

10 Things You Can Do to Improve Your Personal Outreach to Others

ALL evangelistic outreach efforts are *relational*. The purpose of all outreach is to improve people's relationship with God and with each other. Because outreach is relational, there is no one specific way to help build relationships. The following suggestions are offered in an effort to help you to become more effective in how you reach out to others:

1. **Show God's love in word and deed.** We live in a world in which many people are hurting. People will remember how we treated them (what we did and how we made them feel) long after they remember what we said. What is the best way that you can show God's love to someone? It may be by listening to them, by offering a shoulder to cry on, or simply by taking the time to show them that you care.
2. **Meet people where they are.** When Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), he did not try to convince her to go to church, nor did he tell her what she had to do to improve her life. He merely listened to her in a non-judgmental way. He met her where she was and, as a result, she began to tell others about what happened when she encountered Jesus.
3. **See things from the other person's perspective.** Not everyone has the same perspective on God, theology or the Church. Listen carefully and try to understand things from their perspective rather than trying to impose your viewpoint on others. If you were in their position, how would you want to be treated?
4. **Don't argue, coerce, threaten or belittle anyone.** Everyone has been created in the image of God. Approach them as if you are looking at them through God's eyes. You may not agree with them, but that doesn't mean that have to impose yourself (or your perspective) on them. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), the father welcomed his son back with open arms.
5. **Be positive and don't complain.** Sometimes people unintentionally speak unkindly about their church. If you complain about the church, why would anyone want to come and visit?
6. **Tell others how you became involved in the Church and what it means to you.** People enjoy hearing stories about people they know. Try to see if there are any ways in which they might be able to connect their life story to your story.
7. **Ask non-threatening questions.** In an effort to become better acquainted with someone, ask questions about them, but respect their privacy. If they are reluctant to discuss some things, be kind and respectful. You are there to develop a relationship with them, not to badger them to reveal their "darkest secrets".
8. **Be authentic.** Don't try to be somebody you're not. Be honest and forthright, as you seek to understand who they are.
9. **Invite them to participate in the church's ministries** (worship, education, fellowship, etc.), but don't take offense if they decide not to accept your invitation. People are busy and if they are currently unable to participate now, there may be a time when they will be available at a later date. Do your best to keep the door open for them to participate in the future.
10. **Look for ministry partners.** Is there someone else you know who might introduce you to a particular family? If outreach is relational, what other people can help you to build a relationship with prospective families?

If you have any comments and/or suggestions, I invite you to share them with me. Thank you for your outreach efforts.

Your partner in ministry,
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The Stewardship of Time

“We start every day knowing we’re not going to get it all done. And we look back on the years and wonder where they went and why we haven’t accomplished what we had hoped.

Time is the only element in the world that is irretrievable when it’s lost. Lose money and you can make more. Lose a friend and you can patch up the relationship. Lose a job and you can find another. But lose time and it’s gone forever.”

--Peter Bregman

When most people hear the word “*stewardship*”, they tend to think of it in terms of “*giving money to the Church*”, when in reality, it is “*the way we manage the gifts that God gives us*”. To illustrate this, let’s begin with the “gift of time”. Time is a gift that is given to all people. Everyone gets 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Some people maximize the gift of time—they seem to get more done each day than most of us can accomplish in a week (or perhaps even a month)! Other people tend to fritter time away—they seem to waste time (or spend their life “killing time”). One group of people seems to manage their time well, while another group of people seems to let time slip through their hands.

As the Coordinator of Stewardship and Outreach at First Lutheran Church, I think it would be helpful for us as individuals and as a congregation, if we were able to become better stewards of the gift of time that God gives us. Please don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that we are “misusing our time”, but what I am saying is that we might be able to discover ways to “better maximize our time”.

Step 1: Find Our Focus

What is it that God is calling us to be and to do with our lives? What is God’s mission for us? If we could do one thing that would show God’s love to someone, what would we do? What do we enjoy doing? About what causes do we feel passionate? If we knew that we were able to make a difference in someone else’s life, who would that person be and what would we do that would make a difference for them? What kind of legacy would you like others to remember you by?

Step 2: Develop a Plan

It’s one thing to find something on which to focus, but it is an entirely different matter to develop a plan of action. Once you have identified your focus, what course of action will best help you to accomplish your goals? How does your plan mesh with God’s plan and how is your plan an effective use of your time?

Step 3: Take Action

Now that you have a focus and a plan, it’s time to take action. What specific action do you need to take in order to bring your plan to fruition? You can talk about doing something forever, but until you actually do something the plan will not be advanced.

Step 4: Evaluate What Happened

After taking action, take time to evaluate what happened and what could be done to make it better. What would make you and/or the situation more effective? Whose help and support would help improve the situation? Was this a worthwhile use of your time and energy?

Step 5: Celebrate & Give Thanks

Take time to recognize and celebrate what has been accomplished by what you have done and give thanks to God—for the opportunity to use the gifts God has given you, for the people whose lives have been touched, and for God’s guidance, support and direction in your life.

As “stewards of time”, what would help you to become more effective in how you use the gift of time that God has given you? If you wish to discuss this with me at greater length, please feel free to send me an email or give me a call. Thank you for your partnership in God’s mission.

Gratefully yours,
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