

OUTREACH MINISTRY

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Equipping You to Serve

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CHURCHLEADERS

P R E S S

Colorado Springs

OUTREACH MINISTRY

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Equipping You to Serve

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**CHURCHLEADERS
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Colorado Springs

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FOREWORD

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them . . . And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry.
—The Apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:10 and 4:11, 12 ESV)

The fact that you are holding this book says some rather encouraging things about you and about your church.

What does it say about you? It suggests that you recognize that the grace and faith that brought you into the kingdom is just the beginning. God has good works prepared for you to do. You play a vital role in the great redemption drama. God's active and seeking love for the world is expressed in you. A book like this can help tune your heart to mission and sharpen your skills. Your interest, and the time you invest reading a book like this, is an encouragement.

What does it say about your church that you are investing time and energy in this resource you are holding? Those who work with you, those who seek to match your skills with ministry opportunities, recognize that the task of the church is not the work of the paid professionals alone. In fact, it is not primarily theirs: it is our work together—all of us. And as we have opportunity to lead and influence others in the church, we make it our aim, as Paul

FOREWORD

expressed it, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry.” A book like this can play a part in that equipping. And it’s encouraging whenever a church invests in equipping others for this great work.

As you read, reflect and absorb the wise counsel and good ideas you find here, you will see that your role in the work of the church is vital. The kingdom of God advances as each of us seize the opportunities God places before us and hone our gifts for maximum kingdom impact. For the past two decades, *Outreach* magazine has told the story of people like you and churches like yours sharing the incredibly good news of a God who loves us all self-sacrificingly. It is our privilege to stand in partnership with you and your church as you continue the good work he has begun in your community.

— @JamesPLong, Editor
Outreach Magazine
OutreachMagazine.com

INTRODUCTION

to the *Outreach Ministry Guides Series*

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms
(1 Peter 4:10).

This handbook is part of a series designed to equip and empower church volunteers for effective ministry. If you're reading this, chances are you're a church volunteer. Thanks for your willingness to serve!

Several things make this handbook unique:

- The content is specific and practical for your given area of ministry.
- Experienced ministry practitioners—folks who've worked, served, and helped to train others in this particular area—compiled this information.
- It's written with you—a ministry volunteer—in mind.

Within these pages you'll find three sections. The first gives a brief overview of fundamental principles to provide you with a solid foundation for the ministry area in which you're serving.

Section 2 unpacks various roles and responsibilities. Understanding your role and the roles of your fellow teammates helps the ministry team serve together well.

INTRODUCTION

Finally, Section 3 provides a multitude of practical ministry tools. These ideas and tips will help you demonstrate Jesus' love to the people you serve.

Whether you're a first-time volunteer or a seasoned veteran, my prayer is that the information and practical tools in this handbook will encourage and assist you. May God bless and guide you in your ministry!

— **Matt Lockhart**, Project Manager

INTRODUCTION

to the *Outreach Ministry Volunteer Handbook*

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

(Luke 19:10)

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

(John 20:21)

This book has been created to help you follow the example and continue the work of Jesus today. As you embark on an outreach project chosen by you or organized by your congregation, you are discovering the challenge and the joy of serving in Jesus' name. As you leave the church building and venture into pockets of need nearby, you will meet and know and help others who may not have experienced the love of Jesus before.

Use this handbook as a guide as you prepare to serve. The principles in Section 1 will remind you why your outreach project is so important and help you evaluate next steps. The guidelines in Section 2 will help you figure out where you fit into the worldwide mission of spreading the gospel. And Section 3 will spark your imagination with ideas for reaching every population in dozens of situations. Every outreach-minded Christian will find there a treasure trove of practical help for obeying Christ's command to "Go . . . and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19).

INTRODUCTION

All these possibilities are based on the real-life experience of Christian workers serving a weary and wary world with the hope only Jesus offers. You can join them, emboldened by the fresh strategies and equipped with the remarkable collection of resources you'll find in these pages.

— **Mark A. Taylor**, General Editor

SECTION 1

OUTREACH MINISTRY FOUNDATIONS

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Chapter 2	5 Principles For Effective Outreach	17
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CHAPTER 1

OUTREACH 101

*O*utreach. The leader who recruited you said you'd be doing *outreach*. You're glad to help, but it's possible no one ever stopped to define the word for you. You know that *reach* implies some effort, and *out* indicates the project will require some steps beyond yourself. *Outside*. *Out* there. *Out* of my comfort zone? Any of those ideas might fit, but a longer look can clarify what outreach is, and what it is not.

It's NOT about YOU

It IS about THEM

Almost two decades ago Rick Warren wrote a bestseller that started with a phrase most of us have heard since then. "It's not about you," he began in *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and we couldn't choose a better motto to frame our approach to outreach.

It's true, of course, that you are an important element in this enterprise. It wouldn't happen without you and the others on your team. And hopefully you *are* looking forward to the outreach effort you're tackling. It's not wrong to enjoy your service. In fact, it's almost certain you'll find fulfillment in what you do. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), and you should expect to receive many blessings from the outreach you'll offer.

But while you're planning and while you're working, remember to focus on the people you're serving, not your own preferences or comfort or feelings. Hopefully your project planners have done research to discover a real, pressing need your outreach will help to meet, not just a project chosen because the workers will enjoy it.

Outreach is about the people you're serving, so plan on interacting with them if at all possible. Stop to listen. Hear their stories. Make a friend. Offer a warm smile and words of encouragement. And do what they ask—sometimes even when it doesn't make sense to you or it's not what you planned. It's about them. They may even help you. In fact, it's ideal if they will help, because they need the blessing of giving, too. And they know more about their neighborhoods and its needs and preferences than you do. Fold them into your service.

Focus on your team members, too. Be prepared to form relationships that will blossom into friendships and opportunities for all of you to grow. Don't be surprised if some of those working with you are newcomers to your church. Some may barely have attended weekend services. Their desire to serve can grow into an understanding of what motivated you to serve, your commitment to Jesus and longing to demonstrate his love. That leads us to the next point.

It's NOT about YOUR CHURCH

It IS about JESUS

The local church is not the only enterprise planning activities and calling them outreach. Local banks give away ballpoint pens, and coffee shops distribute cup holders at trade shows and malls. But your outreach project is not public relations or marketing for your congregation.

Businesses may call it outreach when they take a day and ask all employees to collect trash, or serve in soup kitchens, or plant flowers outside museums. But your outreach project is about more than doing good deeds.

Your goal is to show the love of Jesus to folks who may not have encountered it before. Your goal is to show how followers of Jesus are not cult-like weirdos seeking new adherents but sold-out followers of the One who died for them. As you serve, remember to love; don't try to sell.

With that in mind, you may or may not choose to advertise your church's name while you're serving. Some churches have forbidden outreach workers to wear T-shirts with the church logo or to drive church vans painted with the church's name. Others say it's OK for a watching world to know that Jesus followers are serving where it's needed most. In a culture that has turned its back on the church, it's good for nonbelievers and those apathetic about Christianity to see Christians serving. Whatever your decision about attaching your church's name to your project, check your motives. The love of Christ compels us to alleviate suffering, provide encouragement, fill empty stomachs, and facilitate healing—even if all that never brings one new person through our church doors.

It's NOT about QUICK CONVERSIONS

It IS about PLANTING SEEDS

Your aim is to live out the love of Jesus and then trust the Holy Spirit to soften hearts and change perspectives of those who see you serve. Trust him to use your project as a link in the chain that eventually pulls them to Christ.

It's possible, of course, that you could meet someone who's ready to hear the gospel and give her life to Christ

on the spot. Be ready for that, but don't count on it. Your mission is not to fan out into the community and assault folks who don't know Jesus with promises of eternal damnation. Today more than ever, that approach is more likely to alienate nonbelievers than to attract them.

The time for seeking commitment may come later. Maybe you will make a friend you can see again. Maybe God will use your good will and hard work as one step that leads to their conversion. Pray for that to happen. And while you're serving, make sure nothing in your attitude or conversation gets in the way of the work God wants to do in the hearts of those you're serving.

Jesus promised that lifting him up would draw people to him (John 12:32). Lift him up and believe he will use your work to accomplish his will.

It's NOT just about SERVICE

It IS about MAKING DISCIPLES

But while you're thinking about all of that, remember this final word. The purpose of outreach is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Some who see you serve will think differently about the church and be willing someday to take a second look at Jesus. Some who serve with you will discover new reasons and opportunities to seek him more diligently. Your project can open the door to relationships that will drive people deeper into Scripture and closer to those who live by it.

That's your goal. It's the most important goal in the world. And God will use you to make it happen right where you live today.

CHAPTER 2

5 PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

*N*ever in our lifetimes has there been a greater need for outreach. Research shows the percentage of our population attending church on any weekend is declining. And the number of those claiming no affiliation with any institutional religion continues to grow. And yet many are looking for answers to life's deepest questions; many seek spiritual meaning beyond their physical existence.

Reaching seekers today demands a fresh approach and a renewed commitment to reaching them.

Some reading this book will remember a day when all our energy was spent on creating better programs to attract more people to our church building. But no matter what we did, many in our culture have paid no attention.

Some of us have given great attention to theories and principles of church growth. But much of that emphasis simply resulted in creating congregations more attractive to Christians who were dissatisfied with the congregation they previously attended.

Some of us have felt that faithfulness should be our goal. So we have given our money, attended the services, read daily devotions, and joined small groups. But much of that activity has turned our focus inward. Our friends, our church, our youth ministry, our children's program,

our women's ministry, our music—it's all so good, it's all so wholesome, everyone there is so nice, it's a wonderful shelter from the evil around us. But as we've isolated ourselves from the world, more and more of the world has headed for Hell.

Some of us, remembering that the mission of Jesus is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) have made drastic changes in our church programming to attract people who don't know him. Modern music accompanied by fog machines and lasers, practical electives, a contemporary approach to preaching, worship services at times besides Sunday morning. And some of us have even created church staff positions called "outreach pastor." None of that—absolutely none of that—is wrong or bad. Of course the church must change with the times.

But the church does not exist for itself. The need of the day and the truth of Scripture demand that we realize this: the church does not have a mission; God's mission has the church. Now is the time to reach out. Now is the time to engage the world on its turf instead of assuming they'll meet us on ours. If we do not realize that, if we do not reach out to those who have not joined us, we become consumers in a club. Sadly, the club mentality is under the surface of many church initiatives and buried in the psyche of many Christians.

But those reading this book can change that.

We can acknowledge that God is a missionary God, and we can recapture our missionary identity. We've long supported foreign missionaries who have left the comfort of the familiar to enter different cultures with God's good news. They have learned new languages and discovered needs in South American jungles or the African

bush or teeming cities in Asia or Europe. They have obeyed the command of Jesus to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

This handbook is full of strategies and ideas to help us do that where we live. Some of this outreach, maybe most of it at first, will be organized by church leaders. God bless them! But we can pray for more. We can ask God to kindle a heart for the lost, a missionary spirit and identity, inside every Christian. Outreach may begin with plans inside a church office, but it must grow from the passion of every Christian in every neighborhood.

The outreach needed today has several important characteristics. We can think about them using a simple acrostic based on the word *REACH*.

R = Relational

Effective outreach makes connections with people.

The project is not the point; the people are our purpose. We may stage impressive programs or do remarkable work. But if we have built no relationship with anyone outside our group, we've succeeded at public relations more than outreach.

Effective outreach mobilizes Christians to hear the stories of the people they're serving. People are longing for someone to listen to them. They will remember that Christians took time to pay attention to their need. It's so much easier to paint a wall than to sit down with someone we're serving and just let them talk. But when we look at people and listen to them, we're following the example of Jesus.

Some like the word *incarnational* to describe this strategy. Jesus was God *incarnated*. He took on flesh and

blood and bones to demonstrate the purposes and priorities of God. With our outreach, we have a similar opportunity to show what the love of Jesus looks like.

When we look at the example of Jesus, we see him again and again interacting with the people around him. He did not do his good works at a distance from the crowd. He mingled with people. He touched and listened. He laughed and ate. He had supernatural ability to see into the hearts of people and to perceive their need. We can pray for the Holy Spirit to make us similarly aware as we serve people on playgrounds, in schools, at shelters, or raking leaves on their front lawns.

“But I’m an introvert,” some will respond. “Extending myself to others is hard work for me.” We can encourage these folks to relax, pray for the right opportunity, and try. Sooner or later they will meet someone else who’s shy or quiet or alone. Or they may discover an extrovert hungry for someone to hear them talk! With God’s help, introverts will be surprised at how effective they can be—and how fun and meaningful it can be to build relationships.

And remember that outreach initiatives build relationships among workers as well as with those being served. A local congregation’s commitment to outreach can attract many who are craving connections and looking for meaningful ways to get outside themselves. Many around us, especially young adults, are seeking causes to give themselves to. When the church spends its resources to meet real needs in its community, it attracts people who are more interested in changing the world than supporting an institution.

The wise outreach leader encourages anyone and everyone to participate. It's true, of course, that a non-Christian won't be sharing the love of Christ, at least not intentionally. But he will experience this love as he sees how the Christians around him are serving. He will feel it as they demonstrate their love for him.

E = Evangelistic

Effective outreach seeks to make disciples of Christ.

Here's the tension outreach leaders experience: Our purpose is to bring people to Jesus. But if we simply go door-to-door distributing tracts, we'll probably be wasting our time. If we buttonhole people on the sidewalk or preach with a megaphone from street corners, we'll likely do more harm than good for the cause of Christ. And if we accost schoolteachers or soup kitchen guests or nursing home residents with a gospel presentation every time we serve them, they may ask us to quit coming.

So, how do outreach projects lead to making disciples? There are several answers.

• Service is our best apologetic.

There was a time when leading unbelievers to Jesus was mainly a rational issue. Show them the Bible is true. Tell why it's reasonable to believe in God. List the proofs that Jesus is God's Son. Repeat the Scriptures explaining how to become a Christian.

We may still have the chance for such conversations. It's still important to know and believe and be able to explain the truth about God. But something else must come first if we're to turn the heads of many who completely ignore the church. (It's not that they don't believe the claims of

Christianity; they haven't stopped to consider them.) In a culture where many think the church is irrelevant, our outreach creates the chance to show that's not true.

- **Service sets the stage for more influence later.**

Listen to the testimonies of leaders whose churches are active with outreach:

“One way we reach non-Christians is because we have an excellent reputation in the community. Again and again we hear, ‘We came because there’s a buzz about this church in this town.’”

“Seeing us out serving is not going to make someone a disciple. But when that person has a need, they think of us first.”

“We believe the more we can do to winsomely represent Jesus in a beautiful way, the sooner they’ll come to us when they experience crisis in their lives.”

- **Service helps Christians become like Jesus.**

Jesus called fishermen to follow him and become fishers for people (Matthew 4:19). People were his reason for living. He cared more for lost people than anyone else who’s walked our planet. Watch him interact with the woman at the well (John 4:1-26), with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22)—the examples go on and on. We are following his example when we care about people the way Jesus did, when our goal above every priority and any concern is to make disciples. With our commitment to outreach we are demonstrating the best definition of Christian maturity.