

Some thoughts on reaching the lost

By Gregory A. Wiens

With 2012 fast approaching, we not only spend time reflecting on events from the past year, but we begin to plan for future programs. (Or at least we should.) There are numerous opportunities to serve our communities, but reaching lost people for Christ certainly must be a worthy goal for the church.

Over the years, I've thought and prayed a lot about the command from Jesus at the end of Matthew. I've experimented and succeeded and failed a lot in this endeavor. As you continue to contemplate God's desire for you and those in your community, let me share four thoughts from my experiences that might be helpful.

First, I believe that the Sunday experience – often called worship – is not the only and primary tool for reaching people who are far from God. Too often pastors think they have to do it all on Sunday morning. The reality is that most people who are far from God aren't going to show up from anything on a Sunday morning.

A second principle is that you must take the time to determine who you are called to reach. By that I mean, *"Who has God gifted you to reach and where are those people in your community?"* There are actually progressive distances people are from God. Some are harder to reach than others, while all matter equally to God. The key is to know *who* you are wired to reach.

Thirdly, you can only reach people with whom you identify. I have always found this identification principle a challenge. This is why I usually don't tell lost people that I am a pastor. People just trust the messenger before they will trust the message.

The fourth principle on this subject is that we are called to be distinct from lost people. We are called to be aliens in a foreign land – ambassadors. We are told to be in the world, but not of the world. This is the balance to the third principle. As followers of Christ, our lives should demonstrate a different quality or different life beat than those who don't know Christ. We are servants of the King and His Lordship should be obvious in the way we live. Everything about us should smell of redemption.

These are four principles I've learned over the years. Applying principles to action is a subject for another week. If you have some thoughts to share on the subject and would be willing for me to share them in a follow-up article, I'd like to hear from you.