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# *Faith Practices*



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*“Go therefore and make disciples of nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.” — Matthew 28:19*

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In private and in public worship, the Spirit calls us through the Word to “preach” our faith as we serve our neighbor. But where are our pulpits? Words from the Gospel of Matthew still challenge each one of us today: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19)

The Great Commission impels us to the practice of invitation or evangelization. It names baptism, it names us and it becomes the lens through which we are invited to view and approach others. Baptism makes explicit who we are and whose we are: we are God’s. Baptism moves us beyond our families of origin to sense our identity as members of the whole family of God. Faith-inspired compassion for our “sisters” and “brothers” moves us to share our faith and love with conviction.

The mission we have been given is at the very heart of our life of faith. We have not been called into God's family to simply enjoy being called a child of God or to gather with others who have been baptized to celebrate what we have received. We have been sent. We are to "tell what God has done for us" in a way that invites those who are not yet baptized to know the God who loves them and has redeemed them in Jesus Christ. More than just a practice, the gift of invitation is the very way we live in relationship with others who have yet to hear and believe.



## BRINGING IT HOME

Invitations are fun. An invitation grows out of our relationship with the person who invites us. Invitations often call us to join with others to celebrate life's important events, like weddings and birth-days, and to witness life's transitions, like funerals and retirement parties.

*Think of some invitations you have received. Invite your family members to share some, too. We get hundreds of invitations every day to invest in products and programs. The average child is exposed to 400 ads a day. That adds up to 4,000,000 ads in a lifetime.*

*Name some ads or commercials. See if you can remember the key phrase or sing the jingles.*

Though ads can be memorable, it is more important to remember that a relationship with Jesus has more benefits than a best-selling product. He offers a greater adventure than any party, cruise or safari. Yet we seem to shy away from finding creative ways to get the "good word" out. But rather than dwelling on the reasons for past failures, let's crash right through our insecurities and think about some ways you might creatively and naturally invite others to follow Jesus.

*“The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead and write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.” — Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

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*Consider the call of Jeremiah...“Now the word of the Lord came to me saying...Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you: I appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, ‘Ah Lord God! I do not know how to speak for I am only a youth.’ But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not say I am only a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you and you shall speak whatever I command you.’” —Jeremiah 1:4-7*

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## **FINDING GOD’S STORY IN YOUR STORY**

Learn to make faith connections in the ordinary places and events of daily life. Consider the following places as stage setters for inviting people to share God’s Good News. Feel free to adapt these to fit your situation.

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**Gas stations:** Buying gas.

**Connection:** Who fills your “tank” with all the things you need — like love, joy and good things?

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**Grocery store:** Talking about prices

**Connection:** Think of some of the things God gives us for free.

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**Medical clinics:** The skills of amazing doctor/ nurses.

**Connection:** God made our bodies to fight disease, but God gifts people with skills that help us keep healthy.

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**Natural settings:** Amazing sights and scenery.

**Connection:** People make lots of beautiful things, but only God can design cloud formations, a sunset or clear, starry nights.

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**Schools:** People who teach us things.

**Connection:** God created the knowledge that others share.

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**Day care:** Lots of people befriend and care for us.

**Connection:** God provides us with people who uphold and support us.

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Here are a few more ideas. You can always invite others to online events too. Choose one, two or more.

- Take some time around the dinner table to identify some friends or neighbors you might invite to worship with you online or in-person at your church. Pray for the opportunity to invite and for their openness to come.
- Pray that God will inspire your words and deeds to be reflections of God's presence and activity.
- Look over upcoming programs and church activities. Identify occasions that might be natural entry points for unchurched friends who may already have a relationship with you or your children — like day care providers, coaches, teachers and co-workers.
- Invite neighbors and friends to come for an evening where they can experience God's presence in your home as you provide friendship and hospitality.
- Open your heart each day and invite the Spirit to use you as an instrument of God's will and God's activity. Be yourself. Let your language and lifestyle reflect God's love to and for others.