

You don't have to be the Apostle Paul in order to share your faith.

Relatively few of us are gifted in the area of evangelism. In fact, many of us have a rather dismal track record when it comes to sharing our faith. Yet, in spite of our evangelistic shortcomings, we want to share Jesus with others. Is there a way we can be involved in sharing the gospel without preaching like the apostle Paul?

You may not be a gifted evangelist, but you do have the gift of servanthood. You can use that gift to reach out to your community with the love of God. For years Steve Sjogren has successfully used a simple approach called "servant evangelism" that allows any believer—regardless of gifting—to be involved in sharing God's love with others. One of the great things about this approach is that you don't have to do it alone. Sjogren offers 101 simple and effective ways your church or small group can demonstrate the love of God to those in your community. And when people see the love of God in action, they want to know more about Him. You *can* share your faith successfully. Here are 10 ideas to get you started.

TEN BEST PROJECTS TO GET YOU STARTED

When you first launch the idea of servant evangelism, the primary goal is to have a successful experience for your group. You want your group members to come back from their time together with a gung-ho attitude and to say, "We had a great time. Let's do this again – soon!" You want participants to enjoy themselves so much they'll not only come back the next time you do an outreach project, they'll also want to bring their friends.

1. **Totally Free Car Wash**

If you're just starting out with servant evangelism and the weather permits, this is a good place to begin. Though not a high-volume project, it's a great starting place for seeing the power of kindness touch the human heart.

A car wash costs essentially nothing to do. There is something for everyone here, including children. Get plenty of signs. Find a good location with a lot of cars driving past. Put some enthusiastic cheerleaders out on the street with your signs, and go for it. Don't forget to have a designated evangelist who explains to the recipients what is going on.

2. **Water / Soft Drink Giveaway**

If you want to do a little more investing in product and to touch a larger group, this is probably the way to go. Set up at a stop light. The police probably won't mind your outreach as long as you're mindful of the flow of traffic when the light changes.

Try to give away at least two hundred drinks on your first outing, even if you are a small group. You'll be surprised how fast that many drinks will go. Print some cards that say a simple message like "God loves you and so do we!" What you don't use the first time out, you can use later.

3. **Gift-Wrapping**

If you've gotten your feet wet doing a project or two and you want to step out a bit further for Christmas, gift-wrapping is wonderful. You will attract a lot of attention among shoppers. Be ready for a possible onslaught of business. Be careful what you promise to the store management on your first time out with this. If the total workforce is your one small group, I suggest you sign up for just one weekend before Christmas.

We've found that malls are also open to the idea of gift-wrapping at Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and other gift-buying holidays.

- 4. Leaf Raking**
As the saying goes, there's safety in numbers. When it comes to serving, this is a slam dunk. Find the yards in your part of town that have a lot of leaves, and go for it. Just make sure you have enough rakers on your team so that no one gets worn out.
- 5. Business Blast**
If you're coming up on one of the special days; Christmas, Easter, Secretaries Day, Valentines Day, St. Patrick's Day, pick up candy or flowers and serve the servants (employees). You may be surprised how open-hearted they are when the tables are turned and you're on the giving end.
- 6. Newspaper Giveaway**
Your mother always said, "Don't play in traffic." She was partly right. Just don't go into traffic with your newspaper when the light is green. Set up on a busy corner and give away your papers at the red light.
- 7. Birthday Party Organizing at a Nursing Home**
There are few places where your kindness will be more appreciated than the local nursing home. For many, this gesture will be the first time they've been remembered in years. Know that in touching the one you focus on, you are not reaching out to the one resident, but to the extended family, who will surely hear about your act of kindness.
- 8. Grocery Bag Packing**
Most people need their groceries bagged. Find one of the big discount grocers and approach the manager with your idea. This is a great project because it can be done any day of the year, regardless of weather conditions.
- 9. Giveaways**
Once you've explained to a store manager your vision for serving the city and gotten in on his good graces, you have a powerful outreach location for the future. Situate yourselves at the entrance, not the exit, of the store. On the way out of the store, customers are in a hurry to get out to their cars. They won't take what you have, and your servant team members will feel rejected.
- 10. Twenty-Dollar Outreach Experiment**
For a little investment of money, your group will learn a lot with this project. This is a great way to jumpstart your group into the ministry of servant evangelism. If your people are a little shy, team up in groups of two or three. Everyone in your group agrees to do some sort of outreach during the next week, investing twenty dollars. The ideas don't have to be completely original. Don't forget to celebrate the projects that are the most daring, most creative, touched the most people, and so on. At your next group meeting, share your experiences.

WHAT TO SAY

"Free!"

Don't take any money for any of your projects, even if it is offered. To receive money robs the gift you're giving of its power. Free is a powerful, stimulating word to modern people. It is both disarming and gratifying at the same time. I can't tell you how many people I've heard say over the years, "No one has ever given me anything free in my life." I suspect for each person who has verbalized that sentiment, there are numbers more who have thought it. In this day of the you-don't-get-anything-for-free-anymore mentality, giving people something for free is truly unusual.

"We're doing a community service project!"

With this little phrase, you give people a bit of context for the sort of project you're doing. In their minds you're not so different from the Kiwanis, Boy Scouts, or other community groups. Of course, you're doing your outreach project with a completely different motivation from the other groups'. It's okay to give people a familiar context that makes sense on their terms.

"We're here showing God's love in a practical way!"

When you're out serving, there is always a question of "how much should we say to people when we are serving?" and "what should we say to people when we are serving?" I've found that the little phrase above has enough content that the average person will understand.

"We're Christians."

It's a mistake to push your church's name too much. On the one hand, we'd love to see people find their way into our church. On the other hand, we don't want to come across as self-promotional. If those you serve sense that you're there to grow your membership roster, they'll be turned off. Bear in mind, unchurched people are far more sensitive to self-promotion than most Christians. Print simple contact information and your church's name on a card if you want to provide specific information for people to follow-up on if they want to. My experience is that as you serve with the right motive, people will spontaneously ask questions about your church without you forcing the issue. Your group will grow as you begin to live with an outward focus. Making more of your church name than is necessary is a mistake.

"If Jesus were in town, we think he'd be saying things, but he'd also be doing things for people."

This explanation seems to make the most sense to unchurched people. In response to the question, "What would Jesus do?" the unchurched seem to think he'd be very practical in his expression of love. They often say in response to this explanation, "I always thought that if Jesus were to come to my city he'd be doing things like this." You'll touch something intuitive in people when you touch their hearts through acts of generosity and kindness.

Excerpt from *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* by Steve Sjogren, NavPress, Colorado Springs, 2001.