

# BBO Guide – Part 3

# Start Your Own Brown Bag Outreach!

Our Brown Bag Outreach isn't exclusive just for us! We got our idea from the "Backpacks & Brown Bags" ministry of Necia Freeman. We want everyone to get involved with the needy in their local communities. A brown bag type of outreach is a perfect way to start, and also has the potential to grow into something big!

Our program is simple and straightforward enough to get anyone well on their way to helping their local homeless. Below, we will cover the basics from planning, shopping, and some tips for while you're on your own route! There is also a set of downloadable resources that cover everything in our guide, including this guide itself!

Here are the Basics (with a team of 3):

- Shopping Time: < 1 hour
- Prep Time: 30 min. – 1.5 hours
- Outreach Time: 1 hour – 3 hours
- Weekly Spending: \$50 – \$75

Here are the sections to our 3-part guide:

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## Part 3: The Outreach

### The Launch

Before heading out, review the "Prepping The Team" section in Part 2. Everyone should be on the same page. Consider putting together a participation agreement so everything is crystal clear (see resources

for a version of ours).

Here are some general guidelines when interacting with the homeless:

- You're here for them. Try to stay focused on them, not your phones. They will notice, and you will lose an opportunity to bring someone to Christ.
- Talk to them. Interact. Mingle. Laugh. Joke. Be a person. Time and time again, we get feedback that the time we spend with them just talking is more than any food we bring.
- Stick together. Try not to split up in order to get your bags out faster. It means a lot more when a group comes to talk to just one person.
- Be mindful of what you say. You don't have to be perfect. But be sensitive to who you're talking to and just be considerate.
- Sometimes people have bad days. Offer a bag and let them be, whether they take it or not.
- You will be asked for more than one bag by any one person. Let them have it. We didn't make them to keep them. However, we generally limit two bags per person, unless we are approaching the end of our route and we have extra bags left.
- Try not to judge or condemn. Try not to give ultimatums. Build the relationship first, and when they're comfortable, you'll find that they'll open up to you and ask

about Him.

# The Approach

Our general approach to the approach is to reach out to anyone we see on our path. Sometimes that means we need to go a little off our route to get to someone who may be immobile. Sometimes the Spirit tugs on us into one direction, or makes us notice someone we might have just let pass. Our experience is that we will see more homeless than we can reach out to, so we do what we can for who we can, and we pray that we will have another opportunity to reach out to that other person in the future.

You will find that some of the homeless are struggling with an addiction of some sort. They might be under the influence when you approach them, or might even be doing drugs as you walk up. I leave the decision whether to wait, pass or approach up to you. As a recovering addict, I am much more comfortable with those types of situations, so I tend to approach while others in my team will pass, and that's totally fine. But there's a line that needs to be drawn, and sometimes it's better to pass and say a silent prayer than to approach and get into some kind of altercation.

# The Interaction

Most of the time they just want to talk. If you let them, they might talk both your ears off. Listen more than you speak, and even if you don't understand half of what's coming out of their mouth, just nod and grin. But no matter what, stay focused on them. They can tell when you're trying to ignore them or move on. When the time comes to leave, just be honest and say that the next week you will look forward to hearing the rest of the conversation. With that in mind, we generally spend a minimum of 5 minutes for each person to 15 minutes.

15 minutes might seem like a long time, but as you grow in your relationships and you see the same people over and over again, you will have much more to talk about and you will be interested in how they're progressing. After a couple interactions, you might find opportunities to pray with them or share the Gospel with them – and most of the time, they'll be open to it. We tend not to advertise “the church thing” too early because we don't want to scare anyone off. Over time, we believe that consistency along with God's grace will be the key to opening their hearts.

Do we spend at least 5 minutes with every person? No. Some just pass and we hand out a bag and ask God to bless them. But the key to our outreach is the building of relationships, and relationships can't be built without an investment of time, consistency, reliability, and getting to know one another to eventually trusting one another.

# The Break

As your route comes to an end, you may find yourselves with a bunch of extra bags or you may have run out of bags halfway through. That's fine. Take notes and remember, and adjust the route accordingly. It may help for you to keep a journal for the first few months so that you can see how things progress and make changes as needed.

When your team returns to church (shelter, office, etc.), consider having a short debrief on what people experienced, what they felt, what they learned, and things they will remember for the future. Then end the outreach with a prayer and ask God for the strength to continue this outreach regularly.

That being said, CONSISTENCY is the key. The worst thing you can do is to tell a person in need that you will be there for them at a certain time and fall through, or that you will bring them something and not show up. On our route, we let everyone know that we will be here on the same route, on the same day, at the same time, rain or shine. And they have come to expect us at that time. While this might not be possible for every single group out there, sticking to a plan and keeping your friends in need informed of any changes will go a long way into getting great results.

So as you break until your next outreach, I will be praying for you and for those that you are serving, wherever that may be. God bless you. Amen.

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Resources ->**

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The Prep**

