



Tips for discerning your area of focus and engaging your community



Understanding the focus neighborhood God is calling you to minister in, is one of the most important parts of a missional life. Whether you have a focus neighborhood or are in the process of discerning your area of focus, it is helpful to analyze the communities you are considering engaging.

Exegesis of scripture is the analysis and interpretation of the text. When we exegete a scripture passage, we consider the text in terms of original language, the culture, and historical context of the people being addressed. In other words, we cannot rightly understand a passage without considering the original audience. When we map our neighborhoods, we cannot exegete or rightly understand the context of our geographical location without considering the “audience”—our neighbors. Mapping your neighborhood involves considering the ethnicities, religions, life stages, and worldviews of the people in your focus neighborhood. When we map our neighborhoods, we apply and live out what we learn in Scripture in ways that will engage our focus neighborhood.



GOALS OF MAPPING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:



- Discern what God is doing.
- Learn about the characteristics of your neighborhood and your neighbors.
- Learn the rhythms of your neighbors.
- Discover the assets and needs of your community.
- Identify your target audience.

TIPS FOR MAPPING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:



- Gather a small group of the missional-minded folks in your congregation to pray and perform the mapping.
- Regularly teach on joining Christ on mission to prepare the congregation to discern and act.
- Ask members who live in the neighborhood about their existing connections and see if they can be built upon.



BEST PRACTICES FOR MAPPING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:



- **Pray and gather information:**

- » bestplaces.net - a great resources for gathering data like race/ethnicity, median age, income, religious affiliation, etc. by zip code.



- **Inquire and investigate:**

- » **Persons of Peace** – a person who is established in the neighborhood and is open to facilitating connections. They can often be found in:
 - Non-profit organizations
 - Community centers
 - Community police departments
 - Housing associations
 - Local businesses
 - Schools



- **Participate and collaborate:**

- » **Volunteer Opportunities** – build relationships and invest in your neighborhood through volunteering. Potential opportunities include:
 - Become a coach or tutor
 - Serve on a local board
 - Join ministerial groups
 - Volunteer at a non-profit
 - Attend town/city council meetings
 - Participate in another church's missional event



- **Continually listen and discern:**

- » **Consider these discernment questions:**
 - What do we see God doing in our neighborhood?
 - Who are our neighbors? What is their story?
 - Are we the kind of church our target audience would want to join?
 - Are we falling in love with our neighbors and neighborhood?

For more information on Mapping your Neighborhood check out, *Neighborhood Mapping: How to Make Your Church Invaluable to the Community*, by John Fuder, Ray Bakke, and Bob Lupton