

## TYPES OF EVENTS—THANKSGIVING

### **Feast of Plenty**

#### ATTRACTION

Free food and fellowship.

#### BRIDGE

A non-threatening, relational event such as this makes it easy to share the gospel.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

After the meal, the pastor or another leader should lead in a time of reflection on the season and its meaning. Our thankfulness to the Father should be expressed, as well as a clear explanation of why the Father sent the Son to earth. A gospel invitation should be given in some form.

#### TIPS

*Overview:* Invite the entire community, although you will want to ask those planning to attend to pick up or call to have delivered a “free” ticket—this is so you can know how many to plan on feeding. Church members should donate money to purchase major food items then be asked to bring smaller items (paper goods, utensils, and so forth). Members (especially those with vans) should be asked to provide transportation, as some of those attending may need a ride.

*Outreach:* Be prepared for the event to attract the local media, and use this opportunity to share exactly why the church is feeding the community. Have all attendees register (either at a registration table or at tables with hosts assigned) for purposes of follow-up.

Have a firm follow-up plan in place. Do not merely feed the community food at the holiday season, but feed them spiritually by following up and attempting to develop a relationship with them. Individual families or Sunday School classes can be assigned particular visitors to follow-up on.

*Prayer:* Prayer walk the community several times, especially in the days immediately before to the event. Ask volunteers to stay at home or in a separate place at church or in the event location to pray during the event. Pray for the registrants by name as soon as the event is over, praying they will be open to follow-up.

## PLANNING SHEET—FEAST OF PLENTY

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Present proposal to church	Pastor/Moderator	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Enlist people to hand out tickets	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
3	Arrange for equipment, food, and decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
4	Order tracts and follow-up materials	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
5	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
8	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
9	Train church members in relational evangelism	Pastor	4 wks prior
10	Implement final physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	Day of event
11	Follow-up with new converts	Encouragers	Immediately following event
12	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following event

## TYPES OF EVENTS—THANKSGIVING

### 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament or Flag Football Tournament

#### ATTRACTION

Thanksgiving is a big time for sports. Football is on television all weekend. Basketball season is just under way.

#### BRIDGE

Sporting events are a great medium for sharing Christ because they are non-threatening and create fellowship and unity.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

A devotional, or the plan of salvation can be shared at half-time of each contest or before each game. If only a devotional is shared, a gospel invitation should be given at a predetermined time when all participants are present (awards time, banquet, etc.)

#### TIPS

*Officiating:* Serious athletes will expect good officiating and good organization, so recruit good officials and be well organized.

*Financing:* Have church members donate money for trophies—everybody should get something. Athletic apparel and equipment companies may be willing to donate or give discounted prices to charitable events.

*Evangelizing:* Athletic tracts and discipleship materials abound—research them in advance and have plenty on hand. If there is a popular Christian athlete in your area, consider asking him or her to be present for one round of competition and to share his or her testimony.

*Details:* Conduct the tournament on the Friday and Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, with competition rounds in the morning, afternoon, and (depending on venue) evening, if necessary. Divide the field into divisions according to age and/or competition level.

Advise local sports para-church ministries such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Athletes in Action of your plans, and seek their guidance or assistance. Follow-up! Sporting events are the only way you will get some people to hear the gospel. Use the contact to build relationships.

*Prayer:* Have prayer warriors praying throughout the event. Have a night of prayer about a week in advance of the event.

## PLANNING SHEET – 3-ON-3 BASKETBAL OR FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Present proposal to church	Pastor/Moderator	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure competition siet	Ministry Team designated	3 mos prior
3	Secure athletes or special speaker	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Enlist people to compete	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
5	Arrange for equipment	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Order tracts and follow-up materials	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
8	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
10	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Train church members in relational evangelisim	Pastor	4 wks prior
12	Implement final physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	Day of event
13	Follow-up with new converts	Encouragers	Immediately following event
14	Visit prospects	Church Members	Immediately following event

## TYPES OF EVENTS—THANKSGIVING

### Wild Game Dinner

#### ATTRACTION

This is a men's outreach around Thanksgiving time, which coincides with hunting season. Men gather away from the church building for wild game dinner of elk, buffalo, alligator, even rattlesnake. It is an informal time of fellowship, food and testimony from a popular men's speaker.

#### BRIDGE

In this non-threatening environment, men will be open to hearing the Gospel and making connections with men who know Christ and share some of their interests.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

The speaker does this in the course of his talk, and individual church members should be ready and willing to share the Gospel with their guests.

#### TIPS

*Overview:* Though the returns are great, this is organizationally a big task. Be willing to start small. Gather a committee of administratively skilled people to lead in planning the details. Get the hunters in your church to provide as much of the wild game as possible. The rest can be purchased from companies such as New West Foods (1 888 289-2833 or online at [www.NewWestFoods.com](http://www.NewWestFoods.com)) and Broadleaf Venison, Inc. (1 800 336-3844 or online at [www.broadleafgame.com](http://www.broadleafgame.com)). Be low-key with the decor and dress—this is not a dress-up affair.

Schedule a speaker who is popular with men. This must be done well in advance. Athletes (active or retired) make good choices, but choose carefully, making sure they have a strong testimony and the ability to deliver it.

*Evangelism:* Stress to your men that this is an OUTREACH. They should purchase tickets (perhaps entire tables) and give them to their lost friends. Have a firm follow-up strategy in place. You can harvest from this event all year.

*Prayer:* Have the ladies, particularly wives of the men, set aside the evening to pray specifically for the guests and their husbands. Pray diligently and consistently for the speaker at this event. Ask individuals or Sunday School classes to pray for him daily in the weeks prior to the event.

## PLANNING SHEET—WILD GAME DINNER

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Present proposal to church	Pastor/Moderator	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Enlist men to buy tickets/tables	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
3	Arrange for equipment, food, and decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
4	Order tracts and follow-up materials	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
5	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
8	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
9	Train church members in relational evangelism	Pastor	4 wks prior
10	Implement final physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	Day of event
11	Follow-up with new converts	Encouragers	Immediately following event
12	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following event

## TYPES OF EVENTS—CHRISTMAS

### **Birthday Party for Jesus**

#### ATTRACTION

This evangelistic party is geared toward young children and their parents. Christmas is a festive time with many parties, so this fits the season. Enlist families to host parties in their neighborhoods. The party hosts will be your children.

#### BRIDGE

Your children will be hosting a party for Jesus' birthday. While it is fun to have church friends as well, the emphasis is on children who may have never heard the real Christmas story. The atmosphere should be that of a party—fun and festive, but with a purpose.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

Your children will be given an opportunity to share with their school and neighborhood friends why Jesus came to earth.

#### TIPS

Systematically ask families in each neighborhood represented by your church to host a party.

*Planning:* Create a guest list. Limit the number of children invited to six to eight. More than that will make the story time difficult.

Even at very young ages, your children may understand the importance of seeing friends come into a relationship with Jesus. Use the guest list as an opportunity to specifically pray for each child invited—devoting a night to each child on the list. It is helpful to do this once before the invitations go out and once after.

Be creative—use a Christmas tree sponge and paint and let the kids create their own designs on homemade invitations. Let them design computer invitations and either print on a color printer or have them color the pictures in. Get Christmas stickers, use glitter (it's a mess, but the kids love it!) . . . the possibilities are endless.

Make sure *when*, *where*, and *R.S.V.P.* information are included. A brief overview of the activities for the parents is also helpful. Inviting neighborhood children not only provides an opportunity to share Christ with the whole family, but also offers another opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other better.

**Note:** Because children are involved, it may be a good opportunity to walk with your children as they deliver the invitations and briefly share with the parents something similar to this:

“Our family has really enjoyed having a birthday party for Jesus each Christmas. It’s helped our children remember what the holiday is all about. This year we thought it would be fun to have a big party. We’ll do a craft, have some cake, and hear the story of Jesus’ birth. We hope your kids can come, and Moms and Dads are welcome, too!”

(If you sense the parents are receptive, you can also invite them to Christmas Eve church services, a Christmas musical, or other Christmas events your church may be having.)

*Decorations:* Christmas decorations already in place provide the framework. Use helium balloons in green, red, white (enough for each child to take home one); red and green streamers; homemade banners saying “Happy Birthday, Jesus!”; “Happy Birthday” tablecloth, napkins, and so on. You get the idea!

*Craft Ideas:* Have crafts for about 20 minutes as the party begins. By having this first, kids coming late will not miss the story. Make party hats with paper, markers, stickers, and so forth. You can write “Jesus loves Susie” on the child’s hat before they decorate—that’s the whole point of the party. Jesus loves these children. You can make ornaments out of Styrofoam balls, glue, glitter, and so on. Make angels, Christmas trees, or star cards with holes around the edges so the kids can sew them with yarn. They can also draw on the sewing cards with crayons and hang them up at home. Have a large piece of construction paper for each child with “Jesus Loves \_\_\_\_\_” written on it. Have precut Christmas shapes available for the children to glue on the constructions paper. While the Christmas story and food portions of the party are occurring, an adult can be putting clear adhesive paper over the project to create a holiday place mat.

*Christmas Story:* Plan 10 minutes to read a large-sized book with short sentences telling the Christmas story. Have your children act out the story while you narrate. Possibly, you can get a flannel board with Christmas characters. (Check your local bookstore). Give each child one character or animal. While the story still needs to be short, their participation helps keep them more focused on the message.

*Food:* Set aside 20 minutes for refreshments. Buy a cake with “Happy Birthday, Jesus” (white cake and vanilla ice cream are better on the clothes and carpet), or let the children help you make one. You may wish to have cupcakes to serve the children and a larger cake for adults to share. Serve milk, water, and non-staining juice. Paper plates, napkins, and cups work well—but be sure to have some sipper cups available for the little ones. Before eating, sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus. Let all the kids blow out one big candle together. Have children’s Christmas music playing in the background.

*Party gifts:* As hosts, your children may want to give their guests an inexpensive gift as a permanent reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. Many Christian bookstores carry inexpensive children’s Christmas music tapes. Christian-themed Christmas tree ornaments, puzzles, or gospel tracts that tell the Christmas story also make good gifts. How about Christmas coloring books? An Advent calendar can be given to children and parents if the party is held early enough. Include a note with each gift thanking the children for coming to the party. You may include an invitation to Sunday school, as well. Two catalogs are helpful for ordering

inexpensive gifts—even Christian ones—are Current, Inc., 1 (800) 767-2766 and The Oriental Trading Company, 1 (800) 228-2269.

*The party:* Welcome the children and encourage them to go directly to the craft table. It will be difficult to pull them away from the toys if they go there first.

Have a Christian Christmas video playing for children who finish their craft early.

Call the children together for the Christmas Story. *Be sure to emphasize that Jesus loves them, came to die for them, and wants to be their friend and Savior.*

Gather the children and parents for refreshments. Sing “Happy Birthday.” Take pictures or videotape the party to confirm the importance of this birthday party.

After the children have finished eating, they can play or watch Christmas videos. Before they leave, have your children give out the parting gifts.

**NOTE:** Not all families in your neighborhood may share your beliefs. Whether they are of the Jewish faith, overtly atheistic, or other, you may not want to immediately disqualify their children from being invited. Rather than approaching the child with an invitation, you may wish to deliver it to the adult first, saying something like:

“John, I know that you and your family have a strong Jewish faith, and I do not want to diminish the meaning of this time of year for you or your children, but we are having a “Happy Birthday, Jesus” party and are inviting neighborhood friends. The Christmas story will be told and if this isn’t a problem for you, we’d love to have Sam and you join us. If you feel uncomfortable with it, that’s fine. I wanted you to know your family is more than welcome in our home.”

This party is meant to be a bridge-builder to sharing Christ with neighbors, not an opportunity to ambush someone’s religion through their child.

*Prayer tips:* Make your invitation list in advance and pray for each child daily, praying they will: (a) be able to attend and (b) will have a mind and heart open to the gospel. Also pray the above for each parent of the children. If the families in your church are having the parties at the same time, enlist a group of people (perhaps those without children, or grandparents, singles, and so forth) to set aside that night to pray specifically for each party.

## PLANNING SHEET – BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Enlist people to host parties	Pastor	2 mos prior to event
2	Arrange for equipment, decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 wks prior
3	Order tracts and follow-up materials	Pastor	4 wks prior
4	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
5	Distribute invitations	Party hosts	3 wks prior
6	Train church members in relational evangelism	Pastor	2 wks prior
7	Implement final physical arrangements	Party hosts	Day of event
8	Follow-up with new converts	Encouragers	Immediately following event
9	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following event

## TYPES OF EVENTS

### **“It’s a Wonderful Life” Party (Christmas)**

#### ATTRACTION

This evangelistic party is based upon Frank Capra's film “It’s a Wonderful Life,” starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed. This is a light-hearted, fun event based on a classic film which is appropriate for a time of year filled with memories.

#### BRIDGE

This event has been used to provide opportunities to “gently” introduce individuals to the host’s personal faith in Jesus Christ and desire to be available to those interested in learning more about having a personal relationship with Him. The Christmas season is traditionally a time for neighborhood and family gatherings, and this film is an excellent tool for inviting neighbors to fellowship. It is non-threatening because the initial focus is watching the movie, so those who are shy about meeting new people are not put in an overtly “social” situation. However, the fellowship created by the gathering will encourage interaction.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

Before the party, the host takes the opportunity to welcome the guests and to briefly explain why “it’s a wonderful life.”

#### TIPS

*Overview:* The film “It’s a Wonderful Life” tells the story of George Bailey and the angel-in-training, Clarence Oddbody—who shows George what life would be like for family and friends if George had never been born. George, who had been considering suicide, decides that it really is a wonderful life. The video is available for purchase or rental at many video and discount stores. Systematically ask families in each neighborhood represented by your church to host a party.

*Planning:* By including the names of the film characters, you can add a sense of fun for the evening. It is helpful to add the times for the film showing and any other planned events for the party in case some guests are unable to attend the whole party. The film is over two hours long, so showing it at the end may be best for guests who will have to leave early. You are encouraged to invite neighbors, work associates, and others who may not have either any personal relationship with Christ or a weak one. Also, invite a similar number of friends who have a relationship with God.

When talking with Christian friends, encourage them to find other party guests who may not know Christ and spend some time that evening conversing with them. Maybe God will provide an opportunity for them to share Christ with the guest. The party atmosphere, though, is typically not the place for a “hard sell.” This party is best for adults only.

*Food:* There does not have to be a “theme” for the food portion of the party—outside of lots of Christmas sweets. If you love to cook—enjoy! If not, simple treats and lots of punch and hot cider make for a wonderful evening, as well. It’s best to go easy on the food if that means a less-stressed host!

*Decorations:* Christmas decorations already in place are all you will need. If you collect “village” Christmas decorations, set them out in view. If you do not mind spending some money, an “It’s a Wonderful Life” poster, ornaments, and so on would add to the fun.

Make sure you have the television in a central location, easily viewed by a large number of guests. It may also be nice to have a “quiet” room for guests who just wish to talk and not watch the entire film.

*Party events:* Rent or buy the video and have it ready to go into the VCR.

A trivia or “skit” contest may add to the fun. Prizes for the contests might be an “It’s a Wonderful Life” ornament or a basket of bread, sparkling cider (non-alcoholic, of course), and salt with a card stating:

“Bread—that this house may know no hunger;  
Salt—that life may always have flavor;  
And Wine—that love and joy abound!”

(George Bailey would give these to families moving into housing his savings and loan made possible.)

The skits—taken from the movie—are hilarious. Let those in attendance be the judges through their applause.

*The party:* Welcome friends—you may wish to use nametags. Follow the schedule on the invitation. Before the movie, formally welcome the collective group to your home. Below is a sample speech for after the skit or trivia contest:

“Susie and I are so glad you all were able to join us this evening. ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ has been a part of our Christmas holiday tradition for years (or, ‘is a new part of our Christmas holiday experience’) and we are glad you’re able to join us this year! One of the reasons we feel ours is a wonderful life, is because of the personal relationship we have with Jesus Christ. As neighbors and friends, we want you to know that we’re always available to listen and answer any questions you may have about knowing God personally. Feel free to pull us aside tonight or give us a call anytime. And, now, have some goodies and get ready. It’s show-time!”

Start the video. As host, being in the more quiet part of the house opens the door for guests to approach you. Once you’ve made the statement, the door is open for you or them to initiate a conversation about a personal relationship with Jesus.

As guests leave, you could give them a parting gift such as a small bread loaf and a gospel tract, or you can opt not to include the tract. Either way, you have opened the door for friends and neighbors to discuss the gospel.

*Prayer Ideas:* Make your invitation list weeks in advance, then pray daily for each individual on the list, praying that they will (a) be able to attend the party and (b) have a heart and mind receptive to the gospel.

Enlist Christian friends to pray specifically for your party. If all of the parties are on the same night, ask for volunteers in the church who will stay home (or join together at the church building) on the night of the parties to pray specifically for each party and each host. If the parties are not simultaneous, the hosting family can ask a committed Christian (or family) to set aside the evening of the party to stay at home and pray throughout the event.

## PLANNING SHEET – “IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE” PARTY

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Enlist people to host parties	Party hosts	2 mos prior to event
2	Order tracts and follow-up materials	Pastor	4 wks prior
3	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
4	Print publicity and invitations	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
5	Promote in church newsletter or bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
6	Distribute invitations	Party hosts	3 wks prior
7	Arrange for equipment, decorations	Party hosts	2 wks prior
8	Secure video	Party hosts	2 wks prior
9	Train church members in relational evangelism	Pastor	2 wks prior
10	Implement final physical arrangements	Party hosts	Day of event
11	Follow-up with new converts	Encouragers	Immediately following event
12	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following event

## TYPES OF EVENTS—THANKSGIVING OR CHRISTMAS

### JESUS Video Giveaway

#### ATTRACTION

“Now available for viewing in your home . . . the JESUS video . . . FREE!” People love getting something for nothing. The JESUS video is family entertainment—something very much needed.

The JESUS video, a full-length film detailing the life of Christ according to the Gospel of Luke, has been seen by millions of people worldwide. It can cost you as little as \$5 per copy to obtain.

#### BRIDGE

The JESUS video is a non-threatening way (to giver and receiver) to make an acquaintance and share the gospel.

#### COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

The video does it for you! Of course, you have to follow up, but part of the brilliance of the JESUS video is that people receive the gospel when they want and without feeling pressured. The JESUS video has been very effective. Approximately 21 percent of those viewing it report that, as a result, they have prayed to receive Christ.

#### TIPS

Determine to how many homes you want to take the JESUS video, and in what areas. You should budget at least \$5 per home.

Work through the JESUS Video Project (1 800 29-JESUS or [www.Jesusvideo.org](http://www.Jesusvideo.org)) to determine the exact process of your effort. They have the expertise to walk you through it. The JESUS Video Project process includes the following:

- In teams of two, church members pray for the people in their assigned area while distributing attractive door hangers that tell people the video is coming soon as a free gift.
- A week following the door hanger distribution, teams should return to their assigned areas and distribute the video.
- Teams should return in 1-2 weeks with a survey to discuss the video and its message.

Be thorough in follow-up! Relationships will continue to grow as new believers are encouraged to become involved in your church.

*Prayer Tips:* “Prayerwalk” through the neighborhoods before you deliver door hangers. Preferably, the same people who will deliver the door hangers and videos will do the prayerwalking, though more can be involved. If you have acquired the family names of the homes, pray for each one on a regular basis. During the deliver times, have volunteers stay at home or gather in the church building to pray specifically for each person delivering the videos and for the homes being visited.

## PLANNING SHEET – JESUS VIDEO GIVEAWAY

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Present proposal to church	Pastor/Moderator	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Enlist people to deliver videos	Pastor	3 mos prior
3	Arrange for JESUS Video training	Ministry Team designated	3 mos prior
4	Order JESUS Videos from JESUS Video Project	Ministry Team designated	3 mos prior
5	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
8	Organize distribution teams	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
9	Train church members	Pastor	2 wks prior
10	Distribute door hangers	Distribution Teams	1 wk prior
11	Conduct video distribution	Distribution Teams	Day of event
12	Follow-up survey to discuss video	Distribution Teams	1-2 wks after video distribution
13	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following event