

SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER STUDY GUIDE

NEIGHBORHOOD MAPPING

HOW TO MAKE YOUR
CHURCH INVALUABLE TO
THE COMMUNITY



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Introduction

Welcome to the **Sunday School Leader Study Guide** for *Neighborhood Mapping*.

In *Neighborhood Mapping* Dr. John “Doc” Fuder shows clearly how every Christ-follower and every church have opportunities to make a profound kingdom impact in a community. “Neighbor love” is an important part of following Jesus and we must consistently find ways to know our neighbors in order to love and serve them well. To do this, we incorporate community analysis, a biblically-based, applied diagnosis process that helps churches and ministries understand the unmet needs and untapped resources of a neighborhood to then implement data-driven, practical initiatives to transform that neighborhood. As we take advantage of community analysis, as well as the divine appointments God arranges between us and our neighbors in need, we build relationships, develop hearts of compassion, effectively share the gospel in fresh and unique ways, and transform ourselves, our neighborhoods, and our churches.

Neighborhood Mapping dives deep into the who, what, where, when, why, and how of community analysis in order for churches to become relevant and invaluable in their neighborhoods. Therefore, we recommend that you have access to a copy of the book as you work through the study guide. If one is not easily available locally, you can order it online from www.shopmoodypublishers.com.

This guide is designed for use in a small group. You may read *Neighborhood Mapping* a section at a time, dedicating an entire meeting to each section of the book. You may meet once to discuss the book in its entirety. To enable flexibility, the study guide is designed to be used however suits your group best. Regardless, we recommend you read the section(s) of the book that correspond(s) to each study session before you work through the questions and action points.

Tips for Using This Guide

- 1.** We recommend that you journal your responses to the questions you choose to reflect on in this guide.
- 2.** The questions are designed for open-ended responses. It's far more important that you think about the content of the book and study guide than that you arrive at "the right answer."
- 3.** Feel free to focus on the questions you find most challenging or compelling and skip others that feel less relevant to you.
- 4.** At any point in the study, visit www.docfuder.com or www.moodyurban.com for additional information or resources

Every session has three components:

- 1. Scripture—**Each study session is based in Scripture. Sometimes this is one of more of the Scriptures used in the corresponding chapter of *Neighborhood Mapping*.
- 2. Questions for Reflection—**This section helps you think through why and/or how to apply the theme of a section into your everyday life.
- 3. Take Action—**Every session ends with suggestions for action.

SECTION I: How Relevant is Your Church

"In a world that is constantly moving and changing, it is imperative that the church not only know how to interpret the Bible, but also how to engage with and adapt to those for whom the gospel message is addressed. When we exegete a community, we draw meaning from it. We discover the underlying history, context, and culture of that place and its people."

(Neighborhood Mapping, 13)

Ice breaker: Invite members of the group to share stories about a time when the church was a vital and relevant part of their lives. What did the church do and why was that so important? What impact did it make?

One way for the church to make a difference in the lives of its neighbors is to become increasingly aware of their hopes, dreams, and needs. Only then can Christ-followers fully share and live out the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 107:6-8

"They cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses. He led them also by a straight way, to go to an inhabited city. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men."

Neighborhoods are changing as people are constantly moving in and out of our communities. Throughout *Neighborhood Mapping*, Doc Fuder reminds us that the Lord is bringing people from every culture, religion, ethnicity, and nation into our cities.

REFLECT

- 1.** What is the importance of God bringing the different nations into our cities? If that is true, how does that affect the way you relate to your neighbors? Does that change the way you live the gospel in your community?
- 2.** Think about the people you encounter regularly in your neighborhood. What kinds of needs do you see that you may not have considered before?
- 3.** What keeps you from engaging more fully with your neighbors?

TAKE ACTION

Fuder writes that more fully discovering your neighbors and their needs is through a four-step process, or what he calls the 4Ss: *supplication, stakeholders, surveys, and stories* (15). Here are a few ways to get started as you pursue getting to know your neighbors and becoming an invaluable, relevant part of their lives for the sake of the kingdom.

- 1.** Make a commitment to pray for your community. Ask God to open your eyes to the needs surrounding you and to make you distinctly aware of his direction and leading.
- 2.** Notice the people around you. Make an effort to smile at your neighbors. Say hello. Develop a habit of seeing those who are different from you.
- 3.** Make a list of the neighbors you become aware of and commit to pray for them this week.



SECTION 2: THE “WHAT”

“One of the greatest gifts we can give is a proper diagnosis [regarding the needs of a community]. It may be, along with giving a Bible, that we also give a job to someone who needs work. That is the good news! Good news is more than a message; it’s a lifestyle. When we properly diagnose the needs, we are on our way to earning the right to speak the gospel into our neighbors’ lives.”

(Neighborhood Mapping, 29)

Ice breaker: Ask members of the group to share stories about a time when rushed in to fix a problem without spending time to fully diagnose the problem. They can be funny or more serious stories. Have them share the outcomes and what they learned from the experience.

Too often we believe we know a community’s needs and so we rush in to offer help—but sometimes that help can be a misdiagnosis and can become a barrier to real life-change for our neighbors. But when we spend the time in diligent work as humble learners, we better understand the community and can present the gospel in ways that best reach it.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 17:22-23

“Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”

In these verses we see how the apostle Paul exegeted, or read, his audience. He observed and took time to reflect on their needs and God’s solution. Before offering a diagnosis to their issues, he worked to understand their lifestyle and tried to find relatable things that they had in common, which opened

the door to sharing the gospel. Read these verses in context (Acts 17:16–31). Then reflect on the following questions.

REFLECT

- 1.** What does it mean to you to have your spirit provoked (Acts 17:16)?
- 2.** As Paul engaged his listeners, in what ways did he affirm them? Are there ways you can affirm your neighbors in order to open relational doors into their lives?
- 3.** Think about a time when you rushed in to “fix” an issue without taking the time to truly observe and process the needs first. How did that situation turn out? What would you have done differently?
- 4.** In what ways can you begin to observe your community to make a great impact on it?

TAKE ACTION

- 1.** Walk through your neighborhood and pay close attention—observe—its needs and possible issues.
- 2.** Ask God’s Spirit to break your heart for the people in your neighborhood.
- 3.** Commit to take a closer look, a deeper investigation, into what happens in your community.
- 4.** Make a list of what you observe—people or places in distress, for instance—and commit to pray for them this week, asking God to give you an open door to become the solution.



SECTION 3: THE “WHY”

“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 do seek shalom for our neighbors, we also discover God’s heart through prayer.” (Neighborhood Mapping, 35)

Ice breaker: Have each member write about a time when another person did something really kind for or to them. Collect the papers, shuffle them, and the group leader can read each aloud. Group members will try to guess which person’s experience is being read.

God has strategically placed you in your neighborhood in order to respond to the needs of your neighbors, to bring them peace, joy, and God’s love. But first you must be able to see them through God’s eyes—and that comes, first and most importantly, through prayer, asking for God’s compassion and leading.

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 29:7

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”

The first thing we ask God for is our community to abound in spiritual vitality: We pray for God to give our neighborhood peace, shalom. We ask God to bring peace to each person in the community, because this is where God softens our neighbors’ hearts and allows them to be open to the gospel. And finally when we seek the community’s welfare, the benefit or reward is that we also enjoy peace, wellness, spiritual vitality, and joy.

REFLECT

- 1.** What does it mean to seek someone's welfare or peace? Think about your neighborhood. In what ways does it need spiritual vitality and peace?
- 2.** Do you believe that God has strategically placed you in your neighborhood? Why or why not? In what ways could you be there for "such a time as this"?
- 3.** Have you asked God to break your heart and make you feel deeply the pains and longings of your neighbors? If you have, in what ways has your perspective changed? If you haven't, what is stopping you?

TAKE ACTION

- 1.** Read the book of Esther and consider the ways God may be calling you to act on your community's behalf.
- 2.** Commit to pray for the peace and welfare of your neighborhood.
- 3.** Take a prayer-walk. Invite other Christ-followers to join you. Doc Fuder lays out practical steps to prayer-walking (41-42). Read those and put them to practice.
- 4.** Journal the ways you begin to see God's peace take hold in the neighborhood.



SECTION 4: THE “WHO”

“Becoming an insider involves a willingness to be a learner, to be instructed and informed by knowledgeable individuals who can swing open the doors to a particular subculture. It requires consistent, visible presence in a community of need. In major cities, the needs of those on the street vary minimally yet persist consistently. We are in short supply of consecrated, compassionate men and women who are willing to become insiders in order to penetrate such cultures and people groups in our communities.”

(Neighborhood Mapping, 49)

Ice breaker: Have each person in the group identify a neighbor (friend, teacher, coach, etc.) who taught them an important life lesson about compassion or humility through their example.

As you participate in God’s plan for your community, you become more and more aware of the deep pain and needs there, which can feel overwhelming. Fuder writes to this end: “Only those who truly have a heart of compassion are able to effectively engage in community analysis—and this is a lifelong commitment. We don’t just arrive at compassion; we grow it over time and experiences. In many respects as God begins to work with us, we will begin to feel overwhelmed and vulnerable—and that’s a good thing!”

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:5-8

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

These verses show us the model God calls us to follow within our communities. He wants us to go from pride to humility, from harmony to dysfunction (to be willing to enter the messiness and chaos of others' lives), from a privileged, resourced life to understanding the reality of poverty and under-resourced circumstances for many in our community, and from power to powerlessness.

REFLECT

- 1.** Consider the Philippians passage. What do the four circumstantial changes mean to you: pride to humility, harmony to dysfunction, privilege to poverty, and power to powerlessness? In what ways did Christ take those on? In what ways can you follow his model?
- 2.** How have you felt overwhelmed by the needs of your community? What is keeping you from leaning more on God's strength as you join His work there?
- 3.** Are there other people in the community you can partner with as you strive to meet needs there? How could you connect with at least one of those people this week?
- 4.** In what ways do you feel called to make a difference in your neighborhood? Who do you think God is calling you to be in the midst of His leading you there?

TAKE ACTION

In this section in *Neighborhood Mapping*, Fuder asks you to consider a list of important questions (57). Let your answers to those questions guide you in taking first steps toward changing your perspective, growing your compassion, and seeking peace in your neighborhood.

1. It's important to remember you don't have to start from scratch in your ministry. God is already at work in the community and has been paving the way for you. Look at others in the neighborhood—neighbors, churches, businesses. Then take time to visit them and see if there are ways to partner with them.
2. Work through the Compassion Continuum (55) of *Neighborhood Mapping*. Journal where you are on that continuum and honestly describe what needs to happen in order to move to the next phase.
3. List the places where you have the opportunity to practice Philippians 2:5—8 in your relationships.



SECTION 5: THE “WHERE”

“When it comes to place, community analysis is best achieved by those who have made the long-term commitment to stay where they have been called. Many neighborhood residents have seen churches and ministries come and go, unwilling to invest in their communities. Yet it is important to understand that it takes years to show that we are committed to the welfare of the community.” (Neighborhood Mapping, 61-62)

Ice breaker: Invite members of the group to talk about the neighborhood in which they grew up. What was it like? How did it influence them as children, and in what ways does it continue to affect them today?

Our lives are deeply impacted by the places we live. It’s important not to neglect the physical neighborhood. God uses people and places for His kingdom and to make His name famous.

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 29:4-7

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’”

When the Israelites were forced from their land, God encouraged them to thrive where they were sent. Rather than flee when the neighborhood starts to change, God may be calling you to stay put, thrive, and be the light and salt to the people living and moving there.

REFLECT

- 1.** Have you been tempted to leave your community? Why? Is it possible that God wants you to stay put and thrive there to fulfill His plans for the community—and for you?
- 2.** How do you think the people of the community view Christianity? Are there things they may resent that have been done in the name of Christianity? In what ways could God use you to bless the neighborhood?
- 3.** Has there been a time when God used you as an answer to your own prayer? What happened? How did it feel for God to use you in that manner? Would you be open to being part of the answer in your neighborhood? Why or why not?

TAKE ACTION

- 1.** In this section of *Neighborhood Mapping*, Fuder takes a deeper look at Nehemiah's life and how he impacted the city of Jerusalem by rebuilding the wall. Read the book of Nehemiah and consider Fuder's points. Think about ways you can apply them in your community.
- 2.** Commit to know your community thoroughly, with the knowledge that you have been called to that place. Research the history and the demographic makeup of the people.
- 3.** Walk the neighborhood looking specifically at the place. Notice the larger picture of the community and consider how the place itself affects its residents.

- 4.** Meet with long-time residents or others who know the neighborhood well. Ask them how they view the place and what they think the five greatest areas of felt need are.
- 5.** Determine to follow the application Fuder lays out on pages 71-72. Discuss what you discover with others who are also committed to seeing God made famous in your neighborhood.



SECTION 6: THE “WHEN”

“When should we be engaged in community analysis? If you’re like me, oftentimes I want to run in and try to fix something before I’ve taken the time to truly understand it. Let’s fix it! Let’s program it! Let’s plant it! But in our enthusiasm we can miss an important part of the process.”

(Neighborhood Mapping, 75)

Ice breaker: Set a stop watch for one minute. Have members of the group try to link fifty paper clips together within that time frame. When they are unable to get them all connected, ask the members what that felt like to try to complete a task in too short a span of time. Then have them share any stories of times when they were given a task to perform without properly being able to prepare for it. Was the task successful?

Getting the “when” right is an important part of community analysis. Fuder recommends that before attempting to move forward in our community analysis efforts, first we need to make sure that our attitudes are in the right place. He lists those attitudes, or postures, as being gospel-centered, holistic, others-focused, and dignifying. These are important because they dictate how well you will do ministry. As he writes, “Our doing flows from our being.”

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:35

“In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.”

Jesus offered a blueprint for how and when we do ministry: He got away from the hustle and bustle in order to quiet Himself before God. Fuder writes that this allowed Jesus to listen to “God’s marching orders for Him” (76). Then the following verses show Jesus at work among the communities. But only after He spent time asking God what He wanted for the people.

REFLECT

- 1.** Look at the postures Fuder suggests you have (see the list above). Do you believe he is correct that you can only successfully do ministry with those postures? Why or why not? Which ones do you struggle most with?
- 2.** What would it look like in your daily life and ministry to affirm the dignity of people, motivate them, and help them take responsibility for their own lives? Why do you think it's important to practice those actions?
- 3.** One of the greatest things Jesus modeled was empathy and compassion. Is that how your community sees you? In what ways can you bring credibility and authenticity to your relationships—so that you aren't just proclaiming the gospel, but living it?

TAKE ACTION

- 1.** Think again about the postures that God is calling you to have. Pray for God to move your heart and mind to clearly align them with His.
- 2.** Answer the application questions that Fuder presents in this section (80-81). Journal your answers.



SECTION 7: THE "HOW"

"We don't go out into a community believing that just because we've gotten to see the needs, the people will automatically accept us and allow us into the intimate place of their needs and problems. We still have to plan, to strategize. It may feel overwhelming, yet we can work, knowing God is on our side."

(Neighborhood Mapping, 91)

Ice breaker: Break the group into teams of two. Set a stop watch for four minutes. The first person in the team has two minutes to interview the other member of their team and get as much information as they can. At the end of the two minutes, the group leader says, "Switch," and the second person has the remaining two minutes to conduct an interview. When the four minutes are up, each person "introduces" the other member to the entire group by sharing as much information as they can remember.

After seeking God's direction, aligning our hearts with His, and making relationships with culture-brokers within the neighborhood, it's time to put community analysis into action. You go purposefully into the community with a humble spirit and a willingness to listen and learn, and you begin to discover the needs there.

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 13:17-20

"When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, . . . 'See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are they like open camps or with fortifications? How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.'"

These verses come after Moses chose twelve spies to go into the Promised Land. He told the spies to exegesis what they found there. The Israelites didn't just take the land; they learned about it first. Read these verses in their context (Numbers 13:1—14:21). Then reflect on the following questions.

REFLECT

- 1.** Have you spent adequate time praying and seeking God's direction regarding your community? Do you have a plan about next steps? What do those look like?
- 2.** Of the twelve spies that reported their findings to Moses, only two returned with favorable findings. Fuder writes that they "chose to see beyond the problems to the potential.... They chose to gaze at God and glance at the circumstances" (91). In what areas do you still struggle to see the potential instead of focusing on the problems?
- 3.** If your church closed its doors tomorrow, would your neighbors even notice? If they did notice, would they care? Or would they say, "Good riddance?" Why would they respond that way?

TAKE ACTION

- 1.** Each day cover with prayer your interactions and relationships, asking God to provoke your spirit and lead you to a holistic view of sharing the gospel with others.
- 2.** When you interact with your neighbors, take the position of a humble student, willing to learn what they can teach. Be open to hearing God's Spirit as He leads you into conversations with others.

- 3.** Follow Fuder's guidelines on how to exegete a community. Then based on your findings, brainstorm and report the ministry potential to those with whom you are partnering in this ministry.
- 4.** Make a concerted effort to see God's fingerprints in your community and praise and thank Him for the work He's already started and will continue to do through you.