

My name is Jerry Sweat. I am the lead pastor of Beach Church and am a member of the Northeast District Operations team. One of the new mission vitality metrics for your local church is "presentation of the gospel" in weekend worship. I know that many times, we assume this is happening in our messages every week but it has been my experience that if we are not intentional, this important and life-changing word and invitation does not happen.

The first message ever preached in the newly birth church by Peter was one that pointed people to Jesus and His saving work. There is nothing you and I could ever present in our messages that is more important than pointing people to the saving grace of Jesus and the hope that we find for our futures and our eternities in Him!

Since we began to intentionally share the gospel in every message at Beach and extend an invitation to place one's trust in Jesus in approximately 75% of our messages (weekend worship, student worship, and our children's worship environment, and Summer Kids Kamp), we have seen a dramatic change in the numbers of people placing their trust in Jesus for the first time (nearly 500 adults, teenagers, and children per year!)

Now the skeptics among you would say that many people making decisions might not ever get fully connected in a life group, ministry, or membership within the church. You would be correct in making that statement. But where do we ever bat .1000 in the local church? We set up next steps as a church for people to take and trust, with God's help, that they will take those steps. As a pastor, having the assurance that people have made the most important decision of their lives and that God has begun a work in their hearts that is the beginning of a new journey; that's significant!

The other question you might have would be the following: What if I make the invitation and no one responds? I remember when I first started making invitations after a message, I was very anxious about the thought that no one would respond. It was during that time that God reminded me that I do not change hearts; that is His part! I am called to share the gospel in as compelling, engaging, and relevant way as possible and then make the invitation. Then trust God to do what only He can do.

We often say at the church I serve that in 100 years, the only question that will matter is not how much money you made, what size house you lived in, how many children did you have, or how far you made it in your career. The only question that matters will be: "Did you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?"

I want to invite you to what has become for me the most significant, exciting, and faith-challenging aspect of my ministry-Intentionally point people to Jesus as our only hope, share the gospel, and then- make the invitation! Be prepared to see God work in ways you never thought possible!