

Six Priorities to Becoming Relevant in Your Community

1. Commitment to change—It is time to let God change the way you think about people. Jesus was the master of changing minds. When it came time to change the minds of His disciples about the Samaritans, He put them in the midst of a Samaritan population. Changing the way they thought about Samaritans in general required that their spiritual eyesight be corrected. Jesus sent His disciples in search for food in the Samaritan village of Sychar (see John 3:1), but then He talked about why He had really sent them. The Samaritans were actually a spiritual harvest they had not sown but had missed.
2. Commitment to connect - To be community relevant, you must understand your community. Connecting to your community requires you to know what is going on in your community. Go to your “365 People” and ask the tough questions, “What’s going on?” and “How is our church doing in meeting those needs?” “365 People” are people who live or work in the middle of your community 365 days of a year. A librarian will know something about the interests of people. A juvenile court judge will know something about family issues and the extent of problems that students are facing. A grocery store manager will know something about the economy and who is having problems making ends meet. A school teacher or administrator will know something about families, interests of students, and future populations.

These are just a few of the potential people with whom you will connect. Do they have to be members of your church? No. Is it mandatory that they are Christians? No. The purpose of “365 People” is to help you know what is going on in your community and to give you an opportunity to connect in places you might otherwise miss. Connecting with “365 People” will probably require you to become a volunteer. Everyone can use some help that they do not have to pay for. If you do not know any “365 People,” there is a way to start. Look for one activity in your community that interests you and volunteer to work one day a week or two hours a month. That is a one-two punch that will be a sure winner.

3. Commitment to be proactive—Being proactive usually requires establishing a relationship with someone in the community. That could be initiated through one of your “365 People” or through an organization in your community that holds your personal interest. Some people are able to speak a second language and chose to work with that language group. Someone may have had an abortion and find the opportunity to work in a pregnancy care center in an effort to help mothers-to-be not make the same mistake they made. The list of opportunities is endless and it is easy to see how the “one-two” punch will lead to developing a relationship that will lead to building relational bridges. Time after time, Jesus invaded the space of needy but unsuspecting people.
4. Commitment to champion—This is the effort of the congregation to meet needs. Nothing fosters hard work like recognizing the efforts of others. When someone makes the effort to do something, lift them up. Build the ministry any way you can.

5. Commitment to good stewardship—This is the commitment to cooperate with city government or private groups that are already engaged in meeting needs in your community. If needs are being met and you have the freedom to volunteer your time, take advantage of the door God has opened for you. Build strategies and alliances that assist others or that enable you to engage where you could never engage alone. Remember, never compromise your witness but never miss an opportunity to take your light into darkness.
6. Commitment to operate by faith—This is the commitment to count on God. Make everything you do a matter of faith. The plan is to start in faith and to operate by faith. This is God's business, not your business. He has made a way for you to join Him but without faith, you cannot please Him. We suggest you pray earnestly for the place God wants to join Him. Follow your passion, your talents, your spiritual gifts, and your natural relationships if you are serious about joining God but do it all in faith. Once you find your spot, what does it mean to operate by faith?