

10 Outreach Ideas That Work

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People can doubt your faith and disagree with your theology, but they can't deny it when you serve them. Here are ten of my favorite ways to show your community the love of Jesus—simple, mostly cheap, and proven to work.

1 Hand out bottled water on a hot day.

This is one of the cheapest, easiest outreaches you can do, but it means so much to someone sweating through a Louisiana—or Charleston—summer. Dave told me about a man who came to church because someone handed him a bottle of water on the beach. He gave his life to Jesus and now leads in an area of their church. Never underestimate the simple things.

2 Adopt your local school.

Buy lunch for teachers, provide classroom supply gift cards (teachers spend their own money on supplies more than you know), or sponsor a field day. Dave's church kept knocking on their school's door until the principal finally said, "The teachers might appreciate a breakfast." That one breakfast opened the door to serving 30 at-risk families at Christmas and 70 over the summer—and families and teachers from that school now attend the church. Schools are a community that already exists. Serve them well and everything changes.

3 Give out gas gift cards at a local gas station.

With gas prices what they are, this hits a real, felt need for everyday families. It's immediate, practical relief—and people remember who eased that burden.

4 Pay for laundry at a laundromat.

Think about the type of person using a laundromat. Many are families without a washer and dryer at home, stretching every dollar. Covering their laundry says "you're seen" to people who often feel invisible.

5 Bring fresh dinner to first responders.

Dave's team took dinner to a local fire station, and the firefighters were blown away—they told him they constantly get handed leftovers. Bringing something fresh communicates honor, not obligation. First responders serve everyone; almost no one serves them.

6 Set up a prayer station at a community festival.

Dave has a pastor friend near Charleston whose engagement at prayer stations is mind-blowing. It works because you're going where people already are, and even people who'd never walk into a church will stop and let you pray for them in a park.

7 Provide a bounce house for a neighborhood block party.

It's a simple, easy win, but families will talk about it for years. Kids have a blast, parents relax and connect, and your church becomes part of the neighborhood's story.

8 Post a Starbucks gift card barcode on Instagram for your community to use.

I love this one because even people who never use the card see the post—and it sends a huge message: this church loves our city with no strings attached. It's outreach and awareness in one move.

9 Buy name-brand shoes for kids going back to school.

I saw a church let kids come shop and pick out their own shoes so every child could start the school year confident instead of afraid of being looked down on. Dignity is part of generosity. Don't just meet the need—meet it in a way that makes people feel valued.

10 Organize a toy drive during the holidays.

This is the one that reached me. A toy drive isn't just about the toys—it's about a kid waking up on Christmas morning knowing somebody cared. That memory can last a lifetime. I'm proof.