

Group Exercise

Grace Fellowship Church is a mid-sized congregation located in the heart of Parkside, a diverse suburban community with a population of about 50,000 people. The church has approximately 200 regular attendees, with a mix of young families, single adults, and seniors. Over the past decade, Grace Fellowship has sought to establish itself as a pillar of faith and service in the community, but like many churches, it is navigating how to address the growing needs and challenges in the area.

The congregation cares deeply about education, strong family relationships, and addressing homelessness. This is evident in their past outreach efforts, which include hosting an annual school supply drive for local elementary schools, offering free parenting workshops, and partnering with a nearby shelter to provide meals for individuals experiencing homelessness. However, many members feel that while these efforts have been meaningful, the church has not developed a focused strategy for long-term impact.

Within a 10-mile radius of the church, several key issues of brokenness have been identified. Drug abuse, particularly the rise of opioid addiction, has left families in crisis. Marital instability and divorce rates are high, leaving many children in single-parent homes. Loneliness and mental health struggles have become more pronounced, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, there is a significant number of teenagers dropping out of school, leading to cycles of poverty and limited opportunities.

Grace Fellowship Church naturally connects with young families and middle-aged adults who are struggling with parenting, financial difficulties, or relational challenges. Many attendees work in education, healthcare, or blue-collar industries, giving the church a heart for issues like mentoring youth, providing practical support for families, and offering emotional and spiritual care.

When it comes to resources, the church operates on a modest budget. Roughly 10% of its annual funds are earmarked for outreach, amounting to \$25,000. In terms of time, a core group of 30 members is willing to volunteer for outreach initiatives, though many others have expressed interest but are unsure how to get involved. The leadership team is eager to assess where they can focus their energy and resources most effectively.

The Parkside community does have some existing services, such as a food pantry, a youth mentorship program, and a free health clinic. However, these programs are often overwhelmed and struggle to meet the growing demand. Gaps remain, particularly in providing consistent support for single parents, accessible mental health resources, and programs aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty.

Finally, the church is aware that several barriers keep people in the community from connecting with them. These include a perception that churches are judgmental, a lack of transportation for those in lower-income areas, and general disinterest or unfamiliarity with faith-based organizations. Grace Fellowship wants to find ways to build trust with their neighbors and become a more approachable and impactful presence in Parkside.

Assessment Questions:

What local causes/issues do people seem to care the most about in your church (i.e., good education, teen pregnancy, strong marriages, homelessness, natural disaster support)?

What outreach events or initiatives has the church championed or supported in the last 10 years?

What do you believe to be the top 4 issues of brokenness within a 10-mile radius of your church (i.e., loneliness/isolation, drug abuse, marital infidelity, poor educational access, lack of medical resources, etc.)?

What types of people (age, background, struggles) does your church naturally connect with?

How much time (per person) and funding (total amount from church budget) can your church realistically commit to outreach?

What **existing community services** already address these needs, and where are there gaps?

What challenges or barriers prevent people in your community from connecting with a church?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food pantry • Tutoring & mentoring • English classes • Citizenship classes • Employment assistance • Legal assistance • Sports leagues • Fitness classes • Recovery ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling ministry • Auto repairs • Home repairs • Yard care • Adoption & fostering • Marriage seminars • Parenting seminars • Financial seminars • Disaster relief team • Medical clinic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music lessons • Art lessons • Hobby groups • Day care for kids • Partner with a school • Partner with a YMCA • Adopt a fire station • Adopt a nursing home • Deliver meals • Hospital chaplaincy • Prison ministry
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What is a realistic **starting point**—a one-time event, pilot program, or ongoing initiative? What is a **low-risk, high-impact way** to test this initiative before going all in?

How will you **train and mobilize volunteers** to ensure consistency and effectiveness?

What follow-up systems will be in place to connect people from outreach to discipleship? Through what methods can the GOSPEL be shared?