

BLOCK PARTY HELPFUL TIPS



Send Relief





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INTRODUCTION MESSAGE

Leading your church to host an evangelistic block party for your community can be a great way for your church to demonstrate the love of Christ to neighbors around you and open up doors to communicate the gospel. I hope this block party guide will provide your church with ideas to consider in your planning and execution of your block party. This is not a check-list of items that you must do to have a successful block party, but encouragement to consider in planning. I pray these ideas spur you to considering how you can create a fun environment for your church to host your neighbors and share the gospel.

No act of love is insignificant when King Jesus is involved in it. I've had the pleasure of seeing a lot of different block parties across the country with the Send Relief Serve Tour. I've seen some really fun block parties and honestly, I've seen some miss the mark. In both kinds of block parties, I've seen God work in powerful ways when churches take steps of faith. I pray this manual helps you avoid having an uninspiring block party, but most of all I hope King Jesus uses your act of love in a powerful way in your neighbors' lives. Every step of faith that you lead your church to make to show Christ's love and share the gospel is a good step of faith!

-Sammy Simmons
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Preparation is a key factor to a successful block party.

As a general rule, you should plan for 1.5 to 2 times your Sunday morning worship attendance. However, there are always exceptions to every context.

Clear the church calendar to allow everyone to be a part of this evangelistic outreach. For maximum impact and church participation, make this the major event of the church quarter. Keep the church calendar free the week before, the week of, and the week after your church block party to encourage an “all hands on deck” opportunity for your church.

As you make plans, share the primary purpose of your block party - to communicate the gospel to the community. Remind your church on multiple occasions what you are trying to accomplish: to *show* the gospel and to *share* the gospel with your neighbors.

You may consider asking these simple questions to help in your planning:

- Who are you trying to reach with this block party?
- Where and when is the best time/location to meet so that it is inviting to who you are trying to reach? There may be wisdom in considering a neutral location to remove barriers.
- Ask your church to set a goal of how many new people you are seeking to meet.

Offer an evangelism training four to six weeks in advance to prepare your people to be comfortable with having gospel conversations with their neighbors.

Options for Training:

- Memorize and recite the Romans Road as a whole church (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9 and Romans 10:13) as part of the morning worship service.
- Offer a one to four week training to help participants develop a plan to share their faith with their neighbors.

NAMB Evangelism provides many helpful training tools to equip your people to share their faith.

*You can find these resources at
[https://www.namb.net/evangelism/
evangelism-resources/](https://www.namb.net/evangelism/evangelism-resources/).*

Consider giving away marked New Testaments with the Romans Road highlighted or included on a label inside the cover. Train a team that is ready to share these with your guests. An approach that has worked for many churches is to say, “Have you received your free gift from the church yet? Before I give it to you, do you mind if I take a minute to show you how to use it?”

Have a prayer booth and as you register people, instruct them to visit the prayer booth to obtain their tickets for the food or games. Pray for each family and share the gospel. (Don’t do this at the registration table - you’ll never get people into the event, and they may get frustrated.)

Consider challenging your people to ask God to bring one or two individuals into their path—people they can invite to connect in a neutral space like a coffee shop, park, or over a meal to get to know more and see what God does. Sometimes people expect us to invite them to church but inviting them into your life is unexpected.

Prayer for the block party should be a major part of every church meeting and worship service for at least six weeks leading up to the event.

Some things you could pray for include: praying for neighbors by name, for family members and friends you are inviting, for people to be saved, for good weather, for God to enable your church to be good hosts and show His love to every attendee. For the six weeks prior to the block party, ask every small group to spend focused time in prayer for the event. Also set aside time in every worship service and team meeting to praise God and ask for His help.

I pray you see God do something that is far greater than your church can take credit for. You desperately need God to show up. So, PRAY!

Your block party should certainly be organized, well thought out, and fun, but time spent in prayer leading up to the event is of utmost importance. **Don't try to host an evangelistic block party without seeking the Lord.**

Follow-up is vital.

Your block party isn't finished when the event is over. When I was a pastor, we would often see more people saved in the follow-up after the block party than at the block party itself. Remember, the purpose of the event is not just to have a fun party, it is to develop the relationship between your church and the surrounding community.

- Use your registration cards and follow-up with every participant that doesn't have a like-minded, Bible-believing church home (or lists your church as their church but you don't know them!).
- Set up visitation teams of two to three individuals to visit (if culturally appropriate) these participants within two to three weeks after your block party. If they had fun at your block party, you may be surprised how well you will be received and how easily you can have a gospel conversation.
- Send out an e-mail with upcoming church events and church worship times to every participant who attended the block party. They might not visit your church the following Sunday, but they may visit when they have a need or life gets hard for them.

Recruit a team with the goal of beginning planning three months from the start date of the event. Working as a team allows others to get involved and use their spiritual gifts.

Suggested Planning Team:

- *Stage Coordinator* - purchases or seeks donations for the giveaways, secures who will give their testimonies, and potentially invites groups for mini-performances during the block party
- *Volunteer Coordinator* - secures volunteers to help work the different teams for the block party *You may want to ask two people to jointly lead this position/consider enlisting small groups or Sunday School classes to “own” different portions of the volunteer needs for your block party
- *Promotions Coordinator* - determines the many ways you will promote the block party and schedules the day you pass out flyers to your neighbors
- *Prayer Coordinator* - helps encourage prayer throughout the church leading up to the event and secures volunteers to work the prayer tent
- *Evangelism Coordinator* - leads the evangelism training leading up to the event and coordinates the follow-up to guests after the block party
- *Fun Coordinator* - creates a fun environment, secures the inflatables, back-yard games, and other fun items for the block party

RECRUIT A TEAM

You may want to lump some of these coordinator positions together or secure multiple people to help co-lead positions. When it is possible, work as a team in planning your evangelistic block party.

Other Volunteer Positions to Consider:

registration, grill team, inflatables and carnival game hosts (possibly in two shifts), hosts (welcoming, greeting, etc.), set-up team, trash team, and clean-up team

If your church is small or hosting a block party for the first time, consider reaching out to a partner church to help provide more volunteers. You may be surprised how willing other churches are to partner with you to reach your neighbors with the gospel. Other churches aren't your competition but your brothers and sisters who are in the same kingdom work. They may even be willing to help with some of the funds necessary for hosting a block party.

You can't over-promote your block party, but you can under-promote it.

Consider multiple different ways to communicate your block party to your neighbors. Make it hard for every neighbor to not know that you are having a block party they are invited to attend. People often need to see an invite several different times or different ways before they are “forced” to make a decision whether to come or not.

Options to Promote Your Block Party:

- Social media targeted ads to neighbors within five to fifteen miles of your church
- Social media posts (encourage your church to share the posts with their friends)
- Church banners (consider a two-sided color 4'x8' banner with grommets, put the banner out two to three weeks before your block party, and keep the words on the banner simple - block party, date, time, all invited)
- Full page colorful flyers that can be placed throughout the community two to three weeks out on doors of community businesses and other locations people frequently visit
- Flyers distributed to your neighborhood the Wednesday before your block party or the weekend before (consider 1/2 page black and white flyers on colorful paper or colorful flyers on white paper)

Additional Tips:

- Do not place flyers in the mailbox – fold the flyer on a front door where residents will see it when they open their door.
- Consider moving all the Wednesday night services (the week before or a few days before) to pass out flyers to your neighbors. Section off parts of your neighborhood and invite every neighbor within a certain range of your church. You can either place flyers on doors or knock and attempt to give neighbors a verbal invite and a flyer. (I personally prefer knocking but either work.)
- Work with your post office to mail everyone a postcard invite within a certain zip-code or mail route of your church. You may be surprised how cost effective this method is.
- Create invitations for your church members to invite their friends, co-workers, family, and neighbors to your block party.
- **CRUCIAL:** Have your next event planned and use the block party to invite guests to the next BIG event. The next event could be something as simple as serving cookies and watching a movie at the church. You've already worked hard getting people the block party, don't lose the momentum. Tell guests, "We are so glad you are here. We have all these activities going on for your family each week, BUT we don't want you to miss our next big event." Giving them a flyer begins the momentum of moving lost people and/or new families from one event to another, ultimately connecting them to your church and to Christ. When we don't connect events, we start over from scratch every time with publicity.

Do what you can with what you have, but this is the time to be generous. Do the best you can to demonstrate Christ's love to your neighbors. Consider the block party as an investment into the community where your church can relationally interact with your community and prayerfully have gospel conversations.

Costs to Consider:

- *Inflatables* - Many associations and state conventions have party trailers that can be rented at a greatly reduced rate. When calling inflatable companies, ask for a cheaper rate or packaged deal for booking multiple inflatables. Some companies offer a reduced rate if you have volunteers helping set-up and take-down the inflatables.
- *Popcorn, snow cones, cotton candy machines* - A block party trailer may have these items included or you may be able to rent these from an inflatable company. You will need to verify if the supplies for these machines are included or if you need to purchase these separately.
- *Carnival games* - You may rent carnival style games from an inflatable company or church members may have corn hole, washers, or other back-yard style games that they are willing to bring to the block party.
- *Food* - Do the best you can with what you have. Some church members may want to cook some pork BBQ, smoked chicken, hamburgers, brats, or hot dogs. Sometimes, churches pay for a food truck to be present and just leave an open tab with the food truck for people to get the food they desire. (Don't charge your guests.)
- *Drinks* - You could ask your church members to donate cases of soft drinks and water to save money here. Some churches make big batches of tea, lemonade, and Kool-aide.

- *Promotional costs* – You can't over promote but you can under promote your block party.
- *Giveaways* – Get something that you would want to win and that will make people want to stay for the drawing. Business may be willing to sponsor or donate items for your block party. Examples include a grill, tools, a spa package, a gas card, a restaurant gift card, a bike, nerf guns or something else fun for kids. Don't break the bank with your giveaways.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Be culturally relevant to your context when throwing your block party. Block parties in Mississippi and Louisiana should probably consider serving jambalaya or chicken and sausage gumbo. However, that may be a strange menu choice for a block party in your area.
- Set up the night before or the morning of your block party hours before you expect the event to start.
- Make sure you plan time for unexpected issues to be solved or vendors to arrive late.
- Make sure there are only one or two entrances to the block party. Block other ways in with caution tape, inflatables, etc.
- Set up registration tables at those main entrances and have everyone complete a family registration with contact information, address, phone, e-mail, names of participants, and two questions - do you currently attend a local church? (If so, where?) and would you like more information about our church?
- Create a way for your guests to know who the volunteers and members of your church are. Consider name tags or matching church shirts.
- Purchase Tyvek Wristbands (paper wristbands) so your volunteers can know who has registered and who hasn't. You can get 500 for under \$20. If you are doing give-a-ways, consider giving out the raffle ticket at the registration table.
- Try to get the inflatables set up hours before the event starts.
- Provide pop-up tents to shade workers and to create different stations for your events.
- Set up tables for people to eat and have conversations.
- Set up a stage area. Consider a fifth-wheel trailer or two parked next to each other. This makes for a great and cost effective stage. You can also rent a stage and a large tent.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Set up speakers and play upbeat Christian music.
- Try not to cancel just because the weather shows it may rain a few days out.
- Pray and trust God. You've sought the Lord and invited your neighbors, trust God to provide what you need.

Surprise people with the quality of your food.

- Don't charge for attendees for food. This isn't the time to raise funds for a ministry or mission, but to demonstrate love to your neighbors.
- If you can, offer something better than hotdogs, such as hamburgers with all the fixings, bbq pork sandwiches, smoked chicken, tacos, fajitas, etc.
- It is always best when you can smoke or grill the food at the block party. The smell is a great advertisement to your neighbors.
- Consider messy food on cheap plates so people need to sit down to eat. This creates opportunities for your church members to have conversations with others as they eat.
- Provide special treats such as funnel cakes, cotton candy, popcorn, kettle corn, etc. They provide great smells and people love them!

Host neighbors well - Train your volunteers to be friendly. Be engaging. Look for opportunities to have impactful moments of connection and gospel conversations.

The easiest way to create a stage is to utilize a fifth wheel trailer. If more stage space is needed, consider getting two trailers and parking them beside each other. You may also rent a stage or simply have no stage.

Ideas from Programming:

- Invite the middle school band, high school band, school chorus, a local dance team, or a local karate studio to perform for fifteen to twenty minutes during your block party. Inviting them to perform is one way to partner well with schools and community leaders and provides a chance to highlight them to the community. Inviting them will bring parents, grandparents, and siblings to your block party to see them perform. Don't shut down the block party for these performances but let the rest of the activities continue while they are performing. If you are using dance teams, you may want to have a conversation about this being a Christian event.
- Rent a large tent and have chairs to provide shade and a place for people to enjoy what is happening at the stage.
- Have people share their five-minute testimony and do small giveaways while the party is going on or after a community partner performs. Don't stop the block party for these times.

- About fifteen to twenty minutes before the block party is supposed to end, shut down all the inflatables and ask everyone to gather around the stage for the give-a-ways and a short message from the church. Consider having someone give a strong three to five minute testimony of how God has changed their life. Have a volunteer give a five to seven minute clear and compelling gospel presentation with an invitation time concluding it. Sometimes, churches do half the give-a-ways, pause with the testimony and gospel presentation, and then do the other half of the give-a-ways. This is not a time to preach a Sunday morning sermon but to give a clear, concise presentation of the gospel. Have some of your members ready to have a conversation in a public place on the edge of your block party with the people who respond to the gospel.

FUN THINGS TO CONSIDER

Consider These Ideas at Your Block Party:

- A giant slide, a bouncy house, and an obstacle course are great options. If you host block parties annually, switch up the inflatables each year for variety.
- Rent carnival-style games from an inflatable company or ask church members to bring games like corn hole, washers, or other backyard style games.
- Add extra fun with a foam party, petting zoo (small animals like goats, donkeys, ponies), a big wheel or tricycle course using hay bales, or a cake walk with Little Debbie prizes.
- Set up a photo area with a festive backdrop for group or family pictures. Share the photos online or offer printed versions (e.g., 5x7 prints available at church the next Sunday).
- Add a face painting station.
- Create a craft tent with fun projects like decorating flip flops, sand art, or painting.
- Train a few church members to make simple balloon animals. Supplies are inexpensive, and no clown costumes are required!
- Provide a sidewalk chalk area for kids to draw and play.

FUN THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Include a prayer tent or a "Got Questions about Christianity?" tent.
- Invite the local Fire and Police Departments to bring their vehicles—kids will love exploring a fire truck or police car.
- Feature a "Touch a Truck" area with access to tractors, side-by-sides, monster trucks, tanks, or even a helicopter if possible.
- Partner with local organizations or groups that would be willing to offer their services. Working with other groups shows your willingness to love and support your community and it also may grow your attendees.
- Partner with corporate sponsors. For example, Chick-fil-A might send their cow mascot and a prize wheel for giveaways.
- Hire costumed characters like princesses or superheroes for meet-and-greet photo ops.
- Offer space for community partners to provide medical or health services.
- Include a giveaway station for items like clothing, shoes, or food—tailor this to your community's needs.