

outreach



MINISTRY

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Outreach Ministry in the 21st Century: The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas

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INTRODUCTION □ □ □

Introduction

Welcome to *Outreach Ministry in the 21st Century: The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas!*

Most Christians understand the importance of sharing their faith with the world around them. Knowing how and where to take those first steps in sharing, however, is often tough. This book is here to make those steps easier for you—and enjoyable as well, as your church learns how to reach out to friends, neighbors, co-workers, community members, and others in ways that are both surprisingly easy and surprisingly effective.

You'll find dozens upon dozens of practical ideas here to use. Best of all, you can begin putting many of them into practice as soon as you're ready to start! These ideas are creative, practical, and hands-on. Whether you want to put together an activity to deepen relationships, discuss the Christian themes in a secular movie, dive in to a service project for the disadvantaged in your community, or commit to a more long-term relationship with those who really need to know the love of Jesus, this book can help.

Because this book is a collection of practical ideas, we've worked hard to put it together in a practical way. You can read it cover to cover, or you can pick and choose the ideas you need *right now*. You might want to start in the Table of Contents, locate the kind of outreach ministry you'd like to get involved in, and scan the tips and ideas from there.

You may want to put copies of many of these pages in the hands of those working alongside you. Therefore, please note that several pages throughout this book have been noted as "OK to copy." (Look for the logo shown in the margin.)



We pray that both you and those you serve will reap eternal benefits from the ideas in this book. May God bless and use you and your ministry.

—Carl Simmons, Editor

SECTION 1

Making Your Church Visible



Here

YOU'VE picked up this book because you're here to live like Jesus. And you already know that a big part of that is getting out into your community and serving the needs you see around you. But for many churches—especially younger ones—just getting on your community's radar so you're in a position to *discover* those needs can be a big challenge.

The ideas in this opening section are here to get you started down that road. They'll give you some practical ways to say, "Hi, we're your neighborhood church, and we're here to help." And they're ideas your church will enjoy doing, so next time you hit the streets it'll be that much more enjoyable and effective.

Whether you hold events in your church building or set up a booth at a local event, these ideas will help your church to stick your foot in the door of your community—in ways that are caring, fun, and illuminating for both your church and your community.

8 Ideas to Get Your Church Noticed



Idea 1 Sticker Shock—of a *Good* Kind

Sticker shock at the gasoline pump is a subject on nearly everyone's mind these days. Ease a little bit of the burden in your own community by lowering the price of gas at a chosen gas station for a few hours one Saturday. You'll see lines at the pump, but drivers will all have smiles on their faces for a change!

Here's how it would work: Your church would pledge and collect a specific amount of money. Before your event, go to your congregation to raise the necessary funds. Explain that your church would like to offer a benefit to the community by helping people lower their gasoline prices at the pump. That money would be used to allow customers at a specific gas station in your town to pay less at the pump for a few hours on a given day. For example, if the regular price of gas is \$3.00, your church could enable customers to buy the same gas at \$2.75 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on a specified Saturday.

Next, find a local gas station at a prominent intersection. Ask the owner if your church could take two hours on a Saturday to offer gasoline at prices lower than the regular cost. Explain that your church will make up the difference. Say that your church simply wants to do something helpful for the community. (It wouldn't hurt to point out that the event will probably garner the gas station lots of free publicity!)

Ask the owner approximately how much gas the station sells during the specified two hours on any given Saturday. This will give you an idea of how much money your church needs to raise.

This event will likely result in long lines at the pump. For once, that's a good thing! So don't be conservative in your fundraising estimations. The more money you collect before the event, the more you can give away!

Before the big day, make lots of signs that tell the “new” price of gas and the hours it will be offered. Make sure your church’s name is clearly displayed.

If you want to go the extra mile, have church volunteers offer drivers soft drinks as they wait their turn at the pump. Kids from your youth group could be available to wash windows as an added service. And when anyone asks why your church is sponsoring such an event, just say that you want to help people and spread the love of God around town!

Idea 2 Car Carriers

Here’s an idea that not only helps you reach out to the community but gets your church plenty of notice, too!

Choose a local store that gets plenty of foot traffic. Your neighborhood Wal-Mart, grocery store, or home improvement center are all good choices. Speak with the store’s manager, and explain that members of your church would like to spend a few hours on an upcoming Saturday to help patrons get their carts to their cars and unload their purchases. Together, decide which hours of the day would be most beneficial to shoppers. Emphasize that no strings are attached!

On your chosen Saturday, position volunteers near exits of the store. As people come out, offer to help them get their carts to their cars and load their purchases in the vehicles. Elderly shoppers and moms with small children might be most appreciative.

Before the event, have T-shirts printed with the name and address of your church. You might also want to print simple fliers to hand out that give your church’s name, address, telephone number, Web address, service times, and a simple welcoming invitation. If you do this, offer a flier to each person, but don’t force the information on anyone. Your goal here is to simply offer cheerful help in a way that allows your love of Jesus to shine in your actions.

If children from your church are involved in this project, make sure an adult accompanies each child or group of children as they move off into the parking lot. Never let a child offer assistance alone.





Idea 3 Support Your Local Team

Odds are that many in your community are involved (or are the parent of a child who's involved) with a sports event or program in your area—whether it's a youth program, a high school team, or an adult sports league. So show your support and become a sponsor. Here are just a few ideas:

- Get a sponsor sign put up on the fence at a baseball or football game (or a banner, for an indoor sport).
- Sponsor a local Little League team, and put your church's name on T-shirts.
- Sponsor a local softball or bowling team (or start one!).
- Sponsor a car at a local speedway. (C'mon, can't you just see your church's name on the side?)
- Become a partial sponsor of a community event.
- Help pay for programs at high school sports events (and get your name in the program).

Don't just limit your church's participation to financial sponsorship, though—find ways to participate at the events you help sponsor. Your church can distribute programs, serve free beverages (maybe hot chocolate at cold football games) or snacks, or assist in the running of the event. Or maybe you can supply fruits or drinks for both teams at halftime or at the end of the event. Let them know you're there for them—both on and off the field.



Idea 4 NASCAR Race Day

If you want to do something different to catch the attention of people in your community, *here's* an event to try!

Contrary to common perceptions, NASCAR fans come from all levels of society—and they will be pleasantly surprised to have you tailor an event to their interests.

A month or more in advance, check the NASCAR Nextel Cup Series schedule (www.nascar.com/races), and determine a race that you'd like to show on a big screen for race fans in your community. Be sure you have a good video projector, screen, sound system, and TV hookup for the right channel. (An outdoor showing would be even more fun,

but daylight may make it impossible to get a good image from the projector.)

If you can possibly use an area of your church, your community may well be intrigued that a church would promote such an event on church grounds. If you need to use a facility other than your church, be sure to make it clear that your church is sponsoring the entire event. Spread the word by handing out fliers at a local racetrack. You could also put up posters in local hangouts and around town.

Plan and advertise free refreshments. You might want to make it clear in all advertising that you'll allow no alcoholic beverages or drunkenness. You'll probably also want to decide in advance what your policy on smoking will be.

Even if attendance at your event isn't overwhelming, people in your community will begin to catch the idea that your church is a *little* different!

Idea 5 Preen a Park

Commit to caring for a particular park in your area. Survey the park and see what you could do to improve its looks or usability. Some ideas might be to use a lawn edger along the sidewalks, fertilize or reseed areas of sparse grass, add additional or better cushioning material under swings, paint or varnish playground equipment, or plant flowers or other attractive vegetation.

Develop a plan for what you realistically can and are willing to do. Then set up an appointment and talk to the parks department of your city government. Lay out your plan, and make it clear that your commitment does not reflect negatively on their care of the park, but that you simply want to make that park especially nice for the community. You might want to suggest a one-year trial basis, during which both your church and the community can evaluate the project.

Once you have permission, keep your commitment. If anything, go above and beyond what you've agreed to do. Report to the city any repair needs, and do them yourselves only if they give you specific permission. After things are going well, ask the city if you could place a small sign at the entrance to the park that says, "This park lovingly cared for by [your church]."



Once things are looking especially nice, ask your local newspaper to do an article to highlight what you're doing. You might even write the article yourself and send it along with photos. If you do so, use a reporter's viewpoint rather than writing a fluff piece—your piece will have more credibility with readers if you use this perspective.

Preening a park can create a positive buzz for your church in the community. And as your people work, they may even have opportunities to talk with park users about your church and our Lord.



Idea 6 Halloween Handouts

On Halloween evening, your church members of all ages can accomplish the unexpected as you go out trick-or-treating—by giving treats *to* your neighbors instead.

Within a mile radius of your church, go house to house, offering candies, snacks, or candles donned with a ribbon and a note. On your note, print a Scripture verse or perhaps a simple message like “Jesus is the light of the world,” and include your church’s contact information and Web site address if you have one.

You’ll discover that giving treats softens hearts. If you ask your neighbors if they have any needs you can pray for, many will respond positively. Use sensitivity as you ask and in deciding *when* to ask. But if you do ask, take time to jot down prayer requests, coupled with their names, addresses, and, if they’re willing to share, phone numbers. Ask permission to share these requests with others if you plan on doing so, and also be sure to ask if you can contact them for updates.

Give any prayer requests you receive to your outreach coordinator when all your Halloween heralds reconvene at the church for a post-Halloween Handout party. Share prayer requests with your congregation’s prayer team. Their follow-up prayers, notes of encouragement, and phone calls give your church another friendly opportunity to become visible—and to make the love of Jesus real to others.