



# Value of the Open Seat

Jesus always kept a seat open and never stopped inviting

**Core Value: Honor**

Honor is a core value for our church. We state it this way, "We honor God and we honor others by always giving our best. Likewise we expect the best because God gives nothing less. Everything we do, we do it as unto the Lord as our spiritual act of worship."

**We honor others, not because they are honorable, but because we are honorable.  
- Richard Crisco**

Because we have set honor as a core value in this house, there are several secondary values that follow. Worship, excellence, encouragement, service, health and home to name a few. One of those I want to highlight and elevate is what I call the value of the open seat.

The open seat is an expression that communicates there is always room for one more.

As a house, we value the open seat. We value the open seat because the Kingdom values the open seat. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He came to call all men to follow him. Though He did have twelve disciples, do not forget that He had seventy-two He sent out two by two He called disciples (Luk 10:1). At the end five hundred gathered on the Mount of Ascension (1 Cor 15:6). When Judas was cast out, the disciples reasoned we must choose a replacement from one who has been with them from the beginning (Acts 1:21-26).

Jesus always keep a seat open to His inner circle and was always inviting others to come and sit

## **Times in the Gospel Jesus called others to the open seat:**

### **1. Jesus called His first disciples**

*Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17-20; John 1:35-51*

- Several disciples came as a result of another disciple inviting them along
- They realized their friends and family could benefit from this relationship

## 2. Jesus calls Matthew, the tax collector

*Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27*

- Matthew came late to the table
- He was an undesirable addition to the growing band of brothers

## 3. Jesus called three more...who decline

*Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:57-62*

***As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).***

## 4. Jesus calls the multitude

*Matthew 10:38; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23*

- His invitation, ***"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."***

## 5. Jesus calls His flock

*John 10:27*

- My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

## 6. Jesus calls His servants

*John 12:26*

- ***"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."***

## 7. Jesus calls one more

*Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22*

- Purposefully placed in the Synoptic Gospels as the final "follow me"

***And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matt 19:16-21).***

***Proximity to the Prince of Peace is a privileged seat but was never meant to be a private seat.***

## **Why The Open Seat**

- 1. It's the heart of the Kingdom**
  - Jesus is not willing for any to perish. He demonstrates great patience and openness so that all may come (2 Peter 3:9).
  - The call goes to all
- 2. It continually renews the core**
  - A newborn always changes the house
- 3. It prevents the core from becoming a clique**
  - A clique - a small group of people, with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and **do not readily allow others to join them**
  - Cliques are the natural temptation of religious flesh
  - Cliques, because of the law of attrition, will eventually die off (they don't refresh)
  - Because there is no renewal your "wineskin" becomes unable to hold something new
  - From small groups to leadership teams, cliques are like a cancer to growth!
  - Conquering a clique requires intentionality
  - We must all embrace the heart of Jesus to invite others in
- 4. It places the burden of entry upon the invited not the inviter**

## **What this looks like in Grace World:**

On Sunday, it's the open space in the pew next to you. There is a responsibility upon all to invite another to come share that seat.

- Pray
- Care
- Share

In our Grace Groups, it is the open seat in the circle. It is a reminder that there is still room for one more.

Leaders should often reference the open seat and encourage the group to invite someone who would have benefited from the group.

"There is still an open seat in our group. We still have room for another to come be a part. Think of someone who you know that would have benefited from our conversation. Invite them to come."

A Few Questions:

If you lead a group or are in a group, ask yourself...

1. How welcoming is this group?
2. When was the last time someone was invited to the group and came?
3. Do you and the rest of the group have a heart to invite others in? Why or Why not?
4. Will there be an open seat ready this upcoming week?