



“Developing a Neighborhood Ministry- The Church’s New Frontier”

COMMENCE PHASE THREE >>

WHAT'S NEXT? > >

Neighborhood Ministry in Our Adopted block

During Phase Two the Lord made it clear where we were going next. In fact, we started Phase Three while we were carrying out Phase Two. If Mission: Reseda was going to continue, it needed to be handed over to church members to carry out in their own neighborhoods. At the time we only had one couple from our church, Neftali and Deborah Santiago, living in our adopted block. As the goal of Phase Three was to adopt neighborhoods within our adopted block, then what were we to do if we only had one couple? Well, another couple in our church, Jeff and Nadine Erickson, decided to move near our adopted block. They had been missionaries to Oaxaca and felt if they could travel all the way to southern Mexico to serve the Lord they could certainly travel a shorter distance to minister here in Reseda. Their move was strategic and has profoundly impacted people living in what we call "Neighborhood Five."

Neighborhood Four

Neftali and Deborah began ministry in Neighborhood Four where they reside and where God has used them in incredible ways. Nef, as we call him, and Deborah first set geographic boundaries within their adopted neighborhood, targeting 50% of Neighborhood Four. They wanted to be realistic as they began to build a relationship with those in their neighborhood. Deborah regularly walked her two Rottweilers, but now with a new perspective. She began praying for each neighbor as she walked by their home and asked the Lord to open lines of communication. Deborah is a very relational person and bonds began to form as she chatted with neighbors on her walks.

Nef didn't know anyone in his neighborhood prior to this. In fact, as a man of African and Hispanic descent, he felt there might have been some prejudice. However, all of that has changed and various neighbors would now like to elect him as mayor of the neighborhood. Nef once said, "I used to go to our mail box with my shirt off, but I don't feel comfortable doing that anymore." God not only transforms our neighbors but uses them to impact our lives as well. I remember one Sunday, for instance, when Nef spent all afternoon and into the

evening talking to and caring for his neighbors, looking for ways in which to help them.

As Nef and Deborah were reaching out to their neighbors, our Phase Two Door-to-Door teams were following up with people in Neighborhood Four. Neighbors were being informed that our Acts of Kindness teams would soon be by to assist them in their requests. The neighborhood was a sight to behold as God's kindness spread throughout.

After our Acts of Kindness team trimmed two large mulberry trees hanging over the home of a new neighbor, the man said, "They never treated me this way in Van Nuys." (Van Nuys is a nearby city.) This man went on to say that he couldn't afford to have the trees trimmed because all his savings went into buying a home in this neighborhood. He and his wife were incredibly grateful. Later, the wife told me that she'd shared the story at her job in a family-run business and everyone was surprised by this act of kindness.

Trees were trimmed throughout the neighborhood, large discarded items were hauled away, cars were washed for free, and a fence was built. Meanwhile, Nef had an idea to clean the inside of a neighbor's home while she was on vacation and we assisted him. Upon her return, the neighbor was very thankful.

At this time, there was a mother-daughter team who lived next door to each other in the neighborhood. The mother, Julia, and Deborah shared a passion for dogs and became good friends. The daughter, Carmen, was the neighbor for whom we built the fence. When Julia passed away, Deborah asked me to call Carmen who was looking for a pastor to perform the service. I met with Carmen a few days before the service and we connected as she talked to me about her mother. The service was very moving and the chapel was packed. Deborah spoke of her friendship with Julia and Nef put together a wonderful video tribute. At the graveside, I presented a clear message of the resurrection to the many gathered who were not believers. After the service, one of the family members came up to me and said, "You have really helped us today."

God has provided many open doors as we reach out to our neighbors. For example, an Ad Hoc River Committee decided to start revitalizing the Los Angeles River, which runs through Nef and Deborah's neighborhood. The river is encased in concrete and is not aesthetically pleasing. We were asked by this committee if some of our church

people could be trained to canvass the neighbors about the river revitalization project in their neighborhood. Of course we said, "Yes." This gave us another connection with the neighbors and many were interested in the whole project. The river committee had another request; they asked if they could use our facility for meetings with the neighbors. And again we said, "Yes." On two occasions we had many of our neighbors in our facility and we had the opportunity to connect with many of them.

Hopefully, the neighbors have begun to see us as neighbors and not as church people. Our building is available to serve them as well as us. We have now opened our facility for a foreclosure clinic, and our city councilman is considering it for future community gatherings.

On October 4, 2008, we "officially" started Phase Three with a block party in Nef and Deborah's neighborhood. (Nef's picture is on the back cover of the Mission: Reseda Handbook.) About 60 neighbors gathered to meet one another and share a hot dog or two while the kids played ping pong. This block party was the beginning of what is now rippling through our valley.

Neighborhood Five

Jeff and Nadine Erickson, following some events during December of 2008, (see Phase Four) organized a neighborhood block party. It turned out to be a wonderful event. Our entire Mission: Reseda team met the Ericksons at the Vineyard. We gathered all the items we needed for the block party, prayed, and headed over to their neighborhood. Once we arrived, we all worked together to get everything ready. The block party was held at the home of a neighbor who did not attend the Vineyard. He opened his yard for the event and was very hospitable. Another neighbor provided a bounce house for the kids. All the food was prepared and ready to go. Nadine made her special salsa, neighbors brought other Mexican food dishes and everything was being readied for one mouth-watering south of the border barbeque. Team member Andrew made a large sign promoting the block party and stretched it out on the corner for all to see.

We had done quite a bit of promotion, but no one showed up, and we wondered if all of our work was in vain. Several of us walked through the neighborhood to personally invite people to the barbeque. To our surprise, when we returned we found a large number of neighbors at the event and others arriving. The children were in the bounce house, the adults were enjoying the flank steaks off the barbeque. One local

businessman was so impressed with what we were doing that when he left our party he saw a mariachi guitar player walking up the street and he hired him to come and sing. The businessman also saw an ice cream truck and paid the driver to treat all the kids at the party. The barbeque was a great success; even if some of us had our doubts at first.

In the early days Nadine made a practice of praying through the neighborhood. She would take her four children on stroller rides through the streets and pray for the neighbors. From those early days of prayer, God has done some amazing things in Neighborhood Five.

As I am writing this, we are planning yet another block party, but this time all of the immediate neighbors are involved in the planning. This event will be so large that we are getting a permit to block off the street. The excitement is growing with those on our team and those in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Ministry Coordinator

It was around this time that we decided to establish Neighborhood Ministry Coordinators and Houses of Light. Neighborhood Ministry Coordinators are those in our church who adopt a neighborhood, and Houses of Light represent their homes in their neighborhood. We appointed the Santiagos and the Ericksons as Neighborhood Ministry coordinators.

(You will find more detailed information about this in the Resource DVD under Phase Three.)

Neighborhood Ministry - The New Frontier for the Church

At this time I also realized that adopting a neighborhood needed to be broader than just those in our adopted block. The Lord showed me that what we were doing in our adopted block was to model and inspire others in our church to adopt their neighborhood. I became very excited about this new revelation. In fact, I began to convey to those in our church that this is where Mission: Reseda was heading. It was leading our church into neighborhood ministry, "The Church's New Frontier."

I began to hear of others in our church who were actively involved in connecting with their neighbors. One couple, Ken and Jenny Jones, walk with 40 of their neighbors on a regular basis. Many of the

neighbors' children gather at the Jones' home in October for their annual pumpkin carving event. The Jones' young daughter puts together a neighborhood newspaper and interviews the neighbors. She compiles her findings and distributes her paper each week.

One of My Neighborhood Stories

I remember telling Jeff and Nadine Erickson that I couldn't expect them to do what I, myself, was unwilling to do. So I became a Neighborhood Ministry Coordinator in my neighborhood. I began early morning prayer walks past 34 selected homes. I reinhabited my neighborhood emotionally. Over the years my wife, Jo, and I have organized different kinds of activities for our neighbors, but this was the first time I looked at them as my flock. They don't know that they are my flock, but I now care about their well-being and pray for them by name.

Here is one example. It was July 4, 2009, and I was painting some woodwork when I heard a fire truck and ambulance go by our home. The vehicles raced into my cul-de-sac (emphasis on "my" because they are my flock, those that I pray for). I changed quickly out of my old paint clothes and ran up the street. The paramedics were carrying my neighbor, Jim (not his real name), out of the house on a stretcher. I came alongside his wife and comforted her for a moment and offered a one-sentence prayer before they left in the ambulance. In the past, I wouldn't have gotten involved, but now I deeply cared for my neighbors.

A few days later while taking my regular early morning prayer walk, I was surprised to see Jim sitting by his window. He seemed fine and we talked through the window. Jim told me that he had an aneurysm and surgery was scheduled for the following week. That was our last conversation, however, because Jim passed away soon after our exchange.

I was very sad about his passing. Jim had been a devout atheist, but had been very sympathetic toward Christians because he felt we were mistreated. He had wanted to create a website called, "Atheists for God." We had many conversations together over the years.

When I found out about Jim's passing, I immediately went over to talk to his widow whom I will call Paula. I had performed Jim and Paula's wedding ceremony years ago and now she asked if I would officiate at

a celebration of his life. Paula guessed that fifteen people would attend and I offered my home.

My wife handed out invitations to the neighbors a few days before the service. We were pleasantly surprised by all who attended, including family, friends and many from the neighborhood. Our living room was filled to overflowing and there was standing room only in our dining room. All shared memories about Jim and certainly there was a celebration of his life. At the close, I had an opportunity to talk about why funerals and memorial services are significant as recorded in Ecclesiastes 7, and most importantly about the resurrection. It's one thing to share these kinds of things with church people or even people you don't know, but, with your neighbors, what a remarkable work of God!

Neighborhood ministry is not new to my wife and me as we have been opening our home for years. We learned a great deal from Francis and Edith Schaefer back in the 1970s. I also learned from the late Dr. Joe Aldrich, my professor and neighborhood mentor while I was in seminary. Joe would tell wonderful stories about ministry in his Newport Beach neighborhood and his earlier years in an apartment complex while attending Dallas Seminary. In affluent and modest neighborhoods alike, Joe took every opportunity to care for his neighbors. I am grateful to this prince of a man who modeled for me the love of Jesus to his neighbors. I am indebted to Joe, and the legacy he left in my heart still spurs me on with Mission: Reseda. I hope we all pass on his legacy.

There are others in our church who are now in some way beginning to care for their neighbors. I would love to tell you about Jack and Maria Fischer and others, but I want to encourage you now to have your own story. May your neighborhood be transformed by the love of Jesus working through you and may the people in your congregation become pioneers of this new work that the Holy Spirit is initiating through His people.

To introduce Phase Three to our congregation I gave a message entitled, "Developing a Neighborhood Ministry: The Church's New Frontier." I also handed out a booklet to them by the same name. You will find below the content of that booklet. I hope it is a helpful tool for you and the people in your congregation to use.

(You are free to adapt this to fit your congregation or ministry.)

DEVELOPING A NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRY: THE CHURCH'S NEW FRONTIER

Developing a "Neighborhood Ministry" is a process. Remember, "little by little" God's kingdom grows and penetrates the world. The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast help us understand this process. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Matthew 13:31-33 (NIV) In the same way, ministry in your neighborhood starts with small acts of kindness and service which grows into what God has in mind for it. Like the leaven (yeast), it only takes small expressions of love to transform your neighborhood.

In the first section you will find the overall plan for Neighborhood Ministry and in the last section are listed some simple steps to start a Neighborhood Ministry. Interpolate for an apartment complex or another setting.

1. The Overall Plan for Neighborhood Ministry

Getting Started:

- **Be Intentional.** Establishing ministry in your neighborhood is more than a good idea or something you are involved with occasionally, but a **commitment** to "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" There is a marked difference between being a nice neighbor and doing things for them when you have the time and having a deep concern for their welfare and acting on it. Consider how you have taken care of yourself over the years and now love your neighbor in the same manner. It will make a profound change in your neighborhood.
- **Connect to the Local Church.** Involvement in ministry always requires coming under authority. It is in this context that God gives favor, direction, protection and blessing to what He wants to do through you. Let the leadership of Mission: Reseda know of your intention to start a ministry in your neighborhood. You can come

under the covering either through being a part of the Mission: Reseda Community Group, meeting with one of the leaders on an ongoing basis, or by participating in a Community Group.

- **Establish A Core Group of Intercessors & Other Support People.** You are embarking on frontline ministry and the enemy will use everything in his arsenal to impede kingdom movement in your neighborhood. It is essential that you have intercessors to cover and intercede for you as you move out. Don't do it alone, ask others to come alongside of you to pray and help when needed. As the Scriptures teach, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work." (Ecc. 4:9 NIV)
- **Establish Your Home as a "House Of Light" in Your Neighborhood.** Commit your home to the Lord's work to be a light house in the community. You might want to ask respected leaders to pray over your home and neighborhood. Jesus seems to indicate that the home would become the center for ministry in the world. He instructed His disciples, "Whatever town or village you enter, **search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.** As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town." (Mt.10:11-14 NIV) Throughout the Gospels, the book of Acts and Early Church History we see the home as a strategic place for the spread of the gospel.
- **Free Up Your Schedule.** "Over the next six months, begin to free up your calendar. Make a master list of the things you do, and begin to say no to those things that splinter your life and leave you feeling hurried and stressed." These are the same things that will take you away from relationship with your neighbors.
- **Establish Geographic Boundaries.** Geographic boundaries can be looked at in two ways. The first boundary that you will want to establish is your immediate neighborhood boundary, where you will concentrate your ministry. Generally, this will be in walking distance from your home. The second boundary pertains to where you shop and send your children to school (approximately a one-mile radius). Seek to do as much within this area as possible to build relationships with those in your community.

- **Take Prayer Walks in Your Neighborhood.** As you begin to pray, the Lord will burden your heart for your neighbors and speak to you about them. Meaningful ministry must be grounded in prayer. As you pray and walk, the Lord may open doors to talk with your neighbors; take advantage of these special opportunities to get to know them and build relationship.
- **Begin to Observe What God is doing in Your Neighborhood.** When it came to ministry Jesus said, "I only do what I see the Father doing." If you take time to observe His activities and join Him, you will find that neighborhood ministry is most exciting.

Building Relationship:

- **Spend More Time in Your Front Yard.** Become more visible in your neighborhood. For example, make it a practice of playing and/or gardening in your front yard. You might even put some lawn chairs out in the front yard and relax. You will be surprised how people will warm up to you. We live in a very isolated society, often neighbors do not know each other, so the more time that you spend in your front yard the more you will see them driving or walking by. Smile and wave at those who pass by, even if you don't know them. Take time to talk to walkers and begin to build relationship in natural ways. Take an interest in people and ask them questions. You will find that most people enjoy talking about themselves.
- **Become a Good Neighbor.**
 - Be friendly to your neighbors.
 - Take care of your property.
 - Stop by to see your neighbors spontaneously.
 - If your dog barks all of the time, come up with a solution.
 - Borrow stuff from your neighbor; it gives you a great excuse to see them.
 - Here's a great plan, "Do to others what you would have them do to you."
- **Get to know Your Neighbors.**
 - Identify the names of your neighbors and other important information about them (e.g., children's names, employment, birthdays, etc.).
 - Volunteer for organizations like the Heart Association and go

door to door asking neighbors if they would like give to this worthy cause. These organizations will provide you with the names of people on your block.

- Become aware of their needs (i.e., house, health, food, driving, etc.) for prayer purposes and to see if your team or the Acts of Kindness team can help.
 - You might want to put together a map of your neighborhood with the above information on it to help you remember.
- **Spend Time with a Few Neighbors.** Begin spending time together with the one to two families you have sought out within your neighborhood. (Remember the “little by little” principle.) Share dinner or dessert together where every family contributes to the meal, thereby making everyone feel a part of the experience. If one person or family supplies all the food it removes the “shared experience.” As neighbors share it spills over into other ways of sharing.
 - **Connect With Other Neighborhood Groups.** Attend your local Neighborhood Watch and/or Council meetings. Those who are a part of these meetings generally have a high value for the neighborhood and are good contacts for connecting you with your neighbors. They will also provide you with a better understanding of your neighborhood.
 - **Find a Purpose to Bring All the Neighbors Together.**
 - A block party.
 - Free Car Wash
 - A women’s tea
 - A movie night.
 - A volleyball or basketball night.
 - Organize a Neighborhood Block Watch.
 - The need for speed bumps or streetlights.
 - Steve Sjogren, in his book Conspiracy of Kindness, has many ideas for this point.

Developing Ministry:

- **Identify a Ministry Core.** Begin to pray with your intercessors about a core group of believers for your neighborhood. Locate other believers in your neighborhood and ask if they would like to help with a neighborhood ministry.

- **Agree on a Common Purpose.** Bring the matter to God in prayer, and identify what the Father is doing in your neighborhood. Each neighborhood is different and the way the Lord works in one neighborhood will be much different than in another. However, you will need a “vision,” to be “intentional” and a “method” to participate in the transformation of your neighborhood.
- **Meet the Needs of People in Your Neighborhood.** Often the needs of people will help reveal the Father’s plan in your neighborhood. Jesus’ ministry abounded with meeting the needs of people, as a word of caution, there were times when Jesus would let outstanding needs go unmet. With this in mind, make yourself available to help meet the needs of people in your neighborhood and employ others from the neighborhood. If the task is daunting, ask for the Mission: Reseda team to help with the need.
- **Develop Community Service Teams.** Find other people in your neighborhood who would like to help build community through acts of service and care. Working together on community service projects deepens relationships and takes the burden off the city’s workforce (e.g., working with a community organization, helping with a youth program, cleaning up or painting a local school, mentoring, filling in potholes, etc.).
- **Start a Small Group for Your Neighborhood.** Initially the small group could be started to accommodate a service project. You might come together for a regular potluck (or barbeque) or to cover some material like *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage*. The group may segue into a Bible study. Give it time to grow into what the Lord has in mind for it.
- **Connect With a Community Group.** As Phase Three of Mission: Reseda grows we will transition away from the single Mission Reseda Kinship to multiple Community Groups. These groups will be made up of Neighborhood Ministry Leaders and other believers from the immediate community. Our desire is that these groups will consist of what we find in Acts 2:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet

together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."
Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

Making Disciples:

Ministry in your neighborhood is more than building friendships and doing things for others; it leads to making disciples. Jesus directed His disciples,

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

- **Finding a Person of Peace.** Making disciples starts with Jesus' strategy in a neighborhood, finding a "person of peace" or a "worthy person."

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you."
Luke 10:5-8 (NIV)

"Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."
Matthew 10:11-14 (NIV)

As Jesus directed, look for people in your neighborhood who "welcome you." These are neighbors who seem to like you and there seems to be a unique affinity for one another. Jesus says, "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16 NIV) If they like you and they listen to you then you have found a

person of peace and you are on your way to making a disciple. These are the ones you are searching for in your neighborhood.

The person of peace is the key to your neighborhood and the one whom God will use to unlock the ministry of discipleship in your neighborhood. As Jesus said, "Stay at that house." Once you have found a person of peace devote time to the relationship. You might be thinking, "There are more people in my neighborhood to make contact with." You will have time for that, but your priority will be those who are people of peace. Remember Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. Jesus first took the time to make sure that she understood who He was. He patiently and graciously revealed who He was and then she went back and told everyone she knew. She eventually became the link to winning those in the city of Sychar. I look at it like spot bowling; if you hit the right spot you hit all of the pins. In the same way, finding the right person in your neighborhood may lead to making many disciples on your block.

Making disciples of our neighbors will take place in any one of the following contexts and hopefully all of them:

- **A One-on-One Relationship.** When the Lord opens a door for the Gospel, show your neighbor the plan of salvation laid out in the New Testament. There are a number of ways to go about this and there are tools available to help them understand how they can become a child of God. Most importantly, you want to be led by the Holy Spirit as He makes Jesus known through you. The advantage of leading your neighbor into a relationship with the Lord is that you have the unique opportunity of following up on someone who lives down the street from you. It would be ideal to read together and discuss the book of John or Mark to show them what it is to be a follower of Christ. There are also many books and DVD resources available that you will find quite helpful. I highly recommend the ALPHA course as a very effective teaching tool for unbelievers and new believers alike.
- **A Small Group.** This kind of group may start in your home or in a neighbor's home. Some of your neighbors may express a desire to meet together to learn about the Bible, becoming a Christian, or even such subjects as marriage or parenting. (See "A One-on-One Relationship" above for suggestions.)
- **A Community Group.** This is a home group located reasonably close to your neighborhood. A community group is made up of

believers and unbelievers who want to know what it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. If your neighbor desires a better understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, this is an ideal group setting. When you invite your neighbor, assist in the transition as they join in and be sensitive because the context could be threatening.

- **A Local Church.** You might invite your neighbor to your church and he/she might feel very much at home with your fellowship. Participation in your local church is good because you can help them connect with the people. However, for one reason or another you might find that directing them to another congregation is a better choice. Churches and people are all very different and what your neighbor is looking for may be different than your needs. For example, you might travel some distance to church but your neighbor prefers to attend one down the street. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading in this matter.

2. Some Simple Steps to Start a Neighborhood Ministry

- Seek the Lord's Direction. Is it what the Father is doing?
- If you are married, is your spouse wholeheartedly on board with you to minister in your neighborhood?
- If the answers to the above questions are yes, then inform the leadership of Mission: Reseda.
- Ask 2-3 intercessors to support you in prayer as you minister in your neighborhood.
- Pray that the Lord will show you what geographic boundaries to establish for your neighborhood ministry.
- Get to know your neighbors, both adults and children, by name and begin addressing everyone by name.
- Take prayer walks in your neighborhood and/or pray over a street map.
- Spend time in your front yard.
- Stop by your neighbor's home spontaneously to say "hello" or ask to borrow something.
- As the Lord leads you, focus on two or three neighbors that you would like to get to know and invite them over for dinner or dessert.
- Identify other believers in your neighborhood.
- Look for neighborhood needs and try to meet them if possible.
- Think of fun activities to do with your neighbors such as having a block party.