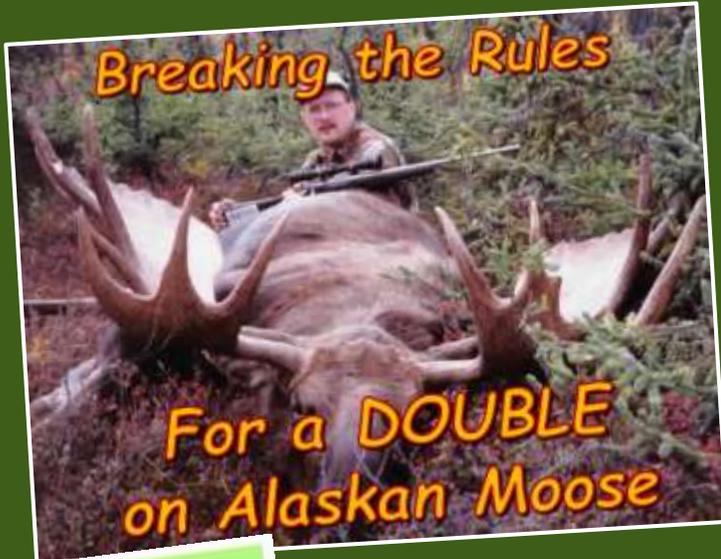


2022 Edition



Steve Sorensen's *Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner*



Make Your Next Event A BIG SUCCESS!



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Steve Sorensen's Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner

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Steve Sorensen, Author of *Growing Up With Guns* and *A 30-Day Hunt for Faith*

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Making the most of this book

This book is not the “Bible” for sportsman’s dinners. Why not? Because it’s not infallible. It can be improved. It is, however, a very helpful planning guide and it won’t steer you wrong. Read it through and follow its advice as closely as you need to or as loosely as you want to.

Having spoken at almost 200 sportsman’s dinners, I see new ideas every year. I try to revise this book periodically in order to pass these good ideas along. I don’t think you’ll find another source that will do more to stimulate your thinking, help you organize, and keep you on track.

I discuss committees to help plan, organize and execute. To some people the word “committee” is a synonym for “wasting time.” Keep in mind that there are two kinds of committees. One creates policy. A policy-making committee seems to have endless meetings and tries to satisfy everyone. The other is a task-specific committee. These task-driven committees aim at accomplishing one specific task. A committee with a specific task-driven purpose can be very effective and very satisfying to work on. In task-driven work, we often use committees without even knowing it because we see what needs done and we do it. This book will help anyone involved in organizing a sportsman’s dinner to see what needs done.

Not much is left out of this book. You’ll learn how to set your date and call your speaker. You’ll discover what makes a good speaker, how to finance your event, how to gather door prizes, how to publicize your event, what printed materials you may need to create, and much more. You’ll even find out how to get the right people to attend your event. Whether your church is small or large, don’t feel like you need to use every idea in this book. No church does that. Just use what suits your church and your community.

This book is set up as a pdf file (portable document format), so if you need to print a few pages to hand out, you are able to do that. Each page bears a copyright so any reader can see where it came from. Please do not remove any copyright information or print any part of this book without that information.



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So, you want to have a Sportsman's Dinner!

MANY CONGREGATIONS HAVE ALMOST NO REGULAR MINISTRY TO MEN. You probably already know that's the reality—sometimes we leave men spiritually high and dry. It's no wonder most men don't participate in the church.

MINISTRY TO MEN IS ABOUT MORE THAN CHURCH ATTENDANCE. Men need a mission. Men will show up when you have a vital ministry, and they'll become more engaged as husbands, fathers, and citizens. They want to believe not only that church attendance is worthwhile, but also that they're needed. *Men need a mission!*

WHO DOES YOUR CHURCH TARGET?

Most churches aim for women. Churches unconsciously aim for women, and they do it in a variety of ways. For example...

- Men might build an addition on the church, but women will probably make decisions about interior decoration. You can bet it will be inviting to other women. To men? Maybe not.
- It's easier to target women because women tend to be more sociable. For a variety of reasons they may be more conscious of the need for fellowship.
- The church is a place where women will often turn for help. Men? Not so much.
- Women more easily find a place of service in the church, and women are often more spiritually sensitive and responsive, which makes it easier to attract them.
- Since women tend to be more responsive, churches sometimes make women a priority by default.

IMPORTANT QUESTION: What if your church aimed for men?

Statistics say that when a church reaches a child for Christ, the family will be reached 8% of the time. If mother is the first one to follow Christ, the rest of the family will follow 22% of the time. But if a father comes to know Christ, the rest of the family will follow 93% of the time! Shouldn't the church do something to target men?

Important Question: What's at stake?

Men are outnumbered! In America's churches, women outnumber men. If it were a football game, the score would be a blowout, **61 to 39**. Yes, churches average 61% female and 39% male. Some churches are even more lopsided! Do you think that makes men comfortable in church? When women greatly outnumber men, do men believe church is for them? Something needs to be done to reach and engage men.

Most churches aim for children. That's good. Children's impressionable minds are sensitive to God. That's one reason why most people who have come to Christ came as children or teenagers.

Few churches aim for men. Many children (especially young boys) lack Christian role models and mentors, and many eventually drift away from the church. When church leadership roles are filled mostly by women, boys often (consciously or unconsciously) get the idea that church is for women and children. In many churches, that's the default mode, and it takes a deliberate effort to change that.

Every Sportsman's Dinner is unique. There are as many ways of doing them as there are churches, and every church will find its own way. This guide helps you in three ways:

1. It will help you avoid "re-inventing the wheel."
2. It will offer ideas you can pick and choose from.
3. It will put you on a track for success.



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IMPORTANT QUESTION:

Can a small church hold a Sportsman's Dinner?

YES! And small churches can do it well. I've spoken at successful events with guests numbering from as few as 40 to as many as 800. People often think their main limiting factor is their building, but you can always find a place to hold the event, even if you need to rent space. **Your main limiting factor will be the number of people available to help.**

Here's what's inside:

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Put your imagination to work...

The time has arrived. The doors are open. Men are coming. One hundred. Two hundred. Three hundred. You've done everything you can think of to make your meeting place welcoming to men.

- You have lots of good food, beverages and dessert ready.
- You've decorated the venue with an outdoor theme.
- Men are telling stories, laughing, having a great time.
- They're introducing guests to each other.
- You give away some nice door prizes.
- Your speaker connects, and the men listen.
- Hundreds hear the gospel.
- Many receive Christ.
- The others? You've made a solid connection!
- There WILL be a next time, and it will get even better!



It's the highlight of the year for everyone!

Let's complete the picture—what have you accomplished?

You have brought men together for fellowship—that's not to be taken lightly because many men are spiritually isolated. And it's not easy because men have too few opportunities to share what they have in common. With this event, you have broken some barriers. You've built bridges with non-believers, you see men you didn't expect to see, and suddenly these men don't seem like they're beyond reach.

Some personal stories have come to the surface:

- There was that guy who said a year ago that he'd never set foot in a church.
- There are several you know who struggle with some of the issues your speaker talked about.
- There's the man whose son-in-law said, "I had a good time even without alcohol!"

The larger picture opens doors for more ministry:

- You drew a great crowd, and you've collected response cards from almost everyone.
- Several* checked the box indicating they prayed to receive Christ.
* 4% or more is not unusual when the gospel message is clear.
- Another 15 recommitted their lives to Christ.
- You've accomplished a significant evangelism effort without struggle and without fear.
- You have a measurable result, and you are sure to have further evangelism opportunities.
- You're doing what Jesus said to do in Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach...."

Congratulations!

You've decided to make disciples.



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First steps to organizing

This guide is designed to help you plan a successful event. Remember—this is a guide. Follow it as closely as you need to or as loosely as you want to.

Create an event Planning Team

You will need from 6 to 10 people, each to head one of the sub-committees (see page 6). You can combine assignments, depending on the ability of your leaders and how much work each sub-committee must do. Some work will need to be done well in advance; some will be the week of or even the day of the event. (Don't be afraid of committees. These are not policy-making groups that must please a broad constituency. They are simple task-oriented groups with a clear agenda. Their purpose is to lighten the work load by deciding what needs to be done. The better the committee, the fewer meetings you will need. A sub-committee may not even need to meet if a good chairman gives clear direction.)

Here is a recommended agenda for the first Planning Team meeting:

- 1. Open your meeting with scripture.** Find a scripture that can be a theme for the committee, and maybe for the event. It could be one of the verses near the end of this book (pages 36-37). It could be one of Jesus' commissioning statements from the gospels. Maybe a passage that emphasizes the unity of Jesus' followers. Or a passage that honors and glorifies God as Creator.
- 2. Offer prayer.** Have several people pray—for the wisdom of the Planning Team, for unity and a sense of mission, for willing volunteers, for the people who will be invited, for financial resources that will be needed, for the understanding of those in the church who may not see the value of this effort, for the cooperation of the community, and for the gospel to bear fruit. *Commit together to pray regularly for these things.*
- 3. Adopt the reason for holding the event in a way that is clearly stated,** so that each team member will be working with a common mission and everything they do will support the mission. Here's an example: *"The _____ Church will hold a Sportsman's Dinner for the purpose of welcoming a large crowd to hear the gospel. We will aim to create a positive, enjoyable setting in which to convey the gospel, and insure that everyone has a good time and goes away with a positive attitude toward Christ, his followers, and the church."*

The Planning Team and its sub-committees must be committed to the mission statement. You want to deliver the gospel—that means everyone must represent Christ well. You want to make sure guests enjoy themselves—that means everyone must have the mindset of a servant. You want people keep a positive attitude—that means the event must follow a carefully planned schedule so your guests don't become bored, or critical, or frustrated.
- 4. Decide on the sub-committees you will need.** See suggested sub-committees on the next page.
- 5. Set the date for the event.** (See pages 10-14.) Your decision on a date might not be made at this meeting, but you should decide on two or three options. Take into consideration other events on the church calendar. It's best to plan several months ahead—a year is even better. Create a planning calendar. Decide how far in advance you will need to make various decisions and carry them out.
- 6. Set the date for the next Planning Team meeting.** Make sure each sub-committee head knows what needs to be accomplished before the next meeting. If a sub-committee has no near-term responsibility, the head should still report what he is thinking about and will be doing.
- 7. Adjourn with prayer.** A well-organized meeting can often be a short meeting.

Important Question:

Who should be the chairman?

Do not elect your chairman, or "Team Leader." Make that decision before you meet. The two main qualifications are organizing skills and a vision for the event.



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Sub-committees: No (or few) meetings necessary!

Don't people hate committees and sub-committees? Yes, they do. In the experience of many people the word "committee" means endless talking and getting nothing done. So why can't someone just take charge and get it done without a lot of meetings? That's an excellent question.

When a committee is task-oriented, the work can get done with no meetings at all! The reason for sub-committees simply to make sure people have the direction they need and can do what needs done with no confusion or overlap. If you don't like the word "committee," use the word "teams," because everyone works toward the same goal.

Someone said, "Many hands make light work." Someone else said "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Which is true? Both. What you need in order to make the work light is many hands—attached to people who know what to do. The outcome of any meeting should be that people know what to do, have the tools they need, and the opportunity to ask questions and to ask for help if needed.

I've outlined 10 sub-committees below. *You probably won't need that many because some sub-committees will not be necessary in every church.* Some might need only one person. In some cases it makes sense to combine responsibilities. It's a good idea to provide a list of the sub-committee leaders to everyone, so that when issues come up they can be handled quickly and without confusion.

Meal: Main decision—what to serve. What are the pros and cons of asking people to bring wild game dishes? Is there a benefit to having the meal be catered? If so, can you cut expenses by doing drinks and dessert yourself? Can you reduce congestion by having servers bring salads, drinks and desserts to the tables? Who will be in charge of kitchen clean-up?

Budget: Main decision—how will your event be funded. What will be the overall cost? Will you sell tickets, ask for a donation, or make the event completely free? Can you find sponsorships or other ways to raise money or cut the ticket cost?

Facility: Main decision—where to hold the event? If you rent a facility, who will be the contact person? Who will negotiate fees? Who will supervise kitchen facilities in the event hall? Who will be in charge of seating? (If your event is held in the church, all of these responsibilities may not be necessary.) Who is in charge of sound, lights, computers and projection? (This person will work with the speaker.)

Decorations: Main decision—how to decorate. How will the tables be covered? What will be used as table decorations? Is wall space available for taxidermy mounts? Recruit volunteers to be responsible for the take-down of the decorations and making sure display items are returned to their owners.

Door Prizes: Main action—make a list of businesses and individuals from whom to solicit door prizes. Write a brief letter outlining the event, which can be handed to prize donors. Who will decide what goes in the letter? Make sure donors are recognized in the printed program. Don't overlook individuals or businesses in the church who want to make donations.

IMPORTANT QUESTION:

Do we really need sub-committees?

Your Planning Team should guide the process. Your sub-committees will take charge of the work. **Most sub-committees will not need formal meetings.** Good communication between sub-committee heads will lessen the need for meetings. Depending on the size of the event, some sub-committees can be combined or duties assigned to one person.



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Fellowship: **Main action—make sure people are welcomed.** Will you invite local vendors (taxidermists, gunsmiths, fishing guides, etc.)? How will vendors be acknowledged and thanked? Can you assign a few people to mingle, speak with guests, and make sure they feel welcome?

Publicity: **Main action—coordinate with local media.** Contact newspaper and radio for news stories and public service announcements. Decide what needs to be printed for the event. (Posters, tickets, programs, placemats, bulletin inserts, response cards).

Set-up and take-down: **Main decision—decide seating arrangement.** Determine how tables will be arranged for easy flow of people and recruit volunteers to help set up. Who is responsible for cleaning up chairs and tables, disposing of garbage, mopping up spills during the event, sweeping floors, etc?

Program: **Main action—recruit the speaker.** This includes phoning him or corresponding with him, and making sure all details are clear. (Some churches may wish to clear outside speakers before booking them to make sure what is taught is in line with the church's beliefs.) Will you hold half-hour pre-meal seminars? If so, recruit seminar speakers. Decide where pre-meal seminars will be held, coordinate the schedule, and contact the publicity sub-committee to make sure this information is published in the program and in publicity that goes out.

Follow-up: **Main action—follow up with guests who made a profession of faith at the event.** Brief and simple training should be done about a week before the event. See page 33 for more information.

Security: **Main action—a few circumspect eyes on the night of the event.** Unfortunately, security is a growing necessity. *More about this on page 17 in this book.*

The role of the Pastor...

In some cases the pastor of a church is an avid hunter and the main driver for these events. He wants to be involved in every detail. In other cases, the role of the pastor is very different—he is not a hunter and he has no passion for the event. He may think he doesn't need to attend. "This is for the outdoorsmen," he reasons, "and that's not my thing." In most cases, that's a mistake.

Never force the pastor to play a central role unless he wants to, but it's important that the pastor be present at least for part of the event. **Here are six reasons the pastor should be visible in some way:**

1. Your guests need to see a pastor so they have a face to connect to the church. For some of your guests, a crisis will come (death in the family, job loss, marriage difficulties, kids in trouble). When they need a pastor, they are far more likely to call on your pastor *if they know who he is*.
2. Your guests need to know this event has the support of the pastor, and his absence might send the signal that he does not support it.
3. You want your guests to get to know some of the men of the church, and to see they have a relationship with their pastor. The pastor is not some "official" church professional who is aloof from people, but an ordinary guy they can relate to.
4. Some guests will not make a commitment to Christ the first or second time they attend your event, but by attending your event they might be open to attending other events. Getting to know them can open doors to other people in their lives. And some, even though they may never attend a Sunday



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service, will feel as though they are a part of the church and will even name your church as the church they attend, even if they just attend special events. That means, somewhere down the road, the pastor will have an opportunity to minister to them.

5. You want your pastor to have a sense of what the men who attend are like. This will be important to him when he encounters them somewhere in the community, or they come to another activity at the church, or they get saved at your event.
6. The pastor's presence is one way of saying to everyone, "Men in this church are important!" The bottom line is simple: If a pastor is absent, people can interpret his absence as "I'm not available" or "I'm not interested." By his presence, a pastor is saying "I'm available" and "I'm interested."

Sportsman's events should never be thought of as a program that's independent from everything else going on in the church. It is one portal through which people enter, and often a main portal for men. Although they may not connect in the way you hope for, sometimes they will connect on their own terms. Seeds are planted at a sportsman's dinner, but we don't always know when seeds will germinate.

Therefore, the pastor should have some visible role, even if it's very minor. Here are a few minor, but important, ways the pastor can fulfill this role.

- He can make a welcoming statement and talk about the great work his men have done to make this event happen.
- He can be invited up front to offer prayer before the dinner.
- He can be ready with a brief, humorous story at some point where a transition is slow.
- He can offer himself (perhaps at the close of the event) as a resource for those who need to talk to a pastor about anything.

The pastor does not need to be the heartbeat of the event, but his visible presence will pay dividends in the future because someone who comes to the event will need a pastor and will need to know who he can call when that time comes.

A word to the wise women of the church

Avoid competition between women and men for space on the church's calendar. When there's a conflict in choosing a date for the event, it's important to find a way to encourage the women to step aside if possible. After all, this might be the only big event the men have all year, but women often have many events. Asking men to sacrifice their event for a woman's event might dampen any initial enthusiasm the men may have, and discourage them from trying again. If women need more convincing, share the next section with them: "10 Ways a Sportsman's Dinner Will Change Men's Lives."

The women of the church need to view this as an important event, because men are important.

Of course, women may be needed in the kitchen, as servers, or in some other role, but this is not the first thing you need to be concerned with. Men can, and have, done everything at some events I have been involved in. Men can cook. Men can serve. Men can clean up. But men can't benefit if women have total control of the church's calendar. Having said all this, the church's calendar is never worth fighting over.



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10 Ways a Sportsman's Dinner Will Change Men's Lives

1 You'll draw spiritually isolated men.

Men from your community will come together and see your church as a place where they can find spiritual help.

2 You'll build bridges in your community.

As you plan, you'll create new relationships in the area you serve. As you promote you'll discover ways to engage local businesses and individuals in the church's vision.

3 You'll give your men a mission.

Men need a mission that's bigger than they are. The whole purpose of the event lines up with the church's mission.

4 You'll develop new leaders.

A sportsman's dinner is an opportunity to delegate responsibility for leadership to your men. It's exciting to watch them grow and gain enthusiasm as they lead a meaningful, fruitful project, and the leadership principles they develop will carry over to other ministries.

5 You'll evangelize without struggling.

This is not just a program — it's practical, real-life evangelism...

- some of your guests will pray to receive Christ.
- others will recommit their lives to Christ.
- still more will show their hearts open to the gospel.
- everyone will celebrate the success.

6 You'll show witnessing does not need to be scary.

Your men will see that sharing Christ through a personal testimony can be normal and natural.

7 You'll see answers to prayer.

Saturating this major outreach project in prayer can unify the entire church around it and show everyone that God answers prayer.

8 You'll have follow-up opportunities.

When everyone fills out a response card, you'll identify many discipleship opportunities.

9 You'll obey Jesus' command.

You'll be carrying out the Great Commission to "...go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19).

10 You'll break old barriers.

- That guy who recently said he'd never set foot in church? **He was there, and he heard the gospel!**
- That buddy of a member who said, "I had a great time even without alcohol!"? **He'll tell others!**
- That husband who has never attended anything? **He'll be back.**
- That man who needed to hear the simple salvation message? **He listened, and finally responded to the call of Christ!**



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Setting the date: What to consider

What's the best night of the week to hold your event?

Flexibility in scheduling can be very helpful in securing a speaker. So, tentatively consider two or three dates, prioritize them, and approach a speaker to see what fits his schedule. The farther ahead you schedule the event, the easier it will be to find a good speaker who is available on that date.



IN THE NORTH — most churches plan these events during the “cabin fever” season—January, February and March. That’s a time when winter doldrums have set in and people are looking for something to do. It’s a great time to stir men into activity in planning the event, and to bring men together to talk about the past hunting season, football games, and other “guy” stuff).

In the North, spring events are very difficult because spring comes with so many demands. Youth baseball, yard clean-up, and other spring activities make it difficult to gather a crowd. Check when Easter is and plan around that. Late summer and early fall can be good, and some churches find good success the weekend before hunting season starts.

IN THE SOUTH — Where the weather is warmer, people haven’t been going stir crazy all winter. They don’t have as big a backlog of chores that have been waiting for warmer weather. So you’ll find Sportsman’s Dinners in April, May, June, July and on.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY — Never allow a Sportsman’s Dinner to compete with Valentine dinners, missions events, or any other calendar item where people can be emotionally invested. If your area has a big local event such as a sportsman’s show, you can either schedule around it or use it to invite guests. And remember, even though it might be viewed as a men’s event, churches sometimes need women to carry a part of the load to be successful. And remember, the outdoors is for women, too!

But it doesn’t have to be a men’s event. If you have outdoors women in your church, they should not be overlooked. It might be a good idea to ask women to bring in antlers or mounts or photos, and set up a prominent display about “women in the woods.” Maybe you can find a video or have a seminar that features female hunters.

To get the date you’re looking for, book your speaker early!

(See page 15)

IMPORTANT QUESTION:

What’s the best time of year?

Sportsmen’s events can be held any season—winter, spring, summer or fall, though in the North most churches schedule them during the winter “cabin fever” season.



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Setting the date: The PROs and the CONs

While the busiest season is January through March, summer and fall events can also be very successful. The charts that follow outline the PROs and CONs for weekdays (Monday through Thursday), weekends (Friday or Saturday), and Sundays (afternoon and evening). A blank space is left on each chart to write additional Pros and Cons that may be unique to your situation.

Weeknight considerations—

| Weeknight PROs: | Weeknight CONs: |
|---|---|
| If the time of year conflicts with weekend events such as: hunting, fishing, local sporting events, the NFL Playoffs, etc...), booking an event on a weeknight may be the right decision for you. | The main downside to booking an event on a weeknight could be that it conflicts with work schedules, or that it is on a school night. |
| You may also find that your potential speaker may be in less demand for a weekday night. Saturdays usually fill up first, then Fridays, so depending on how it fits his other events and on distances he must travel, it may be easier to book a speaker during the week. | You may not be able to recruit the volunteer help you need for a weeknight event, because of people's work schedules. |
| | |

Friday night considerations—

| Friday Night PROs: | Friday Night CONs: |
|--|--|
| Booking an event on a Friday night is often the best because few weekly commitments compete (bowling nights, deacon meetings, PTA meetings, choir practice etc.) | Friday nights might conflict with high school sporting events, concerts, and other community events. |
| Fridays are often good family nights for families with young children, which may help attendance. | If key people commute long distances for work, they may get home too late to work your event. |
| | |



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Saturday considerations—

| Saturday Night PROs: | Saturday Night CONs: |
|---|---|
| You might think about having the speaker stay over and speak at your Sunday morning church service, and you can invite people who don't have a church home back to hear him speak the next morning. | The downside to booking an event on a Saturday night is that it might conflict with a holiday, hunting or fishing season. |
| A Saturday may give volunteers more time to decorate, cook, and prepare during the day. | On a Saturday night, tear-down and clean up might need to be done immediately to make the space ready for Sunday morning. This is challenging, but definitely doable. |
| | |

Sunday considerations—

| Sunday Afternoon/Evening PROs: | Sunday Afternoon/Evening CONs: |
|---|--|
| A Sunday afternoon gives you an opportunity to find a creative way to promote the event in the morning service, and provide an opportunity to feature your speaker there. | Sundays in some churches require too much effort to prepare for another large event—especially if you don't have enough people to carry the load. |
| A Sunday event means you can make a whole day of your event, and have fewer scheduling conflicts. Some churches call it "Camo Sunday." | If your purpose statement is not clear to people in your church outside your target group, make sure a Sunday event is not misunderstood as a sportsmen's party rather than an evangelistic opportunity. |
| A Sunday event can be planned to end earlier than a weeknight event. | A Sunday night might be viewed as a school night. |
| | |

A Word about Holidays —

Don't automatically dismiss scheduling events on holidays. With many holidays coming on Mondays, one of them might be perfect for you. Perhaps you can consider Martin Luther King Day (mid-January), President's Day (mid-February), Labor Day (early September), or Columbus Day (mid-October). I've spoken at great events on Martin Luther King Day, and even on Good Friday!



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Many holidays would not be suitable for a sportsman's dinner for obvious reasons: Valentine Day, Easter, Independence Day, Memorial Day, and the Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year holiday season.

Many holidays are very suitable, however, but they come with their own advantages and disadvantages. As with everything regarding sportsman's dinners, what limits you is the number of people available to pitch in and get the job done. If you do not have many people available to clean up, put tables away, etc., you might be able to get people to reserve Tuesday evening or even Wednesday evening for that task.

Monday Holiday considerations—

| Monday Holiday PROs: | Monday Holiday CONs: |
|--|--|
| You can begin the event earlier than on other days, so you can finish the event before it gets too late. | When an event ends on a Monday night, some of your help might need to leave with the crowd and be unavailable for clean-up. Rather than simply make a general announcement that you need help, you'll need to secure commitments. It's better anyway to secure commitments ahead of time so you don't have to make an announcement that's only for a few people. |
| You have the entire day to prepare. As far as the day's preparation is concerned, a Monday holiday will be much like a Saturday. | A Monday holiday might be a time other organizations compete for. If your community has a Memorial Day parade, or some other community-wide event, it might be hard to get a good response from the community. |
| A Saturday or Sunday that precedes the holiday might be a good time to do some last-minute preparation and planning. | A Monday night holiday, like a Sunday night, might be viewed as a school night. |
| | |

Having spoken at Sportsman's Dinners on weeknights, holidays, and even Sundays, I've found that any day of the week can be an effective day for an event. Also, many of the CONs for any day of the week can be overcome. Proper planning can result in good attendance almost anytime. Even Saturday night on Super Bowl weekend can be a great time for a successful sportsman's dinner!

IMPORTANT QUESTION:
Can Sunday really be a good day?
 Any day can be a good day for evangelistic outreach, but if you have some who oppose holding your event on a Sunday, do not force the issue! A Sportsman's Dinner should never be a divisive issue in the church. It should bring people together, never drive them apart.



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Setting the date: Saturday night AND Sunday morning

Sometimes you can feature your Saturday night sportsman's dinner speaker in the Sunday morning worship service.

Some churches hold a Saturday event and invite the speaker to preach in the morning service—if he is available and capable of doing that. This has several benefits:

- It can help unify the church around the event by exposing the people who were not at the event to the speaker.
- It can give those who came to Christ the night before an opportunity to come to church right away, to a service that may not seem as threatening as a regular service.
- It can give the pastor a break from preaching, which he will appreciate if he was deeply involved in Saturday's activities.
- You have more than one option: You can create an outdoor theme for Sunday, or have the speaker preach a basic conventional sermon.

Of course, there are some good reasons not to have your sportsman's dinner speaker step behind the pulpit on Sunday morning. If the pastor has recently been away or he is in the middle of a sermon series, he probably should not give up the pulpit. Encourage the pastor to have a conversation with your speaker to make sure he's giving his pulpit to someone he can trust. **Whatever you do, honor the pastor to make this decision.**



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Calling your speaker

As mentioned earlier, scheduling the speaker is one of the first matters to decide because it can influence the date you choose. It's important to think ahead, because speakers who are in demand schedule their events a year or more in advance. Also, it never hurts to bring a speaker back for a return engagement because people will get to feel like they know him. And keep in mind that some people will miss the event, and will be happy to have another opportunity to hear your speaker on a return visit.

It's most important that your speaker has a clear understanding of the gospel. I've heard speakers conclude by trying to say something "Christian," and end up watering the message down to "God answered prayer for me," or "stay on the straight and narrow and life will go better for you," or "give something back to God." **Though these things are true, they are not the gospel.**

You will miss a valuable opportunity if your speaker does not clearly tell the story that Jesus died for the sins of every man ("All have sinned," Romans 3:23), that accepting his free gift will erase guilt ("There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1), and that it will change a man's life to his core ("If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" 2 Corinthians 5:17). That message is the reason you are gathering the crowd. Some may be hearing the gospel for the first time. You want your speaker to avoid side issues and climax his talk with a clear focus on salvation.

What about a "celebrity" speaker? Sometimes churches measure the success of the event by how many people attend. To draw a big crowd they bring in a big-name speaker, but unless he can present the gospel clearly, that's probably a mistake. It's better to have 200 people hear a speaker present the gospel in an authentic way, than 500 people who come to hear an outdoor TV personality who might draw a crowd and even be a strong Christian believer, but doesn't effectively present the gospel.

I was first encouraged to get involved in this ministry more than a decade ago at the suggestion of well-known, long-time and effective sportsman's dinner speaker, the late Charles Alsheimer. He told me **three things are critical for effectiveness:**

1. A speaker doesn't need to be a celebrity or a famous expert, but he needs to have an above average skill set and be successful enough to offer some ideas that will benefit the crowd.
2. A speaker needs to be able to present in front of a crowd. If he can't deliver it to the people in an interesting way, he will be ineffective even if he has more knowledge than anyone.
3. **A speaker must have a Christian testimony of salvation, live the Christian life consistently, AND be able to share his testimony. Here is where many speakers fall short.**

Not everyone has those qualifications, but all three are absolutely necessary and not always easy to find. Beyond that, some "should always" and "must never" qualifications are also important.

KEY QUESTION:
How important is the speaker?
The speaker might be your most important decision. He should have a strong Christian worldview, hold fast to basic biblical ideas, and understand the church. You don't want someone who will get bogged down in denominational topics, present ideas the people in your church can't support, go off on tangents, use language that is offensive, or make inappropriate comments.



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You can't tell a good speaker from a not-so-good one by how famous he is, how big the deer are that he has harvested, how busy he is, or even how dynamic he is as a speaker. A good speaker will do, and will not do, certain things.

Your speaker should always:

- have a strong Christian worldview
- be warm and friendly to your guests, and passionate about your event
- identify with and engage your audience, and have the ability to establish credibility quickly
- have a professional level of expertise in the subject he speaks about
- have credibility within the outdoor industry
- hold fast to biblical truths, major on the majors and be sensitive to theological differences among Bible-believing churches
- understand church ministry even beyond the sportsman's dinner
- present a program with worthwhile content that appeals to sportsmen
- understand the gospel and present it clearly
- transition smoothly into his testimony — how he came to Christ
- demonstrate a life consistent with his testimony
- offer Christ to your guests
- be flexible and willing to work with the pastor and local leaders

Choosing your speaker is probably your most important decision. He will be the most visible person for the event, so an ineffective speaker will be a disappointment to everyone!

Your speaker must never...

- present ideas your church can't support
- make the program about himself
- go off on tangents
- try to score political points
- argue with your guests
- use offensive language
- make inappropriate comments



A sportsman's dinner is not an occasion for your speaker to preach. You want scriptural truth to be at the core of his message, but he is giving his testimony, not a sermon. Here are three solid reasons why your speaker should not preach a sermon:

1. Your church already has a preacher. Your speaker is not trying to “pinch hit” for him.
2. Some of your guests have preconceived ideas and won't respond well to a “preachy” presentation.
3. You want your event to be casual, but if your speaker comes across as a preacher, it will give the event a feeling of a church service, and that can be counterproductive.



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Should you be concerned about security? Maybe.

Do you need some people to make sure your event has any security issues covered? Only you can answer that question. Unfortunately, security is a growing necessity, even at churches. At one dinner where I spoke in New York, an individual in the crowd stood up and started a tirade about the church “glorifying killing.” One person on the event team anticipated what was about to happen, quickly escorted the man outside, and tried to determine his motivation. Sadly, it turned out that he had a set of personal problems. Fortunately, he was not a part of an organized demonstration.

However, a day may come when a group of people show up to protest or to demonstrate at a church sportsman's event. If that ever happens, what will you do? You will need a few people assigned to address the situation. They should take note of people who might seem agitated, who might scatter themselves through the crowd, or who might show telltale signs (hats, T-shirts with slogans, etc.) that show they are there to disrupt.

Such a situation can turn dangerous. The quickest way to address it is to move demonstrators outside if possible. Be ready to call 911 to get law enforcement personnel to assist. Do your best not to alarm the people or alert the demonstrators. Perhaps a police officer in your church can help handle disruptions.

Some churches have a security plan in place. If that's true in your church, notify the church leadership that you would like people assigned to security on the night of your event.

If you have no security provisions in place, an online search will show several organizations specializing in church security. Ask one of your leaders to survey what is available and make recommendations. Depending on your location your needs may be minimal, but it doesn't hurt to consider the issue.



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Counting the cost: How much money will it take?

The cost of a Sportsman's Dinner will depend on many things. Do you need to rent an event hall? Will the meal be catered? Will you sell tickets, or offer free admission? Will the event have support from the church mission budget, and if so, how much? Will you need, and be able to find, local sponsors?

Form a finance committee to brainstorm the costs you're likely to incur. Depending on your local area's culture, perhaps it should be free, or it may be best to sell tickets. The price could be as low as \$5 for Dads and Moms, and \$1 for every kid they bring. When people pay something, they're more likely to believe the event has value. It's important to make your event affordable to families, so set a rate structure that favors families, makes the event seem important, and low enough for anyone to pay. If your ticket price is high, you might want to make a number of tickets available for free to those who can't pay.

You can also set prices for whole tables. You can give donors of major door prizes a free ticket or two, or even a whole table to fill. Some churches insist that the event should be free, and that may be true for you. Sometimes a major donor will even underwrite the entire cost, or a high percentage of it.

How your event can pay for itself

There are several ways to finance a Sportsman's Dinner. Funding sources can include:

1. Admission to the event by paid ticket—usually a minimum of \$5, but if the event is a day-long adventure with food samplings and a variety of activities throughout the day, you can charge more. *Whether the ticket price is low or high*, make sure your guests understand how much they're getting for their money. A good rule of thumb is to make the event worth at least two or three times the ticket price.

2. Local sponsors for the event—a local sporting goods store, a car dealership, a financial services business, or any other local business can easily get enough publicity at this event to be worth \$500. You can also solicit businesses to sponsor single tables for \$100, and provide something that one of the guests at that table can win.

3. Donations of wild game from members of your church—One caution here: in some states it's illegal to sell wild game meat. Research the rules in your own state. You may find that it's not be a problem if you maintain a balance sheet that shows the meal is free and that the cost of the ticket goes toward other things such as the speaker, publicity, door prizes that must be purchased, paper products, facility rent, etc.

It's important to know what your guests are paying for. Guests at your event are paying for 3 things:

1. The opportunity to share a meal with other hunters, served to them by the host church.
2. The opportunity to win great prizes the church or event host obtains from local vendors.
3. The opportunity to hear a great speaker at a professional level, and develop their hunting skills by attending a high quality, one-of-a-kind seminar or program they'll see nowhere else.

Remember this...

One thing your guests are *NOT* paying for is the gospel. They should *NEVER* feel as though they have been tricked into hearing a gospel message.



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What is the event really worth to your guests?

It's important that your guests have received their money's worth before the speaker's testimony begins, or it will seem to some that you're charging for something that should be free. Your event will fail if they perceive themselves to be paying to hear a gospel message.

Let's look at what value your event might have.

Meal—At a fast-food restaurant, a meal of a sandwich, fries and a drink will cost roughly \$7. Your meal should be better than that and worth more than that. People should be served seconds if they want, plenty to drink, and a dessert. A conservative estimate is that your meal should be worth at least \$10. If your ticket costs \$5, your guests have already received double the value.

Speaker—Thousands of men each year pay admission of \$10 and up to attend hunting shows where they *spend even more money* on the kind of things you'll be giving away as door prizes. While there, they have an opportunity to hear a knowledgeable hunter present a seminar. Assuming your speaker is worth that \$10 sport show admission, now your ticket is worth \$20.

Prizes—Door prizes are a big draw, and you should have enough prizes that people have a good chance of winning something. Prizes can be at more than one level. (Many ideas for prizes are included on page 20 in this guide.) Unless every guest wins a prize, you may not want to factor prizes in to the value of the ticket, but if you did, your ticket would be worth even more.

These are fairly conservative numbers—and if you offer some pre-dinner seminars and schedule them so people can have time to attend two, it's easy to see why some churches charge as much as \$30 or \$40 for a large, all-day event of this kind. While that's quite high, it's not unheard of, especially if you can make available activities such as fishing, archery shooting, axe throwing, or other games.

Most churches will do all they can to keep prices down to a level where no one feels a hardship. Keep in mind—many of your own people will be making a big investment. If they're giving faithfully to the church, they may not have the disposable dollars the guy has who spends Saturday afternoon at the bowling alley. And the church member will likely be bringing a couple of kids. So, make sure your ticket price is not a barrier to anyone attending. For that reason I personally advocate keeping the cost as low as possible. *It's to your advantage (and the gospel's) that your guests receive a lot for their ticket price!*

Yes, it's possible to fund your event, and have money left over! The main cost will be your speaker's fee and his transportation to your event, with probably a hotel room plus a couple of meals. Suppose you pay \$1500 for that. If you have 200 guests each paying \$10, you have \$2000. In addition to that, let's say you have three local business sponsors who have each put up \$500, so that's another \$1500. Plus, 5 tables have been sponsored at \$100 each, another \$500. That totals \$4000, of which your speaker expenses are \$1500, so you have \$2500 left for tablecovers, place settings (plates, napkins, cups, etc.), drinks (coffee, fruit drinks, etc.), facility rent, publicity, and maybe some costs for decorations and any other contingencies. **You still have money left over. This is how some churches use these events not only for evangelism, but also to raise funds for other ministries.** Most churches, however, stick to an evangelistic purpose and plan to break even.





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Door Prizes: Everyone loves them!

Everyone would love to win a gun, but door prizes don't have to be big. Even small door prizes are always exciting. If you can get a door prize for at least a third of your guests, they will love it. All prizes should be on display from the minute guests begin walking in.

BIG TIP: A Source for Door Prizes

Here's how a \$100 gift card can get you \$200 worth of prizes. Go to your local big-box store right before Christmas, and ask the manager for a \$100 gift card. He'll probably ask you to fill out a donation request form. It will take about two weeks to get it approved. After you receive the card, watch for big discounts on sporting goods, which usually begin in mid-January.

Prizes should not drain your budget. Sometimes stores have lots of items left at the end of the season they're willing to sell at a big discount. Try asking them to donate, or sell at cost rather than carry items over to the next season. You might get game calls, clothing items, and much more at a fraction of the retail prices. Often local stores will donate items if you list them as sponsors in your printed

program. Make a copy of the program available to them, and thank them publicly when you make your announcements at the event. You might also want to consider giving each guest an inexpensive token item with the church's name imprinted on it.

How to handle the smaller prizes

It pays to have lots of winners, even if most of the prizes are small. The most successful Sportsman's Dinners have plenty prizes valued from \$5 to \$50, plus one or more grand prizes. Every guest has an opportunity to win a small prize as well as a grand prize. There are many ways to handle the smaller prizes. Here are two examples (but there are many more):

1. Every guest is handed a ticket that goes into the drawing. You can use different colored numbered tickets for men, women and children. (You don't want a child to win adult clothing.)
2. Each guest puts his name on his admission ticket. When his name is called he goes up to receive his prize.

You should wait until after the featured program to give out the grand prizes, but it's often a good idea to distribute smaller prizes before your featured program, or intermittently throughout the evening. **It's critical to distribute prizes quickly to avoid guests becoming restless.**

Here are some great door prize ideas:

- Knives
- Deer drags
- Fluorescent orange vest
- Hats
- Camo shirts
- T-shirts
- Gloves
- Wool Socks
- Backpacks & Fanny packs
- Books & DVDs
- Outdoor theme coffee mugs
- Flashlights
- Oil changes
- Gift cards
- Fishing rods & reels
- Tackle boxes
- Fishing lures
- Scouting cameras
- Riflescopes
- Rangefinder
- Camping chairs
- Sleeping bags
- Stadium blankets
- Picnic coolers
- Turkey decoys
- Treestands
- Art prints
- Game calls
- Emergency kit
- Certificate for guided fishing
- Taxidermy mount
- Scent elimination products
- Unique homemade items
- Archery gear
- Photo albums
- Turkey vest



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Two ideas for distributing door prizes quickly:

At this point you are not advertising the prizes, so do not try to build excitement by describing prizes as they are being drawn. **The excitement comes from making things happen fast.**

1. Use runners to deliver the prizes. Have the runner hold the prize up as it is being drawn for, and ask the guests to hold a hand up high when they hear their names called. *Runners run.*
2. Set up prizes on a table, and have the winners come forward to choose a prize. Tell them several guests will be choosing all at once, so they must choose quickly. Use the honor system—trust your guests.

The Grand Prize!

Is a Grand Prize necessary? Having a grand prize is your key to gathering information. The most effective way of handling grand prizes is to have a separate drawing from the smaller prizes, and hold it after the speaker is finished. Everyone who stays to the end is eligible to win.

The Grand Prize can be a hunting rifle, a shotgun, a treestand—something with a high price tag. Saving it for the end of the night gives guests a reason to stay. Often, someone is willing to donate a grand prize.

How to handle the Grand Prize

Design your grand prize entry form as a response card with three categories of information.

1. **Contact information for the guest:** Name, address, phone number, email address. This information can be used the next year to notify people about the event, and for follow-up on numbers 3 and 4 below.
2. **Provide a means of giving feedback on the event.** Ask simple questions about the food, the speaker's presentation, the publicity, ideas for next year, etc.
3. **Give an opportunity** to request prayer, or ask for information about the church.
4. **Your card should provide check boxes** where a guest can indicate if he made a profession of faith, or rededicated his life to Christ, or if a guest is already a Christian and is looking for a church home. This information should be followed up within a week. (See page 29 for a sample layout for a response card.)

Some churches add a check box for the guest to request a visit from the pastor. I recommend against this because if a person checks that he received Christ, but does not check that he desires a visit, you risk a misunderstanding when making the follow-up contact

Who to ask for door prizes

Local sporting goods stores:

These are perfectly targeted to your audience. Don't put pressure on them for a particular item.

Many people overlook some of the unconventional businesses that may be glad to contribute, including...

Grocery stores:

A great source for gift cards

Restaurants:

Also a great source for gift cards

Gas stations:

Gift cards
Car washes

Automotive service shops:

Oil changes
Tire rotations

Home improvement stores:

Tools
Small appliances

Big box stores:

Often willing to give end-of-season items for free or at a big discount

Local artisans:

A source of quality homemade items

Fitness club:

Free year's membership with exercise advisor

Garden shops:

Shrubbery



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Publicity: Promote without a "pro"

Many churches have people with computer skills who can help with layout and design of your publicity materials. Here are some suggested avenues for getting the word out to the community:

- **Newspaper article**—about two weeks before the event. (See sample on page 32.)
- **Posters in store windows**—3 to 6 weeks before the event. (See sample, page 31.)
- **Local radio public service announcement**—repeated several times during the two weeks prior to the event. (Only essential information needed. Someone at the radio station should be able to adapt the newspaper article into a radio spot.)
- **Email campaign**—send emails to the outdoorsmen in your church, and ask them to forward them to their friends at least a month before the event, or right before ticket sales begin.
- **Website**—Make a website or Facebook page for this event, or dedicate a page of your church's website to this event. Make it a "landing page" for your advertising.



You may want to prepare some additional printed materials for your event. The more you do, the more professional your event will look, and the more value your guests will see in your event. Many of items can be inexpensively produced on a home or office printer.

Suggested printed materials:

- **Posters advertising the event.** Remove posters from store windows *right after* the event, and thank the store personnel if possible. Even write a thank-you letter to the owner or manager.
- **Tickets.** Can be printed on card stock, up to 8 per sheet. Color photo adds value. Give basic information (date, time, place), provide room for the guest's name to be written if you plan to use the tickets in a drawing.
- **Place mats, 11 X 17.** By using a picture of the speaker and his biographical information, you can shorten the live introduction time and simply welcome the speaker as he goes forward to speak. You may be able to get a business to sponsor the placemats, and put the business's name and logo on it.
- **Program.** An 8½" x 11" folder can include the meal menu, list of sponsors, a picture of the speaker, title of his presentation, a short paragraph about the church, church contact information, and more.
- **Response cards.** Be brief. Make it easy to fill out and do not make it seem like a survey. (See sample on page 29.)

BIG TIP: Recruit a sponsor to pay for printed materials

If a sponsor's business name or logo is on every piece of printed material, it can be worth a lot to the business. And it may cost the business only a few hundred dollars. They may even have the printing company they use do the layouts and design.



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Décor: Remember, it's an event for men

Does décor matter to men? You bet it does! Men will enjoy the event more if you make it a man's environment. You'll find many ways to do that, from centerpieces on the tables, to taxidermy in the men's room. (I spoke at one church where the entry to the men's room had taxidermy on display all the time!)

Life-like game mounts create an atmosphere that stimulates conversation because every animal and every hunt has a story. You'll have fun setting up your venue to look like a hunting lodge. You can really go all out. Maybe someone in your church can create the façade of a hunting camp, and three or four guys can put on a skit to entertain



Does the entry into your men's room look like this? (OK, the gobbler is crooked, but this still makes a great impression on men.) And this is the way this men's room looks all the time!



Lots of guys will be proud to loan their mounts for all to see.

the crowd as the event gets started or before the speaker gets up. You can easily make up a story. It can be anything from strange sleeping habits, to how *NOT* to track, to oversleeping on opening day and shooting the big one from the camp porch.

Ask volunteers to bring in deer heads, bear rugs, or other taxidermy (it doesn't need to be "trophy" quality), and cover the walls with them. Hang artwork. Invite a taxidermist to display his work, or perhaps a local gunsmith or custom call maker, and allow them to make brochures and business cards available. These folks will add credibility.



Set up displays of mounts, antlers, turkey tailfans—anything at all will get guys telling stories.



Contest! Win a trail camera—guess how many shed antlers are in the box!

Enhance place settings by including an outdoor gospel tract, mints, or other "favors." Try to put a gift from the church at each place setting—maybe a mug with the church logo or the speaker's logo (if he has one) or some other kind of small tool or an inexpensive flashlight. Or, since each person will be filling out a response card, maybe a sponsor can provide each guest a pen.



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Centerpiece idea—flowers for a men's event? Sure! Whatever's available (fresh or artificial) in an empty ammo box.

Centerpieces contribute to the atmosphere and can be anything from a simple collection of pine cones to a set of deer antlers. They can be snapshots of some of your people with the animals they have harvested, set up in acrylic holders. Old camping lanterns, empty shell boxes with flowers in them, shed deer antlers, bouquets of pheasant or turkey feathers, or anything associated with hunting, fishing or camping will have everyone standing around it talking about the good old days, or the huge buck Grandpa killed right after the war.

Some companies are willing to provide banners that promote their products. And some churches make their own banners featuring the name of their event, and use them year after year.

Sometimes people get a mental block when it comes to ideas, so brainstorm. Make it fun, don't take it too seriously, make it interesting to your local folks, but don't try to out-do Cabela's.



Centerpiece idea—a jar of empties sitting on some feathers. Everyone will check out what caliber the shells are.



Encourage men to bring artifacts and pictures to display. Note in the foreground—a string of Christmas lights, covered by different colors of empty plastic shotgun shells.



It's easy for a handyman in the church to build some racks where you can hang mounts of deer, bears, or other trophies.



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Seminars: A full slate of programming

Depending on the size of your facility and the availability of space, you can invite local experts who have hunting, fishing, trapping or shooting expertise. Be sure to give them two free courtesy tickets to your event.



Does your local high school have a trap team? Invite someone share about it.



Is there a good trapper in your area? Ask him to display some furs and do a seminar.



Is there a local gunsmith? Ask him to demonstrate gun cleaning techniques.



Do you know a fishing guide? Invite him to give "10 Tips for Catching Bigger Bass."



What about sportsman's clubs? Ask an officer to come with a brochure or talk about its benefits.



Do you know a good turkey hunter? Bring him in to talk about calling or scouting techniques.



Do you know a good deer hunter? Ask him to do a clinic on deer calling or field dressing.



Do you know a wildlife photographer? Ask him to do a seminar on how to take good field photos.



Have a contest for kids and award prizes. A game calling contest is easy to pull off. Make it fun, not serious. If you have both boys and girls, have the audience choose winners in several categories so all the kids are happy. Winners can choose their prize from a few of the door prizes you've pre-selected, and give each of them a consolation prize.

You can expand your event any number of ways. Schedule seminars for a half hour to 45 minutes, and plan it so guests can attend two of them before dinner is served. You can have a video playing for people to watch if they don't want to attend a seminar. You will have more good ideas than you have time for. **It will be difficult to fit everything in, so choose whatever fits your situation, and don't over-program it.**

IMPORTANT QUESTION:

Can we use local experts?

Just because you have a professional speaker doesn't mean you can't use local experts too. You may not want every local expert sharing the gospel with a large group, but you can find other ways they can add value. They will appreciate being asked, and they will add credibility to your event.



Several kids compete in a moose calling contest.



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Plan to draw the right crowd

Who will come? And why? Lots of people will want to be there.

- They come because it's a good night out.
- They come because of the door prizes.
- They come because of the great food.
- They come because they want to learn something about hunting or fishing.
- They come because they enjoy being at this kind of event.
- They come because they "make the circuit," attending all these events in the area.
- They come because of a friend.

A more important question:

"Who do you want to come, and how do you get them there?"

The most successful sportsmen's dinners gather people who don't know Christ.

A story: Several years ago I spoke at a well-planned sportsman's dinner in southcentral Pennsylvania. The food was great, and several vendors were set up in the lobby. Leaders from the host church were easy to identify. They welcomed people and helped them find a place at a table. The event was well publicized, the house was packed, and enthusiasm was building. All 400 people were excited to be there.

After the meal I got up to speak. I presented one of my programs on wild turkeys, shared my testimony and offered Christ as the one who redeems broken people. Then the pastor took over, thanked the people for coming, and guided all 400 in filling out a response card. One of the lines on the response card was this: "I prayed to receive Jesus Christ tonight." *The pastor was very explicit in explaining what that means.*

A little later after almost everyone was gone and the building was quiet, I was packing up my things. The pastor walked up to thank me and he had the stack of response cards in his hand. I asked how long it would take him to go through them. He said he already took a quick look through them, and about 100 men indicated they accepted Christ that night. *100 out of 400 who attended!*

Why was this event so successful? I can tell you it wasn't the speaker. I did the same things I do when one person gets saved, or 10, or 20. **The difference was that this church made a big effort to get non-believers to attend.**

KEY QUESTION: What is most important?

The planning is important because that's how you gather people who need to hear the gospel. The speaker is important because, after you've done all that work, you want someone who will present a clear testimony and offer the gospel effectively.

But if you don't get non-believers to attend your event, you can't expect anyone to walk out as a new believer at the end of the evening.



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Part of the crowd of 400, where 100 people indicated they prayed to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

What happened to those 100 people?

I said to the pastor, “Now what do you do? Following up on 100 people is a big job!”

He said, “That’s what we’re good at. We’ll sort these into contact lists and link each person to a believer we think they’ll identify with. We’ll do everything we can to contact all of them within a week.”

It’s important to take something of value to each one, then follow up a second time within two weeks. Invite them to another event. It doesn’t have to be a big event. It could be an informal breakfast with some men from the church, or a study group, or a family event, or something for their kids. But do more than just invite them—**THEY’RE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO COME IF YOU MAKE SURE THEY KNOW SOMEONE WHO WILL BE THERE.**

Obviously not all 100 of those people became members of that church, and not everyone who makes a commitment at your church will become part of your fellowship. Some will come from too far away to make your church an option for regular attendance. Some have a history with another local church—if it’s a gospel-preaching church you may want to encourage them to re-connect there. Some seed falls on rocky soil. But it’s important to follow up on every person who checks that they’ve received Christ, or who wants a visit from someone in the church, or who says they are looking for a good place to attend church. Out of those 100 people, that pastor believed a dozen or so would become committed believers and disciples of Jesus through that church.

What would happen to those 100 people if no one followed up on them? Most would probably say they are Christians, but few would become connected to a vital church where the gospel is preached. That means they would not learn much about their new faith, and would be unlikely to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Follow-up is critical to a successful event. (See pages 33-34.)



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Ten things you can do to bring in non-believers

1. Promote the event not only by publicizing it in the church, but by telling your people *why* you're holding this event. You're holding it for non-believers.
2. Announcements should go something like this: "The upcoming sportsman's dinner is an opportunity for you to bring your friends to a place where they will hear the gospel. We want each of you to attend, but we especially ask that you bring your friends who don't know Christ. We promise you that your friends will hear the gospel in a positive way, and you can promise them that they will love being here. It's going to be a great night."
3. All your publicity materials should make clear that this is not a church event—it is an event for the community. To do that, use publicity methods that go beyond the church bulletin and posters. Get a radio interview with a local talk program. Perhaps you can have the speaker participate by phone. Buy some 15 or 30 second radio promotions. Have a story in the local newspaper. (See page 30.)
4. Publicity materials should mention the names of organizations who will have vendor displays—taxidermists, sportsman's clubs, game agencies, gunsmiths, sporting goods stores, etc. You're not giving these people a platform to speak from, but by their presence you are saying you have a wider audience than just your church.
5. Invite neighboring businesses or organizations or business owners in your church to bring guests, clients, or members. Reserve a table for them at a reduced price. Maybe you even can find someone in the church who will bear the cost of that table when he knows it will be filled with people who need to hear the gospel.
6. You might receive calls from neighboring churches asking to buy a quantity of tickets. Thank them for their interest and explain to them that you would love to have them, but that you're not measuring the success of this event by the number of seats that are filled. You're measuring it by the number of non-believers who fill the seats. Encourage them to bring non-believers.
7. Have your people invite their friends who don't know Christ. Try to discourage your people from sticking together with the people they are close to. Instead, encourage them to bring friends and introduce them to their friends.
8. Have a plan for the tickets to sell out quickly by doing as much "pre-sale" as possible before the tickets go on sale (or before they are distributed if they're free). **"Pre-selling" is really pre-planning,** and it will help you accomplish at least three things. It will:
 - A. Create urgency once tickets are available.
 - B. Add a greater sense of value to the tickets.
 - C. Let you plan how to get them into the hands of non-believers before they're all gone.
 - D. Let you anticipate how many people to plan for.
9. Make it a goal for half the people at each table to be there because of a personal invitation, not JUST because of a public announcement. Personal invitations are primary, and the public announcements should support and reinforce them (not the other way around). You can create a small hand-out ("You're invited to...") with basic information on it to make the invitation important and memorable.
10. Your target audience is the lost, so pray that your people will understand that and will be excited about a room full of non-believers hearing the gospel.



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Resources: Producing printed materials

Response cards: These can be printed four to a sheet of paper, then cut, for a 4¼" x 5½" finished size. Add a small photo or other graphic to dress it up. **DO NOT make it so crowded that your guests feel like they're taking a survey.** If you want more feedback after the event, set something up on your website to solicit responses, or send an email follow-up.

All of us at Cornerstone Church welcome you to our Sportsman's Dinner. Thank you for coming. If you'd like to be included in our Grand Prize drawing, please fill out the information below.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

This information will also be used to invite you to future sportsman's events held by Cornerstone Church.

I want to receive notices about next year's event and other events for men.

Next Steps Feedback Form:

Did you enjoy your meal? _____

Did you learn something from the speaker? _____

How did you hear about this event? _____

Comments/Suggestions: _____

Check any that apply:

I'M A NEW BELIEVER – I prayed to receive Jesus Christ as Savior tonight.

I'M STARTING OVER – I have not been living the life Christ called me to and I recommitted my life to Christ tonight.

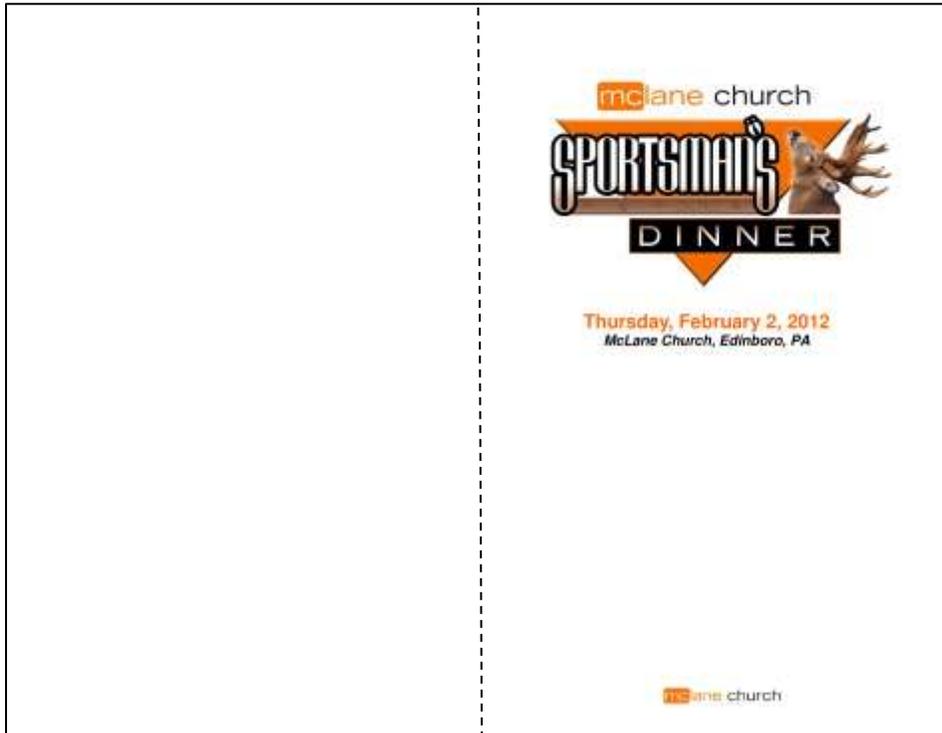
I'M MOVING FORWARD – I am a Christian believer, and I was encouraged in my faith tonight.

I'M A CHRISTIAN BELIEVER, but I'm looking for a church home.



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Program Brochures: This sample was printed both sides on an 8½" x 11" sheet, then folded in half. This church printed logos of companies that provided door prizes. In this case the back side was blank, but you could use the space for pictures, or in any number of ways. Put a program at each place setting.





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Posters: Posters for store windows or community bulletin boards can be printed on ordinary 8½" x 11" paper. If you have access to a larger printer, you can make them larger. Below is a sample of a simple poster. Download content for making posters like this from www.everydayhunter.com, and adapt for your event. If you have someone who has graphic arts skills, the sky's the limit.

New Springfield Church of God

presents outdoor writer

Steve Sorensen

with a program on

The Path to Your Next Mature Whitetail



Saturday,
March 9, 2013

Doors open at 5:00 PM
Dinner at 6:00 PM
Presentation at 7:00 PM
Dessert & Door Prizes to follow

Ticket prices: \$10
Children 10 years old & under: \$5

Call...
(330) 549-2060
New Springfield Church of God
3649 E. Garfield Rd
New Springfield, OH 44443



SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS:

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- Rick's Taxidermy
- Old Barn Taxidermy Shop
- Snuff N Stuff Taxidermy
- Williams Archery
- Buckeye Firearms
- YM Camera
- Red's Bait Shop
- Life-Like Taxidermy







Steve Sorensen is 3-time winner of "Best Newspaper Column" in Pennsylvania and has written for Deer & Deer Hunting, North American Whitetail, Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, Ohio Valley Outdoors, Pennsylvania Game News, The Varmint Hunter Magazine, and more. He is a field editor for Bear Hunters Online. Besides whitetail hunting, he enjoys hunting turkeys, woodchucks and the eastern coyote, and also has an amazing story about Alaska moose hunting. Check him out at www.EverydayHunter.com.



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Placemats: If you have access to a printer that can print on an 11" x 17" sheet, you can make nice placemats for your place settings. Ask your speaker to provide a photograph and some biographical information. Guests will have the speaker's biographical information in front of them, so you dispense with a long introduction by referring them to that. Just give a couple of details and ask the people to welcome him. You can also add information about the church, or your men's ministry calendar items to the placemat.

Newspaper article: Copy and paste the article below into your word processing program, and where underlined, add information specific to your event. This news story is about a whitetail deer presentation, but it can be adapted for other programs. If you invite a different speaker and he doesn't have a pre-written news article, just use this one as a model.



Outdoor Writer to Speak at _____

Outdoor writer Steve Sorensen will be speaking on "The Path to Your Next Mature Whitetail" at CHURCH NAME, CHURCH ADDRESS on DATE. DETAILS OF MEAL. The meal will begin at TIME, and Sorensen's presentation will begin at TIME.

Sorensen writes "The Everyday Hunter," a three-time winner of "Best Newspaper Column" in Pennsylvania (chosen by the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association) and has won the national Pinnacle Award for outdoor writing twice. Sorensen is a Field Contributor to *Deer & Deer Hunting* magazine and his column appears in several newspapers. His work has also appeared in a variety of other national and state magazines including *Sports Afield*, *Outdoor Life*, *North American Whitetail*, *Bear Hunting Magazine*, *Pennsylvania Game News*, and other print and online publications. Sorensen's columns and many of his magazine articles can be viewed at www.EverydayHunter.com.

Sorensen's presentation is titled "The Path to Your Next Mature Whitetail." He tells how hunters are bringing home bruiser bucks that would be jaw-droppers anywhere. He'll give his audience the deer hunter's "geek" test, talk about how to find the biggest bucks in your area, what makes bucks get big, and how to take an inventory of the bucks where you hunt.

OTHER DETAILS REGARDING RESERVATIONS, TICKETS, DOOR PRIZES, CHURCH LOCATION, PHONE ETC., -- ADD OTHER INFORMATION AS NECESSARY.

Pastor _____ promises that hunters and non-hunters will enjoy this event.



Steve Sorensen's Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner

Follow-up: It's time to gather the harvest

It's one thing for a person to receive Christ. It's another to become a devoted disciple. Here is where discipleship begins. When you call on a person who has indicated he received Christ on the night of the dinner, what should you do? How do you follow up in a way that increases the chance you can fold this new believer into the church for fellowship and spiritual growth?

This may be the hardest task of all, but it's the most satisfying. It's like gathering the harvest into the barn. Each person is different, and not everyone will have a clear idea of what has happened. Remember that you have offered and they have accepted the greatest gift of all—forgiveness and new life in Christ.

Principles of Follow-up

The new believer, without another Christian to connect with, is likely to falter and end up falling away or living way beneath full assurance as a believer and remain in spiritual infancy. It is imperative that a mature Christian have a significant personal role in the early growth of a new Christian. Any person who follows up should have confidence that the Holy Spirit will make him effective and is working in the life of the new believer.

Following-up with these nine simple principles will help form a committed disciple:

1. Pray for the one you will disciple (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3), because God is sovereign in the work of making disciples (Philippians 1:6; 2:13).
2. We have a responsibility to follow up new converts (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). We are God's instruments on earth—he chooses to work through people to accomplish His purpose.
3. Remind him of what happened. 2 Corinthians 5:17 is a good place to start, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
4. The Word of God is essential to follow-up. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) We should teach from the Word of God, and avoid our own opinions.
5. Recognize that God allows people to respond differently to His Word. Mark 4 teaches us that:
...some do not accept the Word at all (v. 15).
...some receive the Word superficially, but lose interest and fall away (vv.16, 17).
...some hear and respond to the message, but later they allow it to be crowded out by things of the world (vv. 18, 19).
...some hear, accept God's Word and bear fruit (v. 20).
6. Encourage him to make Christ the Lord of his life, not merely a new addition to his life.
7. Teach him that he has access to the Holy Spirit for power to live a new life.
8. Forming a strong personal friendship with the new believer is essential. Stress the importance of Christian fellowship in a local church. Offer to attend with him, or (if he's from a distance away) help him connect with a good church in his area.
9. Help him take steps to sharing his new-found faith, starting with other believers.

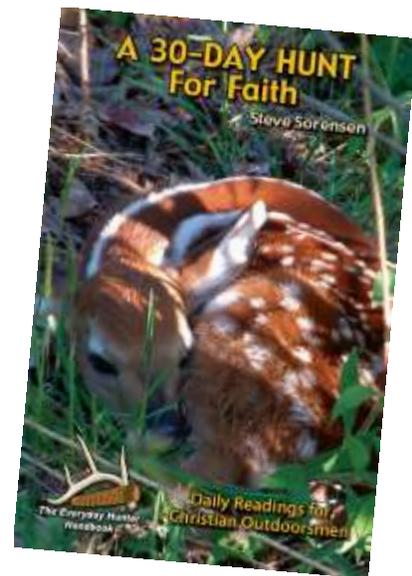
Sportsman's Dinner = Gospel Opportunity



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When you call on a person, do not overstay your welcome. **BE BRIEF!**

- Thank him for attending the event. You may want to ask him how he heard about it.
- Make a statement or two about the event, and how your men enjoyed making it happen.
- Get him to talk about something that interests him—his work, family, etc.
- Mention that he checked “Received Christ as Savior” (or “Rededicated my life to Christ”), tell him you’ve done the same thing, and tell him that’s an important life-changing event.
- *Don’t ask, “Do you have any questions.”* Do say, “Most men wonder what’s next.”
- Briefly reiterate the gospel, and say, “It’s like any new experience—we need to learn more about it.”
- This is a good time to give him a short devotional book. Steve Sorensen’s *A 30-Day Hunt for Faith* (76 pages) was written especially for new believers who have come to faith at a Sportsman’s Dinner. It’s available (with a quantity discount) at www.EverydayHunter.com. It leads the reader through several basic Christian concepts and encourages him to move ahead when he completes it.
- Let him know you’ll be seeing him again, perhaps at a coming men’s event, or you’ll call on him again. At this point you may want to invite him to a men’s event, or try to connect him with another man in the church.
- It’s always good to leave a gift behind. It could be a notepad with the church’s name on the pages, or a little booklet about the church. The point is that you’re trying to cultivate this person, and help him to know he has an important connection with your church or with some other Bible-based church.



Never wait long before making the contact. Within a week, every person who has made a profession of faith should be contacted, either by the pastor or a key leader.

You will avoid discouragement if you remember that not every person who professes Christ will end up becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus, and serve him through your church. Some will have connections with other churches. To some, the idea of church will still feel strange. But Sportsman’s Dinners are a great way to introduce men to Christ and the church. They have come once, and they will probably come again.

Two MUSTS for follow-up.

1. **Train your follow-up team by discussing the strategy on these two pages**, or they may not be sure what to do. It can be done in one brief session. Role playing may be helpful.
2. **Approach follow-up with a broad kingdom mentality**, or you’ll end up being disappointed in the outcome. Remember, someone plants, someone waters, but God gives the increase.



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Two frequently asked questions

How can we make sure everything runs smoothly?

Yes, a lot can go wrong with a big event. Things can go downhill fast if people aren't served efficiently and quickly. People will notice if you aren't well-organized. People can be impatient when the door prizes drag on for an hour, or when you run out of drinks, or when you seem disorganized.

Figure out how much time each aspect of the event should take, and at what time each transition should happen. If you have used too much time in one thing, try to adjust on the next. It's important to keep things moving, but at a comfortable pace. It's also important that the event end on time.

It might also help to visit other churches to see how they do it. Sportsman's Dinners are popular so one is likely to be close enough where you can send some key people to pick the brains of the organizers. Many churches have been doing it for 20 years or more (that's a big clue to their effectiveness), and have their system well-established. They're rightly proud of the job they do and are willing to help others get started.

Can Christians ethically hold an event that celebrates hunting?

Sooner or later, you'll get that question in one form or another. Some people, based on their own personal philosophies, will say it is immoral to kill animals and eat meat.

While it's not possible in this space to give a theological justification for hunting and eating meat, nothing in the Bible discourages either one. We can be thankful that our opposition is minimal in rural areas, but at the same time we should be prepared for some people to disapprove of what we do.

There is no correlation between "Thou shalt not kill" and hunting. Every commandment, including this one, is about the relationships between man and God or man and man. It is abundantly clear that the commandment against killing was not a commandment against hunting, as many Bible verses make evident. It is a command against the murder of another human being made in God's image, not a command against the killing of animals.

Would Jesus have hunted? No one can say he would not. Some people will say that hunting was not as important in the New Testament as it was in the Old, but clearly fishing (a close cousin to hunting) was highly valued. Many of Jesus' chosen disciples were fishermen, and Jesus never criticized them for that. In fact, after Jesus' resurrection he told seven of them where to fish, and they brought 153 large fish to shore. This is not the action of a person who is against eating flesh, since Jesus himself was complicit in killing many fish—both at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 5) and the end (John 21). And more than once, he fed large crowds with fish. There is not a shred of evidence that Jesus was a vegan or a vegetarian, and we have plenty of evidence that he was a meat eater.

Hunting, fishing, even trapping animals to use their skins is never condemned in Scripture. In fact, Genesis 3:21 tells us God himself used animal skins to clothe Adam and Eve. This is a big topic, and thankfully one where Christians have strong footing. Several books cover this topic well from a biblical point-of-view.



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Bible verses about hunting

The following verses are not meant to be a full scriptural endorsement of hunting, fishing, and eating meat, but they do show evidence that the Bible is positive toward hunting. In fact, the Bible gives no evidence at all that the Christian should oppose hunting, fishing or trapping.

One way to use these verses is to choose one to become a “theme verse” for your sportsman’s dinner. (Verses below are from the King James Version.)

God gave man “dominion” (this includes conservation and game management) over the animals he created:

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (**Genesis 1:26**).

God has designed into creation a food chain, with mankind at the top:

²⁹ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so (**Genesis 1:29-30**).

God has given us both plants and animals for food:

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things (**Genesis 9:3**).

Hunting was respected in the Old Testament and good hunters were admired:

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, “Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord” (**Genesis 10:9**).

God approved of hunting, or he would not guide a man to become an archer.

And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer (**Genesis 21:20**).

Isaac, the son of Abraham and the father of Jacob, appreciated hunting and eating game:

³ Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; ⁴ and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die (**Genesis 27:3-4**).

God told the Israelites to eat meat:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth (**Leviticus 11:2**).



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Hunting and fishing were moral activities God himself endorsed:

Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks (**Jeremiah 16:16**).

Peter, in the New Testament, was told by God that all meat was good to eat:

And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat" (**Acts 10:13**).

St. Paul endorsed eating the flesh of animals with thanksgiving:

⁴For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (**1 Timothy 4:4-5**).

*Is there a better way to reach men in your community
than by holding a Sportsman's Dinner?*



Plans are made, the event has been publicized, tickets have been sold, food is ready and prizes are on display. You've thought of everything, done everything, and a good crowd is ready for a good time. They'll all hear the gospel and some of them will meet Jesus for the first time!



Steve Sorensen's Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner

A Personal Word from Steve Sorensen:

As I travel around the country speaking at men's events, I never fail to be impressed with three things:



No program in any church creates the enthusiasm I've seen men put into planning and carrying out a sportsman's dinner.



No program beats the pure enjoyment guests get from celebrating the greatness of our Creator.



No other strategy for ministering to men creates more openness or responsiveness to hearing the gospel.

I believe strongly in the effectiveness of Sportsman's Dinners at presenting the gospel to people, so I invite you to use this material and make as many copies as you need without charge, whether you call me as your speaker or not. The reason I put together *Steve Sorensen's Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner* is so that the churches and organizations that have never done one of these events can do it without "reinventing the wheel," and so that those who want to expand or enlarge their event can have some proven ideas on how to do that.

My prayer is that you find sportsman's dinners an effective way to reach men for Christ.

Contact me for a copy of this brochure, with the items you saw outlined on page 9.



Contact me to learn about the sportsman's dinner programs I have available.

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Steve Sorensen's Ultimate Guide to Planning a Sportsman's Dinner

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Scripture taken from the King James Version of the Bible.



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Sportsman's Dinner Planning Notes