

CHANGING THE PERCEPTIONS GROUP PROJECTS

We have our work cut out for us. Christianity needs its adherents to rediscover what it means to be Christian. Armed with some excellent research and a passion to show Christ's love to the world, we can begin to change the perceptions of those whom we seek to influence the most: outsiders. As you or your small group reflects on the unChristian study, begin to ask yourself how you can help personally change people's views of Christianity. Our lives are like an open book. When a person reads our lives, what does it say about the God who has transformed us?

The following ideas are provided as group projects that your community can undertake to change the perceptions. Consider doing one or all of them to learn, be challenged, and be encouraged about how God can use you to make an impact in culture.

1. *Getting an Outside View*

Many times we are tempted to ignore how Christianity is perceived or to make up excuses for Christianity's poor reputation. There are two ways to put yourself in the shoes of outsiders and come to grips with how they really feel about Christians, allowing you to empathize with their perspective. 1) Watch the film *Saved* or the Jesus Camp documentary as a group. These films will require you to come face to face with the negative perceptions of Christianity. After viewing the movies, have a healthy dialogue about what you experienced and how it made you feel. 2) As an individual, apologize to someone you know personally that may have been offended by unChristian behavior.

2. *Host a Dinner*

It seems like a simple directive, "love your neighbor as yourself." Many of us have limited circles of community that often don't include the people that literally live next door. An easy way to show love and sincere concern for our neighbors is to invite them into our homes for dinner. Each person or couple in the group should personally invite and host a neighbor in their home for dinner. Going to a restaurant to eat will not satisfy this assignment—it is very important that you invite them into your home for a more personal encounter. During dinner, focus on getting to know your neighbor. There are no ulterior motives; this is simply an opportunity to begin loving your neighbor as yourself.

3. *Serve Your Community*

One of the negative perceptions is that Christians are only concerned with getting people saved. What if your group decided to serve your community together simply for the sake of the community? Work together to brainstorm some ways that you could serve others for a day, then make one of them a reality. Contact a local public school and ask the administration if there are any cleanup projects you could do. Visit the elderly at a nursing home. Volunteer to help children with special needs. Visit the homeless one evening and give them blankets, food, and other helpful items. The possibilities are endless. Be creative. Focus on the needs of your local community and choose a project that you can accomplish as a group.