



NEIGHBORHOOD MAPPING

HOW TO MAKE YOUR
CHURCH INVALUABLE TO
THE COMMUNITY



DR. JOHN FUDER

Chapter 3

THE “WHY”



Q. *Why perform community analysis?*

A. *Because community analysis—knowing who the people are and their specific needs—is God’s heart.*

The prophet Jeremiah tells us to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you . . . and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.” An older version of the NASB says to seek the shalom, or peace, of the city. Why do we engage in community analysis? The simple answer is so that we may bring about peace, harmony, welfare, and fullness to those around us. Because that is what God calls us to do. He calls us to pray on our neighborhoods’ behalf. But not only to seek shalom for our neighbors, we also discover God’s heart through prayer.

Therefore, community analysis must begin with prayer. We must first get to know the community through God’s eyes. Sheryl Montgomery Wingerd, a missionary with South Asia Now, reminds us that in order to successfully reach our neighbors, God’s people



are to be “studying their city, taking responsibility to know its strengths and weaknesses, its needs and possibilities. . . . [We are to be] the ones walking the perimeter, standing on its corners, interacting with life on the streets, absorbing the atmosphere . . . making the effort on behalf of neighbors who cannot cry out for themselves.”¹ Rather than creating more programs and events that move us toward busyness or meeting our own needs, we wait on the Lord to give us a love for the community and its people.

WHEN WE SEEK THE
COMMUNITY’S WELFARE
AND THEY ENJOY PEACE
AND WELLNESS AND JOY,
THEN OUR REWARD IS
THAT WE DO TOO!

Going back to Acts 17, which we discussed earlier, we see that Paul’s spirit “was being provoked” (v. 16). Our spirits must be stirred to be truly engaged in our communities. Only then can God’s hand work through us.

But there’s another reason for engaging in community analysis. The second part of Jeremiah 29:7 tells us: “In its welfare you will have welfare.” In other words, when we seek the community’s welfare and they enjoy peace and wellness and joy, then our reward is that we do too!

A LOOK AT SCRIPTURE: ESTHER 4:13–17

Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, “Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.” So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

This passage points to the significance of an “Esther moment.” By that I mean, the opportunity to respond in an urgent and pertinent way to the needs of our community. In fact, this Scripture reminds us that we too have “come into the kingdom” for “such a time as this.” Esther models for us a pattern that spells out why we should respond to the needs of our day.

1. *Context:* The sovereignty of God had strategically placed Esther as a person of influence within her culture. This book states nine times that she had been given favor by God. Even though she was up against formidable odds, she understood the need to act on behalf of her people. Despite differing circumstances, God has placed us in a position to respond to the needs around us. We too have been given favor by God (such as access to resources and people of influence whom we can recruit to join us in the work). It is up to us to act accordingly.

2. *Compassion:* Earlier in chapter 4 Esther heard the news about Haman’s despicable plot to “destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews” (3:13). It was not enough just to put them to death, but the intent was to utterly wipe them out. Her response was deeply convicting; she “writhed in great anguish” (4:4), so much so that she could not endure the horrors that were about to befall her people (8:6). Esther responded with God’s heart of compassion for her people. Have we reached this same point of desperation around the plight of our communities? Until we do, is it any wonder that we do not see deep change in our neighborhoods? God, give us tears and move us to action.

3. *Consecration:* Before Esther jumped into action, she paused to fast for several days. She dedicated her life to be used for God’s purposes. As we anticipate serving in our communities, before we rush headlong into the needs, we must ensure that our hearts and minds are at God’s disposal.

4. *Courage:* Esther counted the cost and was willing to give her life for the sake of her people. Her words to Mordecai were, “If I perish, I

perish.” There is risk in engaging broken places: sacrificing time with family, being misunderstood by friends, safety concerns . . . and we will need courage like Esther had to remain faithful to our calling.

5. *Commitment*: Esther could not remain silent in the broken state of her people (7:4). She responded by speaking on their behalf to the king, risking her own reputation by doing so. Her commitment to act was rewarded by the king sparing her people, and the fear of God was instilled into the community (9:1–4). Actions lead to results. Imagine what God can do in your community through your commitment and dedication.

SO WHAT?

Read and meditate on Psalm 122:6–8.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May they prosper who love you.

May peace be within your walls,

And prosperity within your palaces.”

For the sake of my brothers and my friends,

I will now say, “May peace be within you.”

This psalm contains a “Prayer for the Community,” drawn from Robert Linthicum’s *City of God, City of Satan*.² It’s a model of how to pray for the neighborhood broken into five parts.

1. *Spiritual vitality* (v. 6a). The first thing we ask God for is our community to abound in spiritual vitality: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” Or “Pray for the peace of Uptown,” or “Pray for the peace of Lakeview.” We pray for God to give our neighborhood peace, shalom.

2. *Economic health* (v. 6b). Next we ask God to allow the area to thrive through economic health: “May they prosper who love you.” When an area prospers, it receives resources it otherwise cannot receive. That in turn allows the area to better flourish.

3. *Physical safety* (v. 7a). There are a lot of neighborhoods where physical safety is a luxury. Every day we can tune into the news and hear or read about another shooting, robbery, mugging, or some other violence that is happening. Even the best neighborhoods can have violence. So we ask God to provide physical safety to our neighbors: "May peace be within your walls."

4. *Political justice* (v. 7b). Our communities need justice. They desperately need fair opportunities. And so we pray for God to bring "prosperity within your palaces."

5. *Social relationships* (v. 8). Throughout the prayer we've asked God to provide peace and prosperity to "the land," so to speak. This final request is to ask God to bring peace to each person in the community: "For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, 'May peace be within you.'" This is where God softens the hearts of our neighbors and allows them to be open to the gospel.

Haddon Anderson, a youth pastor and former student of mine, recently told me about a man his church had ministered to by helping him find employment. The man was so excited to have work. Haddon said, "He's now been employed for two months and when I saw him the other day, he told me how happy he was that he gets to do something meaningful and support his family." The church became relevant in that man's—and family's—life. Deep in the human heart, there is the desire to be able to maintain and provide, and the church offered that opportunity to Haddon's new friend. This is just one story of thousands that when we hear them, we are able to connect God's story, and in the process of that, you can connect your own story. It all weaves together.

APPLICATION

One of the best ways to discover why community analysis is important is to first observe the area (as Paul did in Acts 17), and then pray over the area. Before we survey or interview or do any other work,

we pray. And what better way to pray and get to observe a community than to initiate prayer-walking. Prayer-walking is simply praying as we walk, but focused on a specific locale. It is praying on-site, with insight. It's an unobtrusive, effective way to place ourselves before God and intercede for people and places. In a physical sense, we draw nearer to pray clearer.

An example of a type of prayer-walking is what the Israelites did around Jericho.

Now Jericho was tightly shut . . . [But] the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king *and* the valiant warriors. You shall march around the city . . . When you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat." (Josh. 6:1–5)

As the walls of Jericho crumbled and collapsed because the Israelites honored God, so too we believe that spiritual walls in our neighborhoods can begin to come down as a result of the concentrated prayers of God's people. As we walk and pray over our communities, we get a sense of the personal helplessness of those around us, we see how the place itself impacts the people, and our faith is stretched. Cofounder of the Salvation Army, Catherine Booth, once said, "Oh that we could weep the gospel into people." Prayer-walking helps build our understanding, grows our spiritual authority, and drives us to the compassion that brings about weeping the gospel into people.

I have found it helpful to base our prayer-walking efforts on a strong biblical theology, following in the footsteps, so to speak, of countless other believers who have cried out to God for their communities as well. God has tugged on my own heart, and so many others, as we have prayer-walked our way through numerous neighborhoods of Chicago the past two decades. It is my sincere desire that the following practical steps on where and how to pray-walk will encourage you in your prayer-walking endeavors as it has for me.

STEPS TO PRAYER-WALKING

1. *Identify the neighborhood.* Purchase a map of your city or neighborhood. Then identify streets, neighborhoods, and key areas central to its spiritual and social well-being, including significant people living and working in your community. I had the privilege of completing the Chicago Neighborhood Prayer Guide in partnership with several other ministries and churches in order to mobilize people to pray for all seventy-seven neighborhoods in Chicago. Our goal was to recognize key social and spiritual prayer concerns and unique characters of each of these communities, which churches and ministries could then use as a model for other cities to use as well.³

2. *Invite others to join you.* Research which people and organizations you want to invite to come along and those you want to visit on your prayer-walk. Both are important. A great way to build unity among believers is to get other like-minded Christians in the area to pray as well. This isn't about building up a specific church; this is about reaching people for the kingdom and about glorifying God's name. So share this opportunity with neighboring partner churches and make announcements leading up to the prayer-walk.

On the walk you'll also want to stop by specific places to pray for them. For instance, I was recently part of my church's prayer-walking group, which covered a Chicago neighborhood that used to be identified with the Cabrini Green housing projects. We walked the streets and prayed, but we also went into apartment complexes and prayed in the halls.

3. *Map out your route and set a date for the prayer-walk.* Be clear about the perimeters of your walk and share that with all who will join you. Make copies of the neighborhood map so that everyone knows where to go.

4. *Prep your neighbors.* Let area schools, homes, businesses know you're planning to pray for them and when. That way they know what you're doing, see you taking an active interest in the community, and

it will provide opportunities for them to approach you for prayer or with questions.

5. *Put people into teams.* You don't want an oversized group walking the streets. Send your people out in pairs or trios, so that the entire neighborhood is covered all at once.

6. *Set a time frame.* This doesn't need to be an all-day event. Limit it to one to two hours. Also, encourage the teams to rotate and change routes throughout the time frame.

7. *Be discreet.* It's important to avoid pretense or showiness. You're quietly in the neighborhood, yet walking through the streets, taking them for God.

8. *Pray as specifically as you can.* Pray for spiritual breakthroughs, souls, families, peace, safety, vocational, and education needs, as well as any other needs you know of.

9. *Pause at strategic places.* Be silent and wait on God to speak. Listen to the activities around you. Listen for the Holy Spirit's voice.

10. *Offer praise as well as prayer.* Sing songs of praise as you move through the neighborhood. You might sing "God of This City," or "Amazing Grace." Something that keeps you focused on how great our God is and what He desires to do in this community—through you.

Remember that the book of James tells us that "the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (5:16). Never underestimate the power of prayer-walking. As you continue to cover your neighborhood with prayer, you may decide to creatively switch it up. On the far South Side of Chicago in the Roseland neighborhood, Pastor James Meeks and his congregation at Salem Baptist Church recently set up prayer corners where they have unleashed hundreds of their congregants to engage the broader community in prayer and gospel conversation. They have seen hundreds of people come to Jesus as a result of their obedience.

If you still need a bit more convincing on why community analysis is so important, let the words of this modern hymn settle into your soul:

Our cities cry to You, O God, from out of their pain and strife; You made us for Yourself alone, but we choose alien life. Our goals are pleasure, gold, and power; injustice stalks our earth; in vain we seek for rest, for joy, for sense of human worth.

Yet still You walk our street, O Christ! We know Your presence here where humble Christians love and serve in godly grace and fear. O Word made flesh, be seen in us! May all we say and do affirm You God, Incarnate still, and turn sad hearts to You!

Your people are Your hands and feet to serve Your world today, our lives the book our cities read to help them find Your way. O pour Your sovereign Spirit out on heart and will and brain; inspire Your Church with love and power to ease our cities' pain!

O Healing Savior, Prince of Peace, salvation's Source and Sum, for You our broken cities cry—O come, Lord Jesus, Come! With truth, Your royal diadem, with righteousness Your rod, O Come, Lord Jesus, bring to earth the City of our God! Amen.⁴

CASE STUDY: PARTNERING WITH A LOCAL SCHOOL

I had the pleasure of meeting Doc Fuder at Moody's Pastors' Conference in 2005. Our new church was only three weeks old and I was excited to learn all I could about urban ministry. I was the first one in the classroom that Tuesday morning. I arrived early to get a good seat. When Doc began to teach us hungry men about God's heart for the poor and marginalized, I felt my own heart begin to weep as well. As he continued to teach us, he shared how important community analysis is for our churches. This was the first concept of community analysis I'd ever heard. I left that conference and took my new knowledge back home with me. Since then, our church has adopted this methodology of outreach and evangelism, and we've touched our community in many special ways.

The first thing we did was to pray for God to break our hearts for the community. He did. We then began to pay close attention to the needs and happenings in the various areas. Rock Island is very diverse and composed of several neighborhoods that are divided by names. We began to walk those areas and pray over them. As we walked, we cleaned up garbage and litter on those streets. God quickly opened the doors of ministry as we watched and learned.

Early one chilly morning in 2008, I received a phone call from the police department. Our church, which is across from a middle school, had been vandalized by one of the students. Our youth director and I responded immediately. The police and the principal asked if we wanted to press charges and have the boy arrested. We declined and were able to minister to this boy and his broken family. We then began to sponsor a program at the school that awards students who improve their behavior, grades, and attendance every quarter. Since then, our youth director and his family also moved into the neighborhood. He now helps coach the junior football teams.

We have also recently opened a community center next door to the church. And we will soon provide preschool screenings, medical exams, legal advice, and financial guidance as well as English lessons

for our growing African population.

Thank you, Doc Fuder, for pouring so much of your God-given passion into all of us. Community analysis has completely changed the way we do ministry.

TOM SCHILLINGER

Pastor, Mighty Fortress Community Church

Rock Island, Illinois

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

MOODY PUBLISHERS 

AMAZON 

APPLE BOOKS 

GOOGLE PLAY 

WALMART 

BARNES & NOBLE 

CHRISTIANBOOK.COM 