

Texas Tailgate Church

...using your truck to plant a life-changing gathering of Christ-followers!

Picture the possibilities:

As Chris pulled up and parked his truck in a mobile home neighborhood he saw Mike and Katy coming down the street to help him. This thirty-something couple had been in church off and on as children, and now God had made them hungry to find those spiritual roots again as unchurched young adults. But, their lives were so busy they just couldn't seem to make time for one of the churches in town. Once Chris started "Prayerwalking" in their neighborhood a few months ago they not only met him and liked what he was doing, but God also had prepared their hearts to pitch in and begin leading out in the little church gathering that had started around the truck.

While they started putting out copies of the day's scripture passage and the "helping others box"(offerings) on the tailgate Chris was calling a couple of regular attenders on his cell phone. A couple of kids, a mom and her young teenager, and one retired couple soon circled the truck sitting on grass, camp chairs, and blankets. All had actually learned about this "gathering" by being neighbors with Mike and Katy. Already the adults admitted that they looked forward to this simple little church. It encouraged them personally, but it also gave them a means of helping others, in Christ's Name. The group was always praying, or giving, or doing something for someone. It was like joining God to make a difference in the world!!!

Your truck can be a "tool" to reach people for Christ.

- Trucks can go almost anywhere: parks, lakes, vacant lots, teen hangout parking lots, fast food sites, isolated neighborhoods.
- Trucks are "casual," non-threatening, and a widely accepted part of our everyday culture. They put people at ease.
- Trucks can carry people, deliver help to others, and have an on-board praise-system (CD player) to help out with worship!
- There are millions of trucks in Texas owned by passionate Christians who know where there is a "pocket of people" who are pretty much unchurched and without Christ.

Note: Trucks are not what draw people! Only God can draw people together, and He does that through prayer and relationships, not events/food/advertisement/signs. Don't decorate your truck with crosses or signs...just use it as God's "transportation and platform tool" to get you connected with the people He has already been preparing for your arrival!

How To Begin

1. Drive and Pray. Start praying about what people-group God wants you to reach. Where do they live, play, and hang out? Ask God to guide you to them and believe that He will. Begin to drive and pray and see through His Eyes. Trust that God is getting someone ready to work with you!
2. Walk and Pray. Once God puts a group on your heart begin prayerwalking in the places these persons live or gather.
 - Ask God to bump you into a Person of Peace (someone open to you and to your mission, even if he/she isn't a Christian...someone who opens the door to other relationships in the group...someone HE has been preparing for you).
 - Don't make a scene; just walk and pray silently for everyone you see and every home. Neal Hughes suggests taking seven prayerwalks in the same place...usually by week five someone will surface and want you to pray for their family or even start prayerwalking with you (if you invite them).
 - Once God connects you with a Person of Peace, ask if you can begin to meet and pray for them or their family needs each week. Ask God to prove Himself to them in practical life-changing ways. When it is appropriate ask if they know others who might be interested in helping start a little church just for their

friends & families. As you continue to meet and pray God will lead you to others who want to gather as a simple church...it only takes a few.

The First Gathering

Agree on a day and time to begin meeting (any time is okay if you make it God's time in your midst). Choose a gathering site that fits them. It might be around the truck, in a home or garage, at a teen parking lot hangout or under a public pavilion. Encourage them to truly make it a little Body of Christ that helps and touches people's lives. Seek to be a fully functioning church by living out the following experiences at your weekly gatherings:

1. **supportive friendships**...share life concerns and pray for each other (perhaps silently if some prefer). Take turns telling (a) what the world has been dumping on you this week, and (b) what God has been doing in your life. "Be there" for one another in the ups and downs of everyday living.
2. **authentic worship**...focus on God's greatness using any combination of music (guitar, CD, video), art, silence/awe, nature, testimony, scripture promises, etc.
3. **obedience-based discipleship**...apply a Bible passage to how you live. As a group, dialogue over what each verse says about (a) God, (b) self, (c) others, (d) life. Pick practical scriptures like Psalms, Matt. 5-7, John 8, Gal. 6, Philippians, or James. You lead, but let them talk too. Some verses might not be clear, but most will "speak" to everyone's' real-life needs.
4. **life-involvement evangelism**...include not-yet-Christians fully and naturally, and allow them to hear/see how Christ is working in the lives of those believers present. Nurture everyone toward expressing their own journey with God as friendships deepen. Let people be drawn to God by all they experience in the gathering.
5. **servanthood caring**...seek opportunities to help others like Christ would (Matt. 25:35-36). Help someone in a life crisis. Take a weekly offering (always let "giving" be an act of worship) and have the group decide on how to use it all in meeting someone's need. Let them decide how to take the offering, and let them deliver it.
6. **Baptize** anyone who professes faith in Christ as his/her Savior and the Lord of his/her life. Anyone okayed by the church can baptize as part of gathered worship. Any place is okay.

Ask God for an intern

From day one begin praying for an intern that you can equip to lead the church. God might send someone to you before the church starts who is spiritually faithful and who just needs you to stay behind the scenes and mentor them for a few months. Or, the intern might come later and become your co-laborer, your replacement, or a missionary from the church to a new group of people. Spend extra time with your intern. Pray for and encourage him/her. Let God begin to shape and use them...your goal is to multiply people and more simple churches.

Focus on Christ-centered relationships

Always challenge participants to be Good Samaritans and passionate servants of Christ rather than turning to events and attractions to keep them interested. They will follow Him!

Two key factors will make a huge impact: Your passion & dependability. There is no building or elected organization to give stability here. But, people will "see" what's important to you. When you consistently exhibit a deep heart for following God, they will want that also. When you are faithful to be present, prayed-up, and prepared for every weekly gathering, they won't wonder if "church" is going to happen that day, but will be drawn to its true friendships and God-sized mission!