

# KNOW YOUR REACH

## Know Who Your Church is Reaching

It's Communication 101—the first thing every good communicator does is know their audience. Our best communication principles work because they are Biblical principles.

Biblical Principle: Know Your Audience

Great communicators adjust their message to fit the people in front of them. Not in a way that makes them inauthentic, pandering, or saying things just to get people to come to church – but shaping ministry for maximum impact in your local community.


*' ... I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. '*

1 Corinthians 9:22

The apostle Paul modeled this brilliantly. In Rome—the empire's capital of law and power—he used judicial and logical language, arguing like a lawyer and building his case step by step. Words like *law, sin, righteousness, justification, and grace* dominated, and he painted courtroom images of guilt and pardon before God.

*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.*

Romans 3:23-24

 That's legal language — transgression committed, penalty deserved, pardon granted. A message suited for a Roman.

But in Ephesus, a city known for its spirituality with multiple gods, fascination with the stars, and emotional — even sexual emphasis seen through the temple of *Artemis* — Paul chose relational and cosmic language. He wrote of *heavenly places, mystery, inheritance, and the body of Christ*. His tone was communal: Identity in Christ, unity in the body, growing to maturity. Over thirty times he repeats the phrase “*in Christ,*” anchoring them in their new spiritual position.

*He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.*

Ephesians 1:5-8

🌈 That’s transcendent, sensual language — resurrection, heavenly realms, cosmic union. Same message, but perfectly Ephesian.

Paul didn’t change the gospel, but he did change the framing—because he knew his audience.

Your audience is your community, and one of the quickest ways to get to know them is by pulling an ESRI report. It’s easy to get a clear picture of who lives around your church location, or evaluate a potential site. You’ll get demographics, age ranges, income levels, family structures, education, even lifestyle patterns. It’s not about chasing data for data’s sake; it’s about understanding the people you’re called to reach so you can meet them where they are. This kind of insight can shape your launch strategy, help you choose the right language, and keep you from making costly assumptions in your first critical years.

OK..now that we have this principle let’s get started:

## How to Get the Report

- 1) Visit the [ESRI site](#).
- 2) Select the 2020 Census Profile, and click “Define Location”
- 3) Select “Address or Lat/Long (Point Location) from the drop down.
- 4) Select “Address” from the drop down.
- 5) Enter the address of the location you want to report on.
- 6) Use the default rings of 1 mile, 3 miles, 5 miles.
- 7) Hit submit.
- 8) Create your account, and pay for your report
- 9) Find the email in your box, download your report and enjoy

## What to Look For

- We use the 1, 3 and 5 mile radius intentionally. Although people may attend your church from further than 5 miles, your biggest chance to impact the local community comes with those living close. Skip right on down to page 11, and look at the 5-mile radius first.

- Look for population trends, not just totals. Pay attention to whether your area is growing, shrinking, aging, or getting younger—it will affect not only how you launch and grow, but how to speak to the tone of the local community.
- Study age brackets closely. A church thrives on young families, and they need a different ministry focus than one dominated by retirees or singles. Pay attention to what's happening with age 35-50 to maximize the strength of your church, but also any other trends that stick out.
- Check household income and education levels. This helps you understand giving capacity, ministry opportunities, and what kind of language or resources will connect best.
- Note racial and ethnic diversity. This can shape your worship style, outreach events, and volunteer leadership.
- Dig into family structure data. High numbers of single-parent households, multi-generational homes, or married couples without kids can each point to unique ministry opportunities, and will impact the style of your communication.
- Look at occupied vs. vacant housing. High occupancy shows that people want to live in that area of town. It also shows a level of stability, and the potential for additional growth and development.
- Two files come with your report. One is the .pdf with all the data on it, the other is a map with your radius on it. Print that map, and put it somewhere you can see it. It will help you stay focused on your highest return areas.
- You might try and pull some reports for other areas maybe 20-30 minutes away. Compare your target area to the surrounding region. This helps you see what makes your community unique, and speak directly to that.
- Revisit it regularly. Communities change—check your data every year or two to stay in touch with the people you serve.

## [Sample Report](#)

Click the link above for a sample report. Here are a few insights we could glean from this report.

## 1) Invest Deep in Kids & Student Ministry

- In the 1-mile radius, 31% of the population is under 18.
- Even across the broader 5-mile area, 1 in 4 residents is under 18
- Ministry implication: Double down on children's and student ministry excellence. Parents are choosing churches primarily based on how their kids are engaged and disciplined. Consider sports leagues, after-school tutoring, VBS at scale, and strong volunteer pipelines.

## 2) Equip Parents and Strengthen Marriages

- 65% of households are married couples in the immediate area, and nearly 40% of those couples are raising kids.
- Average household size is larger than the national average (3.07 vs. 2.6).
- Ministry implication: Develop marriage mentorship, parenting courses, and family counseling support. An established church here can become the "go-to" hub for family health.

## 3) Busy Suburban Families = Streamlined Ministry

- Households are mostly dual-income, kids in school, sports, and activities. Families are time-starved.
- Ministry implication: Respect their schedules: tight, engaging services; online sign-ups; childcare systems that run smoothly; and clear, quick next steps. Eliminate friction everywhere.

## 4) Experience-Driven = Raise the Bar on Excellence

- These families spend on dining out, streaming, sports, and shared experiences. They're used to quality.
- Ministry implication: Match the cultural bar for excellence — not with flash, but with well-crafted worship, compelling kids environments, and clear communication. Poor execution here will cost credibility.

**Bonus tip:** ESRI features a host of other reports you can pull that include things like lifestyle, spending patterns, and psychographics. ChatGPT can also summarize those reports based on communities that are like yours (although you have to purchase the report to get the raw data specific to your address).