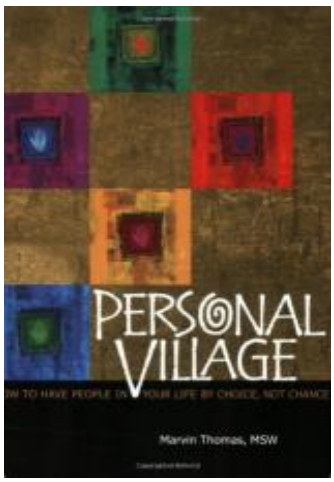
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Personal Village: How to Have People In Your Life Choice, Not Chance

by Marvin Thomas, MSW



About the Book

Everyone knows the African proverb: It Takes A Village To Raise A Child. In reality it takes an entire village of people to support each of us on the journey from birth to death. **Personal Village--How to Have People in Your Life by Choice, Not Chance**, underscores the urgent need in today's culture to revitalize our personal villages, defines personal village as everyone each individual knows and describes in detail how to create and continually revitalize the personal village for each one of us. Filled with ideas on how to roam in your neighborhood, enhancing the art of creating real intimacy, finding and developing new relationships, the magic of fellowships and small intimate support groups, this book illustrates how to create and nourish friendships and how to establish an intentional family. Written for a wide audience, it is a rich treasure trove of practical suggestions and resources that every reader will find valuable.

Discussion Guide

1. Before you began reading **Personal Village** what were your ideas about the circles of people that support your life? Where did these ideas come from: books or magazine articles, personal experience or memories?

2. How did your understanding about personal circles of people around you change as you read this book? Were any of the your earlier ideas challenged or confirmed?

3. Marv Thomas draws from many sources-scholarly studies, existing books, historical examples, movies and TV shows, to give examples of how human interaction leads to the formation of community. Did you find any of these sources particularly useful in reinforcing the notion of Personal Village? Were there any that seemed to contradict it?

4. What are the novel challenges in today's world that you are facing as you move to form more meaningful connections with the people around you?

5. The author suggests that the advertising and media depictions of relationships distort our understanding of human interaction. Has that been your experience, and if so how?

6. Thinks of and discuss any institutions (church, salon, fellowship, professional organization) that can help people come together in a postive way. Can you think of any institutions-formal or informal-that might isolate individuals from a positive, supportive community experiences?

7. The author repeatedly mentions the values of his upbringing and how they led to his studies of interpersonal and group dynamics. How has your upbringing influenced your expertise of your Personal Village?

8. According to Thomas's sources, "Civilization has changed more in the past half century than at any time in human history." How has the modern world placed individuals at greater risk of isolation and how has it offered greater potential to overcome this isolation? What has been your personal experience of these issues?

9. Do you think that technology abets or inhibits the formation of Personal Villages?

10. Is it your experience that relationships forged in the heat of a crisis are inherently stronger, or have the ones established before the onset of a personal crisis been stronger and more resilient?

11. Do you think that being purposeful and strategic in your relationships undermines your sincerity? If so, can you think of ways to enhance your own Personal Village that are consistent with your values and integrity?

12. How do you think "roaming" and "The Rule of Seven" worked in ancient human evolution? Do you think that primal instincts, like fear of strangers, impacts how you move about in your Personal Village?

13. What are some ways you can seek out a group or organization that best suits your interests and personality? What are some of the indications that an organization's members or group dynamic might be "wrong" for you?

Author Bio

Marv Thomas's roots run deep in the strong farm family values of hard work and mutual support that were the backbone of his upbringing in the Pacific Northwest. As a teenager he was taken under the tutelage of a retired army general. He gave Thomas a world view which was rare for people three times his age. In college, he was a student of psychology, philosophy, history, and engineering. He pursued graduate studies in engineering and mathematics before entering social work as a profession. Since 1966, he has been working as a psychotherapist, group trainer, organizational consultant and educator. In 1970, he began developing a practical working model of community. Since that time he has been helping many people deepen communities and has lectured and presented workshops on this subject. He speaks not only with the authority of someone who has "been there," but as a professional counselor who for forty years has observed the damage that isolation imposes on our population.

He is well known in Seattle as a teacher, lecturer, psychotherapist and marriage counselor. He has a degree in

Engineering and worked in the aircraft and space industry as a part of the team that sent the first men to the moon. Marv earned a bachelors degree in Mechanical Engineering from Gonzaga University and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Washington. He is a member of the National Association of Social Workers with an ACSW certification, is a Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work and a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in the State of Washington. He is listed in the 2005-2006 edition of Who's Who's of Executives and Professionals.

Thomas is a founding member and former director of the Group Process Institute. He trained directly under such figures as Fritz Perls, Leon Fine and Virginia Satir. He has taught group process and community theory for many years, appeared on radio and television and delivered many speeches and lectures. His broad and diverse training and experience gives him an authority on the subjects of systems thinking, human relations, and community dynamics that is virtually unmatched. Marv lives in Seattle with his wife of 45 years and has two grown sons.

Critical Praise

"This is the most intelligent work on personal community I ever seen. I give out copies of this book to my clients because it is the only source I know where they learn how to create for themselves a vital personal village. This book is astounding."

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