

The Invitation

Joe Slater

We customarily offer an invitation toward the close of each meeting. Anyone who wishes to obey the gospel, or to confess sin and be restored, or to receive help with some other spiritual need, is invited to come to the front while an appropriate song is sung. Those responding are then assisted as the situation calls for.

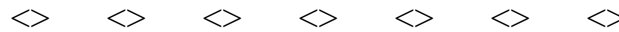
While this invitation is a tradition that is not mandated in Scripture, it is entirely in harmony with God's word. Certainly we ought to urge people to believe and obey the gospel: "*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). One way we may encourage prompt response to the word of God is by singing. In fact, one of the stated purposes for singing in the New Testament is to "*admonish (warn) one another*" (Ephesians 5:19).

One of the drawbacks to having this traditional invitation is that we may grow so accustomed to it that we think folks can respond to the gospel **only** when an invitation is extended at the close of a meeting. I hope all of us realize that the Lord's invitation is **always** open! We have rejoiced to see people baptized on Monday afternoon, Friday evening, and other times throughout the week. It is always right to believe and obey God without delay, regardless of the day or hour. In fact, in the New Testament examples of conversion to Christ, not one person ever ate a bite, drank a drop, or slept a wink from the time he understood the gospel until he obeyed it. The Ethiopian eunuch didn't wait for a meeting of the church or a formal invitation – he was immersed out in the middle of nowhere, with no other mortal to see it except Philip (who immersed him), and perhaps the chariot driver (Acts 8). The Philippian jailer and his household were immersed in the wee hours of the

morning; and Lydia and her household were immersed in a river on a Saturday (Acts 16).

Have you been thinking about obeying the gospel? Or have you already been baptized, but have strayed away and want to return to the Lord? Have you delayed because you're embarrassed to respond during the invitation song? Please realize that you can become right with God without coming to the front of the auditorium at the close of an assembly. If you need to be immersed, contact me, one of the elders, or any other member of the congregation; we'll make every effort to meet this need without delay. If you need to be restored, this, too, can be handled privately and then announced to the church.

Offering an invitation and singing an invitation song toward the close of each meeting is a good tradition. Let us not detract from it by acting as though it is the only possible time for an acceptable response to God and His word!



A NEW HEART

What does a new heart cost? According to the May 16, 2010 issue of The New York Times Magazine, a new heart costs \$864,700 to "procure, transplant, and maintain with immunosuppressant drugs." (The price has not likely been reduced since then!)

Yet the most lasting heart transplant one can receive is the one Jesus performs on you when you surrender your life to Him. You receive a new heart that never will expire, never will fail, and never will need to be replaced again.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

via Jacksonville, AL (adapted)

WHAT LURES YOU?

"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" (James 1:14).

As I stepped out my door this morning, and walked the 30 feet to my dock, I was wondering which lure to use.

Should I use my little artificial minnow with a "crappie nibble" as an added attraction? Or should I use a little lead head, a white head with a bright red body and white trailing rubber strands? Of course, again, a little "crappie nibble" is helpful." That little bright yellow piece of "crappie nibble" always seems to be like "icing on the cake." The fish just can't seem to resist it. Yes, I am doing all that I can to lure the fish and set the hook.

As I step out my door this morning I need to remember that Satan is already out there with his lures and hooks. It may be just a regular lure such as we encounter every day. Something that has a small attraction for us but not enough that we succumb to it. Ah, but today Satan has added a little "crappie nibble," that icing to the cake.

And before we know what has happened, Satan has us hooked and is reeling us in. Now we are his.

Yes, he is cunning, and takes advantage, thus we must not be ignorant of his schemes (II Corinthians 2:11). He disguises himself as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). He uses "*the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life*" (I John 2:16), and then throws a little "icing on the cake" to make sin even more appealing.

We need to remember that 1) Satan prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8), and 2) sin is only a passing pleasure (Hebrews 11:25). Therefore we must always be on the alert. We must always seek His (God's), kingdom and His righteousness. In so doing we will go far in avoiding being hooked by Satan.

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