

16 STEPS TO PLANNING A HARVEST DAY

A Harvest Day focuses on providing a quality and effective Sunday morning service to reach the lost. The goal is for lost people to come forward for professions of faith and to follow up with baptism.

1. Prioritize it on the church calendar.

Be intentional about preparing. Choose a date and schedule it as Harvest Day.

2. Cast the vision to the church.

After you share it with your key leaders and stakeholders, inform the entire church of your plan to have a Harvest Day. Be sure to communicate the intent of seeing a harvest of souls saved for the Lord!

3. Develop and implement a prayer strategy.

This strategy is a spiritual endeavor, so proceed with calling on the Lord to do what He can do through this Harvest Day: prepare, draw, convict and save the lost! Encourage your people to pray privately during their devotional time with the Lord. Consider giving them a prayer card with specific things to pray for and spaces to write the names of people they can pray for and invite. Weave prayer into your small groups, Sunday morning worship, mid-week activities and other events. A 90-day prayer strategy is preferable, but if time is a limitation, consider 30 days at a minimum.

4. Recruit a planning team.

Pastors, don't do this alone! Enlist some people gifted in administration from your church to oversee both the planning and execution of this event. Share your vision with them. Let them create a strategy that will bring it to fruition.

5. Determine the order of service.

Worship, preaching and the invitation (response time) are a given. Allow time for other program elements like testimonies, mini-interviews, relevant videos and other media. Whatever you decide, avoid overloading the schedule. Sometimes less is more! Allow ample time for the preaching and invitation because the intent is to see a harvest of souls saved for the Lord. Determine the order of service and guard against last-minute additions.

6. Book a gifted evangelist to preach for the occasion.

Securing the right communicator is critical. The senior pastor can preach for the event, but sometimes there is value in bringing a grace-gifted evangelist who knows how to draw the net effectively. Look for someone God has anointed with an ability to preach the gospel to the lost winsomely. Need help finding an evangelist? Visit the Conference

of Southern Baptist Evangelists website at sbcevangelist.org for a list of their evangelists' members*.

**These links provided are for information purposes and do not constitute or imply an endorsement from the North American Mission Board.*

7. Prepare evangelistic music.

The music should be gospel rich and celebrate the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It should focus on Christ's substitutionary atonement, His reconciling work, Himself as the propitiation for our sins, our redemption through His blood and our rebirth. Some churches choose to schedule a special guest musician or band gifted in ushering people into the presence of God to lead worship.

8. Develop a plan to give lost people an opportunity to respond to the gospel.

Most evangelists have a preferred process that they use for an invitation. However, if you are preaching the sermon, plan for the invitation. You could invite people to come forward to meet with your leaders who can assist them with their desire to follow Christ. Or you could have them respond from their seats by praying with you to accept Christ and then to come forward to make their decision public. Think through a simple invitation process and give clear instructions during the response time.

9. Equip your people to share the gospel and lead someone to Christ.

Some churches refer to these people as decision guides, and they come in handy when you invite the lost to come forward to accept Christ. As people respond, your leaders can receive them and then hand them off to the decision guides, who meet with them privately as they further unpack the gospel and lead them to Christ.

10. Encourage church members to invite their family, friends, neighbors and coworkers.

Reassure them that their loved one will hear a simple gospel message and they will have the opportunity to respond.

11. Promote Harvest Day.

The Harvest Day tag is an internal label for your church members so they can know the event's intent — to see a harvest of souls saved for the Lord. However, you can create a cool, catchy, relevant external name for the event to effectively promote it to your community. Invest in creating promo materials to promote it – via mailers, social media infographics, signage in high-traffic areas, home door hangers, etc. The goal is to saturate your community so everyone knows about your event.

12. Prepare for guests.

Like expecting guests at your home, get the facility nice and clean. Trim those hedges, cut that grass, pressure wash that exterior, get rid of that smell, clean that carpet, fix that hole, repaint those parking lot lines, etc., but don't stop there. Get that greet squad or first impressions team ready. Teach them how to greet guests with a smile. Help them

anticipate guests' questions (e.g., directions to the restroom, children's church, nursery, sanctuary, etc.), and direct them to the Guest Information Desk or Connect Center for more information about the church and the programs you offer. Lastly, prepare the entire church to engage guests during Harvest Day so they feel wanted, not just welcomed. There is a difference.

13. Develop a follow-up plan.

You will need a plan for converts and guests in general. Since you already have the contact information for converts, baptism is the next step for them. For guests, you need to create a method to obtain their contact information, perhaps via your Connect Center or Guest Information Desk.

Next, you must decide what to do with guests' information once you have it. So, determine your next step for guests and invite them to take that step both at your Harvest Day and afterward via a phone call or email. Notice it says step (singular) and not steps (plural). Throwing too many next steps at someone at once can overwhelm them.

Here are some suggestions for the next step for guests:

- A connect class where they learn about your church
- A luncheon where they meet your staff and leadership
- A small group where they can learn more about the Bible and do life with others

14. Report the results.

When Harvest Day is associated with the Crossover emphasis prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, there is a report form that you will be asked to complete so that we can celebrate the ways (number of gospel conversations, salvations, volunteers, etc.) in which God worked through the vast array of Crossover events. It is critical for you to complete that report in a timely manner so that we can share those at the annual meeting.

15. Evaluate the Harvest Day.

This step is essential because it allows you to assess what did not go well and what did go well. Evaluate the event with some of your key leaders and then file the lessons learned so you can shore up those areas in the future. As for the things that did go well, check out number 16.

16. Celebrate!

That's right, celebrate with your church all the things the Lord accomplished. Think of unique ways to do this and have fun with it. Your folks will be encouraged if you take some time to intentionally celebrate the main thing – a harvest of souls saved for the Lord!

You probably think this is a lot of work. It is, but the eternal investment is worth it!

Let's roll up our sleeves, friend, so we can see a harvest of saved souls for the Lord.