up to me before a service and asked me to make one of those statements. They were looking for an opportunity -- an opening -- to take the conversation with their investee to a new level. They understood what it meant to partner with the church in evangelism. Less Is More

One other advantage of our invest-and-invite strategy is that it is an easy plan to communicate. It is not seven steps or five steps; it is two words. Everybody in our church knows what I am talking about when I refer to our invest-and-invite strategy. And everybody knows whether or not they are on board with us.

In our elders meetings, we keep up with and pray for each other's investees. The same is true in our staff meetings. Leaders (including staff) know that on the Sunday their investee shows up, they are released from their normal ministry duties. Their responsibility on that Sunday is to navigate their friend through a morning at NPCC and then go have lunch.

Every church needs an evangelism strategy that the members understand and embrace. Our invest-and-invite strategy is easy to communicate and easy to apply. More importantly, it reflects one of the first instances of evangelism in the New Testament. When Andrew discovered Jesus' true identity, the Bible says he went and found his brother Peter, and "he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:42).

The church is the body of Christ. Bringing the unchurched in among the body is the next best thing to bringing them to the person of Jesus.

Ed's Take:

Like Andy, I believe the role of evangelism is a non-negotiable in the local church. Every church should have as part of its purpose a statement about evangelism. One of our stated purposes at Fellowship Church is "to reach out and share the good news of Jesus Christ." Unfortunately, churches often fall victim to the naval-gazing principle; when left on their own, they turn inward and become a holy huddle with an "us four and no more" mentality.

One of the primary responsibilities of the senior pastor and staff is to keep the church focused on evangelism. Many churches teach the importance of reaching out but fail miserably in modeling evangelism to the church. I recognize that it is difficult for church staff to witness and invite people to come to church because we spend most of our time around church people. When I started Fellowship, I decided early on that I would spend a good deal of my time around people who were not Christians. Wherever I go -- the health club, restaurants, the theater, sporting events, etc. -- I constantly invite people I meet to attend Fellowship Church. I tell them about how Christ can change their lives.

We hold our staff accountable for the contacts they have with unchurched people. Often in staff meetings, I will go around the room and ask staff members to report on who they are spending time with. If staff members are not talking to people who are hell-bound, then something's out of balance in their schedule and priorities.

A Tag-Team Event

Not only do I encourage our staff to share the good news of Christ, I regularly challenge the congregation to invite their friends, family, and coworkers to Fellowship. I promise our regular attendees that if they will invite someone to Fellowship, we will make sure that the moment their friend or family member pulls into the parking lot, he or she will feel comfortable and welcome. More importantly, we will make sure that all visitors hear that God created them, Christ died for them, and He is the only way to eternity in heaven.

I tell our congregation that evangelism is a tag-team event. It takes both the staff and the congregation to work together to get people to visit our church.

A healthy church should have a mixture of three groups of people attending: those who have not stepped over the line of faith, those who have just made a faith reception, and those who are mature in their faith. If everyone is a mature believer, you are not doing the Great Commission. Conversely, if the church is full of baby believers, you are not discipling.

I've also discovered that the best way to market the church is through word-of-mouth advertising. Our surveys indicate that 98 percent of the people who attend FC showed up for the first time because someone invited them. If you have a church that is creative, relevant, and exciting to attend, people will invite their friends -- that's a given. If your church is boring and irrelevant, you can have evangelism classes 24/7 and it won't matter. People will not invite others to a boring church.