

## Ways to Connect with the Unchurched

In order to connect with the unchurched you have to have three ingredients: a knowledge of God's word; a good relationship with unchurched people; and an ability to make the leap from a world of organized faith to a world of searching faith. Most clergy and some laity have the first ingredient. However, very few clergy ever spend enough time with the unchurched to form relationships with them. Our administrative duties at church keep us cloistered within the walls. Laity on the other hand have close working relationships with the unchurched but have not been trained to use that relationship for evangelism when the time is right. Nor do they have the biblical knowledge. Laity can make the leap from the world of organized faith to searching faith better than clergy. This is the reason I have come to believe that one of the most important issues not being addressed in the church is how to equip and mobilize the laity to infiltrate the unchurched world with the Gospel. This is another and much larger issue that always begins with forming a relationship based on friendship not evangelism. Hope this helps.

The following is a collection of ways to connect with the unchurched public that came through one of our forums. The key to reaching out the unchurched is to connect your story with people for whom you have affinity with because of your story, i.e. your experiences before you began the Christian journey.

1. Servant Evangelism, I am beginning to believe that if I were starting a new church again, I would every Saturday develop the habit of doing servant evangelism in the area and begin to take lay people with me and in time develop it into the primary ministry of the church. Let me encourage all of you to at least look into this. It is cheap, doable for anyone, and on top of that it can be fun. A visit some Saturday to the Servant Ministry at Cincinnati Vineyard to see how they make it into an event would be worth the money. go to [www.kindness.com](http://www.kindness.com) for examples. I would also seriously consider setting up several Alpha courses, even do one in

a hotel perhaps to make it on a neutral ground. Bill Easum, this is the only post from me in this list. The rest come from the forum.

2. How about sending personal notes of congratulations to the parents of every child for whom there is a birth announcement and a note to the child welcoming them to our world.
3. The next time you see a school play, or a concert, or a game - write a personal note to each student offering warmth and praise for their activity.
4. Visit the local police department and get to know the officers. Later offer to be available should they need someone in a crisis situation such as delivering a "death notice", etc.
5. Ask your congregation to bake cookies and divide up to write a personal note to every public employee in your area just letting them know that their service to the community is appreciated. Do the same for educational staff, day care programs, library, garbage service, nursing home staff, etc. taking one group on every other month.
6. Have folks bake a pie and bring it to the late shift workers at... Put a little note with it saying that it is a free gift, just like the gift of God's love... we appreciate all you do while the world is at rest...
7. Go into the neighborhood of one of your church members and organize a block party where folks in the neighborhood can get together just to have fun.
8. Have a neighborhood Bible School (aka Backyard Bible School) this summer in five different garages or city parks that your folks put on for three afternoons or whatever.
9. Select a neighborhood of 400 to 500 homes and start farming them. Getting a team of folks to make monthly contact with each home. You might start out with just distributing door knob hangers and move on to small gifts or a

community survey. (i.e. batteries for smoke detectors, refrigerator magnets, fly swatters, etc.)

10. Organize some special Sundays in which a particular group within the community is honored/invited to participate in worship.
11. Offer a "life enrichment" seminar at a neutral location. A Percepts Study would indicate what the felt needs of a given community are and would be a starting point. i.e. a six week series on financial freedom. A felt need by most folks, a non-church/non-threatening location, and long enough for group dynamics to set in.
12. Are you a singer, musician, comic, etc.? Take it on the road and entertain local groups.
13. Get a team of your folks out on the morning of one of those snowy days and shovel a few blocks worth of snow off of folks sidewalks. Likewise, get up real early on one of those snowy days and brush off the cars of the folks working the late shift...
14. Block parties work for me -- we have one every 3 months or so. It never ceases to amaze me how many new people there are in my neighborhood every time we have one of these (I live on post and we move a lot). We invite everybody from the neighborhood, and always a couple friends from church, and just have a big potluck/volleyball bash in the yard. 6 Families from my neighborhood now attend New Hope, and my neighbor Rick, who has always been the guy with the sour face, started asking questions about baptism the other day.
15. At work, I actively seek to engage in mentoring relationships with leaders that are not Christian. As we share about why and how we lead soldiers, it is a natural springboard for sharing how Christ has changed my life. I have two colleagues that this type of relationship with me right now.
16. As a church, we also provide a lot of easy things

to do with our friends. In the 9 months we've been a church we've had a craft fair, a costume carnival, a community Thanksgiving luncheon, and a Super Bowl party (We projected the game on to the large screen and had a big meal -- great fun) At each of these I've had friends that don't go to church with us participate. Also our baptisms are at the beach and we invite friends to come to the potluck and play volleyball at the celebration.

17. Right now I meet people through coaching a soccer team for my girls. 11 other kids. Parents. I also volunteer in the schools and meet the same kids and more kids, that leads to conversations with parents.
18. I hope I am not putting myself on the line here but to be honest I volunteer as chaplain at the county prison and go to local bars to listen and hang out. Also, I start "support" groups for those whose lives are broken like women in transition and advertise. Problem is once in awhile I get really burnt. Like the guy I brought into church who was imported to town to manage a porno bar. He was trying to turn his life around and I got him a key to the church after 1 year faithful membership. He hit a rough patch and sexton found him living in the church. Super Maxine had a good time with that one. Great part was core leadership was mad at ME for being put out with him. Mad I didn't get him more help! Right now I am trying to figure out whether to tell the church that the woman acting as my personal assistant, doing typing etc. has been barred from Walmart and Kmart for shoplifting.
19. My best way at this time in my life is through my kids who range in elementary to high school age. Through them I meet their parents and eventually get to know one another well enough to share.
20. I have found that sporting events are a great

place to do that. We are usually just standing or sitting around watching the children anyway. So, after I get to know them well enough not to sound too pushy, we start talking about faith issues, Jesus, and eventually where they might go to church. Since we are among those who cheer yet do not scream vulgarities at our kids or use belittling comments about our team or the opponents, our acquaintances already sense there is something "different" about us.

21. I joined the volunteer fire department last year to build new relationships. I'm also trying to get on the textbook adoption committee at the high school (I've got a background in education), and I'm thinking about applying for the junior high track coach position that's open. After the relationships start, my wife and I are trying to "Give our Friday nights to Jesus" a la Josh Hunt to continue developing the relationships.
22. I was the law enforcement chaplain at my last church. Rode regularly with the police officers. Great ministry to the officers, great to help them see what they do as a ministry, and you meet all kinds of people from the local politicians to the folks who think they own the police dept. to the folks in the roughest neighborhoods. Could have been a really awesome ministry of the local church if they had chosen to support this endeavor. Alas. A couple of the cops did come to church because of the ministry. One family actually stayed.

I regularly meet people in bars. I used to go with the cops, now I go with my students. Folks in bars will tell you just about anything when they find out you're a preacher.

23. Because of my involvement with the Police Department I was appointed to the City Council's Community Gang Task Force which again gives me exposure throughout the community. I am also a member of a local

Rotary Club. This keeps me in contact with business people and civic leaders.

24. I ride an air head BMW motorcycle daily, now and then with a small group, a few charity runs per year and sometimes sat am breakfast at couple rider hang-outs. meet men and women from all walks (rides) of life. great opportunities to tell bits of my story as openings in conversation invite those parts of my faith story which intersect with their bit of life story at the moment. results vary. some come to worship, some are immediately turned off when they discover I'm a pastor, a small group is developing off church campus. one of the finest compliments I've received was from one rider who has become a growing disciple who said to me: "padre, you are the least religious Jesus person I ever met, what time is your service...?" another time I was on a tour 3 states away, met some riders at an eatery and one scruffy looking rider whom I'd never met said to me "you're that preacher from Virginia my buddy told me about, are you for real, man?"
25. Our church is a member of our two local Chambers of Commerce. I attend a majority of the events and always get to meet at least a few new people.
26. Our fax service is sent every other week to over 1300 businesses in the area. It contains helpful information on advertising, mission, vision, values, leadership, etc. as well as a brief blurb on the church at the bottom of the one page fax. It is amazing the number of people I meet who get and read the fax. It serves as a great conversation starter.
27. Neighborhood gatherings (Christmas party, summer BBQ, etc.) have been effective at bringing guests into our home and having an opportunity to connect with them. The largest drew over 120 people in four hours.
28. Our music/worship staff person hangs out in

music stores and talks to the people there. He volunteers to help them with music/studio/background/etc. and in exchange develops a relationship and invites them to church and leaves a flyer about the church in the store.

29. We targeted about 100 people in our community who would be important to meet - School Board members, school system administrators, NAACP president, business leaders, county commissioners, business consultants, directors of foundations, etc. We sent them a letter asking for 15 minutes of their time to ask them three questions - In their opinion, what are the three most pressing issues in our community, thinking outside of the box what could a church do to address these needs, and after reading a brief blurb the church.
30. I serve on the School Advisory Council of the school we will begin meeting at this week. This allows me to meet parents and administrators and is a way of giving back to the school. Of course they will also get a check from us each week for rent.
31. Our web site has received several thousand hits. We have received many phone calls from folks who found us on the web or typed in our address from a promo piece we mailed. They read about us and then call to get more information. Over and over we have heard how much they appreciate a church site that is about much more than just church. Ours includes pages for marriage/parenting information, financial information, stock quotes, games, search engines, a homework helper, great links, health, a bookstore, and much more.
32. I have been building relationships with my 7th grade son's friends and parents through coaching his basketball team for several years. We have had one boy come to Christ and several families join our church and enter

into following Christ as a result of these relationships. I also lead a weekly small group in my home with my son's friends which is affiliated with Young Life "Campaigners" which we call "Iron men" - after the Iron sharpens iron verse in Proverbs. The guys come here before school for donuts, a fun activity and a lesson. I am especially fired up since <four></four>of them prayed this morning to receive Christ!!! PTL.

33. We do free socials events to invite people to non-threatening social activities. We have rented out a roller skating rink and we have rented out a wave pool. We don't charge people and we love anyone to come. A few of these folks have joined us as well. BTW for the money, we believe giving people a free ticket to something of value is much more effective than impersonal print advertising (when you spend time with them at the event - "face time"). Jesus said - use money to win friends into eternal dwellings.
34. The Fourth of July fireworks can be seen from our church parking lot. This year we invited those in the surrounding neighborhood (by mail) to use our parking lot and lawn area to view the fireworks. We provided the popcorn and lemonade. We even brought popcorn around to those neighbors who were in their own yards watching. I'm not quite sure if popcorn went with the wine they were drinking, but they accepted it anyway. We may add a band this coming year and free snow cones.
35. Local health club -- helps pass the time on the treadmill
36. Skateboard parks
37. Hair stylists
38. Animal Clubs (Lions etc.)
39. Historical society museum
40. Gardening clubs
41. Door knocking

42. Funerals and weddings
43. Jogging / walking around town and the track
44. Political events
45. PTA
46. Bowling leagues
47. YMCA
48. United Way
49. Jaycees
50. Helping out at the soup kitchens, hanging with the homeless.
51. Racquetball has worked for me. Relationships build in the downtimes between games. The intensity automatically provides openings for sharing about life.
52. Eat at restaurants often enough to get to know your servers. For those who serve well, compliment them and ask what their motivation is. In doing this with a woman at Chili's, I was easily able to tell her that I'm a pastor developing a new congregation in our town, and I care about service because it's an extension of our Christian lives. She was almost speechless when I asked her to meet with a group of our lay leaders (once we get them!) and share the joy, and burden, of serving others.
53. Do a neighborhood focus group. We've found them to be extremely effective.
54. I work with the elementary school on lots of things . .in the middle of a transformational program -a 3 year process called "accelerated schools" have the chance to work with teachers and other parents. Go on field trips with my daughter and other parents/kids work with the "site-based" committee volunteer in the library. Lots of kids from the community come to VBS & we see each other all around town - especially at school. When I sprained my ankle last fall, I went to the high school trainer for therapy - lots of contact with coaches & student athletes through that. I go to the "beauty shop" (small town of 1800 in east Texas) to get my hair cut -

meet lots & lots of folks there!. I helped the roofing contractor tear off our old roof on the parsonage, I've helped plant onions & pine trees with local farmers. one of my values is: To help anyone, anywhere, anyhow, anytime!

55. If you anticipate that you'll see the people again (neighbors, community leaders, school teachers, mail carriers, waiters and waitresses, grocery store checkers), pick out one or two each day, and pray for them for a week or so. Then begin a conversation. I've been amazed at how God opens doors that seemingly would have remained closed.
56. One of our most effective evangelism teams are our mall walkers. Here there is a very eclectic mix of folks who walk the mall together every morning. We have two couples who are there each day and then offer to buy a pretzel of coffee etc for strangers. It has been a very effective tool.
57. The families of suicide support group through our local hospital. A church member took me there for the once a year "let a minister come" meeting. Many of the people didn't think the pastor had shown up until about halfway through the meeting when they asked who I was. Then, they really started to talk about God and suicide. Some have visited church, which, given the judgment churches around here have given them, I count as a good beginning.
58. We have some foster parents in our church who held an adoption party at the church. Most of the people who came were related to foster parenting, but not necessarily to church. We gained a new couple and several others have remained in contact with the church. I find that sharing our building with more secular groups that I sometimes attend, opens up possibilities.
59. Every morning the trains going downtown are packed to standing room capacity. A good thing for your commuters to do is try to sit in a "four

seater" (four seats face each other). Usually there are regulars in these seats and you can get involved with them. Sitting in the single seat does nothing.

60. A great one that my husband and I learned at a Vineyard conference. Go out to eat somewhere, and when the waiter or waitress brings your food say, "We are getting ready to pray over our food, is there anything that we could pray for you about?" My husband and I did this on the way home from the conference, and the waiter asked us to pray for his parents, they were getting a divorce. (You don't make the person stay there while you pray) Then over the course of the evening, he shared more about his story, and we had a wonderful opportunity to minister to him. It was great.
61. We have three 12 step meetings in our church and I let it be known in as many ways as possible that we will host more. Then we keep communicating the message around the bldg about our spiritual journey and our openness. Plus, since I am in recovery, I go to meetings here too. People in 12 step meetings are already a long way down the road of discipleship, but they are suspicious of institutional religion.
62. Give Your Friday Nights to Jesus. see it at [www.joshhunt.com/friday.html](http://www.joshhunt.com/friday.html)