

Prayer forms basis for effective evangelism

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Revival begins when Christians allow God to work in their hearts, according to leaders of a new prayer-based evangelism model used throughout the state.



God must first move in the hearts of his followers before they can begin to reach out to those around them, said Greg Wallace, pastor of [Woodridge Baptist Church in Kingwood](#) and author of the new evangelism method. Christians must allow God to open their eyes to the spiritual needs around them.

God can do that through prayer, he said. Wallace's model, called the 4xfour challenge, encourages Christians to identify four non-Christian individuals or families in their sphere of influence, write their names on a card and pray for them four times a week. God will begin working in the lives of the Christians and non-Christians to bring both closer to Him.

"A congregation must see the lostness around them," Wallace said. "We try to do that by going back to Jesus' words and commands and with the statistics about their communities around them. It is about our hearts."

Christians should be able to identify non-believers near them—in their home, at work or where they spend time relaxing, said [Scott Willingham](#), church evangelism specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, who is facilitating the use of 4xfour across the state.

It can be as simple as a son or daughter, a co-worker or the person behind the register at a fast food restaurant, Willingham explained. Often, Christians already have a relationship with the people they are praying for, and God can use that relationship as a platform from which they can share the gospel.

Morgan Malone, pastor of [First Baptist Church in Bonham](#), said 4xfour presents a simple, specific, biblical way for people to approach evangelism. Through prayer, the way people view the world around them is reframed in spiritual terms. Christians begins to see themselves as missionaries responsible for the spiritual well-being of the people around them.

“We’re trying to make it simple where they can initiate the process,” he said.

As Christians pray specifically for the four people they identified, God will reveal opportunities for them to share their faith, Wallace said. The 4xfour model asks believers to invest in the lives of identified non-believers four times a year. That might mean inviting them over for dinner, going to a sporting event together or meeting a specific need they have.

Depending on the person’s spiritual condition and situation, the investment period may be extensive, Malone said. Organizers hope non-Christians will begin to see Christians live differently. They hope non-Christians begin to see Christians care about them and, by extension, God cares about them.

“We want to go from intercede to invite,” Malone said. “Invest may be where we need to be longest.”

4xfour is a question model of evangelism, Willingham said. Christ commands his followers to love others as they love themselves. People can express that love naturally based on their gifts, talents and sense of God's calling. That love will speak volumes to non-believers and cultivate relationships.

"We're waiting for them to ask questions," he said. "And here are the questions we want them to ask: Who are you people? And why are you doing this?"

With a relationship developed through investment, 4xfour calls Christians to invite the people they are praying for to four church-related events a year. Ideally, they would be events designed to welcome people in from the community such as Easter egg hunts, men's gatherings or Christmas pageants.

Research indicates invitations that grow out of existing relationships are more successful than invitations without relationships, Wallace noted. By identifying, praying and investing in a person, the groundwork is laid for a natural invitation to a spiritual event—whether a church outreach or opportunity to share the gospel.

Wallace said 4xfour has had a great impact on his church. About 70 percent of the congregation is involved in the effort, and the church's prayer ministry has greatly increased. Church members have become intentional about cultivating relationships with non-Christians. About half of the new Christians baptized at Woodridge Baptist Church come from non-church backgrounds.

[Monterrey Baptist Church in Lubbock](#) has seen similar results. Members are engaging non-Christians and investing their energy there. People are excited about sharing their faith.

"Everyone has friends, neighbors and acquaintances that are unchurched,"

Wallace said. "Identify them and write their names on your card. Intercede for them four times a week. Invest your life in them four times a year and then invite them to your church's four events especially organized with them in mind. Be ready to invite them to worship, small-group Bible studies and to receive Christ when they are to that point."