

Invitation Best Practices

If you want to have ongoing spiritual conversations with people who are spiritual skeptics and seekers, the invitation for the trial meeting must be compelling. A straightforward invitation to people you already know, empowered by the Holy Spirit, will increase the likelihood of an acceptance to “come once and check it out.”

TIPS FOR COMPELLING INVITATIONS:

1. **Earn the right to invite.** Invitations are more readily accepted when people know and trust you. Practice the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations as a natural part of your life, and people will be drawn to the idea of ongoing conversations about God. (Find out more at the9Arts.com.)
2. **Put your heads together.** Work on invitation wording with your co-facilitators. As you each invite people you know, be sure that all of you are consistent in what you are inviting them to come and try.
3. **Pray first.** Pray together and individually for each person that you plan to invite. Follow God’s leading as he prompts you to invite others that you had not planned to ask.
4. **Don’t say “no” before they can say “yes.”** You’re saying “no” for someone if you don’t offer an invitation at all or if you extend a negative invitation. (e.g., “You probably wouldn’t want to come to my meeting, would you?”) It’s surprising to see who accepts and declines invitations, so ask with a positive expectation!
5. **Bring it up face to face.** It can work well to bring up the idea in conversation even before you have details about the start of your group. Making the actual invitation in person is also a good idea; but if you have at least mentioned the topic, you are likely to find out how your friends feel about the idea. Then your actual invitation can key into what interests them most and can address barriers they might have to coming.
6. **Be warm, friendly, and specific.** In a winsome way, communicate exactly what it is you are inviting them to attend. (e.g., “Coffee and Questions about God.”)
7. **Dispel fears.** Explain that this discussion group is designed to be a safe place where questions are valued and accepted.
8. **Keep it casual.** Let the person you’re inviting know that there is no long-term commitment required. A great way to phrase this portion of the invite is: “Just come one time and check it out. If you like it, you are free to come again.” And if he or she does not return, be sure not use any kind of guilt tactic!

9. **Ask for a yes or no response.** Try to ask for a decision one way or the other without being too pushy. “Will you be able to attend?” If your friends need time to decide, offer some reassurances that you understand. Then contact them again to see what they intend to do. When someone declines, simply state that you totally respect that decision and that it’s not a problem. It’s important for your friend to see that declining your invitation in no way alters your friendship.
10. **Follow up.** Call, text, or send an email to everyone who has shown interest, to confirm the plans, provide more details, and let them know that you’re looking forward to it!