

RESTORING SHALOM

Project Assignment
Insert Thyself!
Civic Involvement & Social Networks

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The Challenge: To weave oneself into the fabric of the city

Part 1 - Developing Social Networks

Introduction: When we look at *The Rise of Christianity* it is clear that the early church grew because of social networks, but Rodney Stark says that what won the day was the doctrine of love, and that love was expressed to the wider world through communities of believers.

Open social networks that consistently and provocatively brush up against Christ-like loving communities give the greatest opportunities to both engage culture and reach people.

Purpose: To begin to understand your city in light of the social networks of which it is made up.

Objective: You have a three-fold objective. 1. To begin to identify social networks and to assess which one you are already in and which one might be accessible to you. 2. To assess how you might gain access to various networks. 3. To assess how people in your networks might come in contact with a redemptive community.

Instructions: Answer the following questions.

1. Which networks are you already in?
2. Which have the most influence for the sake of the city?
3. Which networks overlap with networks you are already in?
4. In what ways might other networks be accessible to you?
5. What value do you bring to your networks?
6. How active are you in your networks? How might you increase your activity?
7. How might you be a conduit between the people in your networks and a redemptive community?
8. Write out 2 - 3 steps that you want to take to become more involved in your city through social networks.

Part 2 - Become Civically Involved

Purpose: If we want to influence our communities and their inhabitants we need to have genuine contact points with the people of the community. Civic involvement lets us live and interact in real ways with the people we want to reach and the culture we want to shape.

There is more reason to be involved in our cities than meeting people with whom we can share our faith. Our involvement in our communities opens doors for service and acts of love.

Objective: To be active in our communities through on-going involvement and participation in one club or service organization

Instructions: Within the next month identify and join at least one club or service organization in your community.

What constitutes Civic Involvement?

- What constitutes Civic Involvement? How do I know I am "civically involved?"

Civic Involvement simply means involvement in your community beyond the boundaries of the church.

- But maybe we are already "civically involved" and we don't have to do anything more?

Many people are already involved civically, but for many others this is a new concept.

- Does it have to meet a need in the community? Can it just be for our personal enjoyment or enrichment?

Civic involvement can be worked out in many different ways including both meeting community needs and personal enjoyment/enrichment.

The reason there is a strong emphasis on meeting needs in the community is that our bent for mercy and justice can often overlap with a need to be involved in our community. Clubs such as Toast Masters are great ways to be involved but don't have a service bent. Both kinds of involvement are valid.

Social Networks and Civic Involvement

Developing Personal Networks-

- Consider the idea of networks as presented in *Restoring Shalom*. What relevance does this have for work and ministry in our cities?
- One of the major objectives for the learner is to build out their networks. Begin to make a plan. Remember that all networks will expand a person's social surface. Consider the following questions.
 - Am I a natural networker? Rate yourselves on a 5-pt scale.
 - What networks naturally overlap with the strategy I am working with?
 - What networks might I gain access to through my personal interests?
 - What is the most important thing to do in the next two weeks, next two months to begin building my social networks?