REACHING YOUR NEIGHBORS

YOUR OUTREACH AVATAR

The First Step to Developing Your Target Audience Strategy

Introduction

By and large, it seems that most church leaders are resistant to developing a "target audience," even though they already clearly cater to one. Your worship service and most of your ministries are perfectly designed to reach those you're currently reaching – in other words, your attending membership. Your music, liturgy, hospitality practices, and even the topics of your sermon are all designed to reach, teach, inspire, motivate, and touch those who are already there.

If your community is full of people "just like your members," except that they're not going to church, then you can probably keep on doing what you're doing and just add some savvy networking, marketing, and advertising practices to grow your church.

However, the truth is, almost everyone who wanted to be in church last weekend *was in church.* And pretty much everyone who is an ideal match for your current congregation, well, they were in a church somewhere – yours or some other congregation.

That means if you're going to reach those in your community that are different from you, then you're going to have to do some things differently. And that means change. (And we all know what the word CHANGE!!!! does to the hearts of the faithful. Let's just say it isn't pretty.)

Before you pull out the stops and start making changes to try and reach your neighbors, it's a smart thing to decide which of your neighbors your congregation is most likely able to reach and retain.
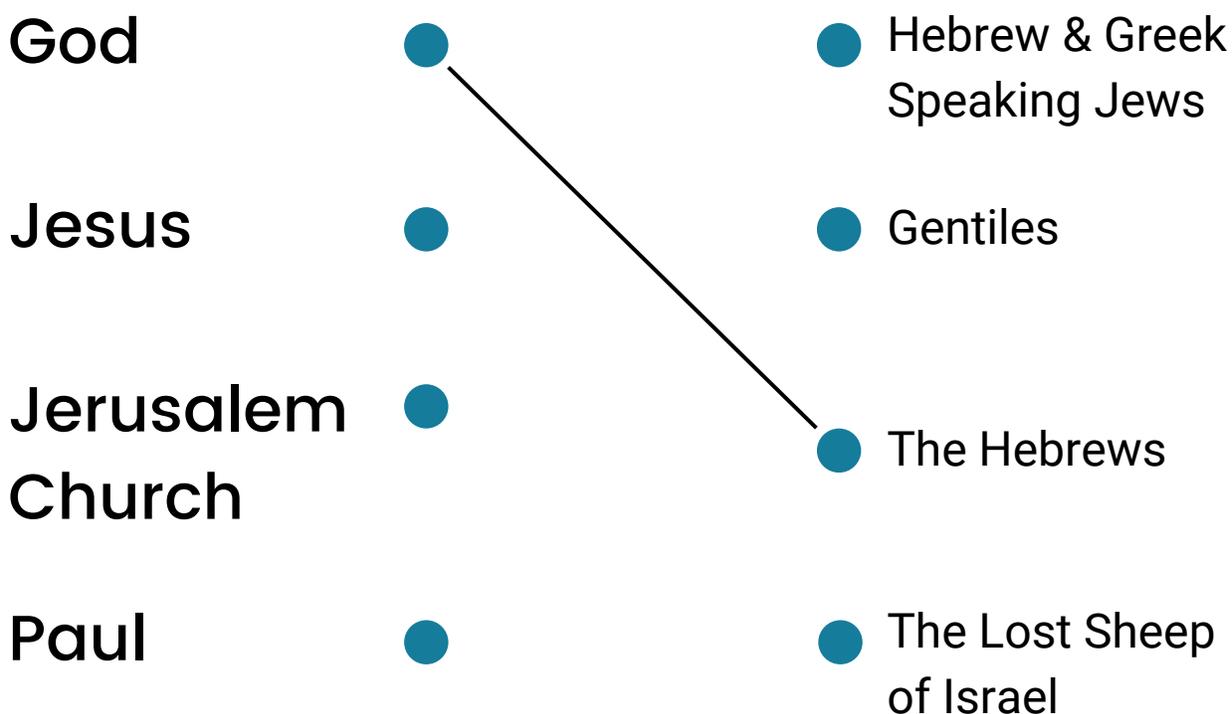
By developing your Outreach Avatar, you'll be able to design/adjust your marketing, advertising, outreach events, ministries, hospitality practices, music, liturgy, and even your sermon topics so that those neighbors are inspired to find their way to visit you and your congregation.

Match Game

MATCH THE "PERSON" ON THE LEFT
WITH THEIR "TARGET" ON THE RIGHT

God ●   ● Hebrew & Greek
                           Speaking Jews

Jesus ●   ● Gentiles

Jerusalem ●
Church   ● The Hebrews

Paul ●   ● The Lost Sheep
                           of Israel

But is a "target audience" legitimate? Is there a precedent in scripture?

In the Body of Christ, EVERYONE should be welcome – the church must not exclude anyone who is seeking the Lord. However, being welcoming doesn't automatically mean someone is going to feel like they're a fit. For instance, if someone doesn't speak the language you use in worship ... they may be welcome, but they're not going to get much out of the service other than fellowship.

The truth is, every church targets and there's plenty of biblical precedence for it.

CHOOSING YOUR MOST LIKELY AUDIENCE

People Just Like You

The easiest demographic to reach, since you're already reaching people just like you. The only question is whether there are a lot of unchurched people in your community that are "just like you."

1

Those You Can Build On

People in your congregation that "looks" like your target. Often this is two or three individuals, couples, or families that are similar to those you'd like to reach – and are willing to build relationships with new people.

2

Those You Can Build With

If no one in your congregation "looks" like your target, the next option is to see if there are people in your congregation willing to be bridge builders to the target. (That means intentionally creating a friend-building relationship with those who visit, perhaps becoming spiritual companions and/or life coaches.)

3

Demographic Decision

Many churches consult the demographics for the community to determine which of the people groups/ages are likely to see significant growth over the next 5–10 years. Then they choose the group that's growing and most likely to be able to connect to the existing congregation (see 1–3 above).

4

Those You Want to Reach

Finally, some congregations have a heart for a particular demographic in the community and they're willing to do "whatever it takes" to reach that group.

5

Get To Know Your Outreach Avatar

Answer the Following Questions to Create Your Outreach Avatar

Choose One: Your Avatar's Gender

_____

How Old is Your Avatar? (not a range!)

_____

Married, Single, Co-Habitating?

_____

Children? How Many? What Ages?

_____

Education Level Attained? (What degree/s?)

_____

What Is Your Avatar's Profession?

_____

What is The Household Income?

_____

What is Your Avatar's Religious Experience?

_____

What Is the Household's Living Accommodations? (Homeowner, Apartment, etc.)

_____

What is the Significant Other's Profession?

_____

What Does the Household Do for Fun?

_____

What Does Your Avatar Drive?

_____

What are Your Avatar's Hobbies?

_____

What Worries, Stressors Keep Your Avatar Up at Night?

_____

Your Avatar Description

Write a Short Narrative that Describes Your Avatar
(Start By Naming Your Avatar and Family Members)

Next Steps

Once you know your Outreach Avatar, the next steps are to decide what you and your church is willing to do to reach them. From there, you can design events, choose and plan your sermon series, and make adjustments in your worship and your ministries. Once you've done that, the next step is to encourage your neighbors to come and check out your church. You can do that by nurturing relationships through networking and through intentional marketing and advertising. The key to remember is that the Great Commission isn't about being convenient or easy. It's about doing **whatever it takes** to reach your neighbors for Jesus.

1 Corinthians 9:19–22

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. *I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*

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