

GOING URBAN

Overview of Urban Ministry in the 21st Century

Personal Info

- Director of Urban Ministry at Inter-City Baptist Church
- In ten days, I'll be marrying my fiancée Jo (not my fiancé Joe!)

The World is Going Urban

- Worldwide urbanization
 - For the first time in history, the majority of the world lives in urban areas
 - “Between 1920 and 2007, the world’s urban population increased from about 270 million to 3.3 billion, with 1.5 billion urban dwellers added to Asia, 750 million to the more developed regions, just under 450 million to Latin America and the Caribbean, and just over 350 million to Africa. These changes foreshadow those to come. Between 2007 and 2050, the urban population is expected to increase as much as it did since 1920, that is, 3.1 billion additional urban dwellers are expected by 2050, including 1.8 billion in Asia and 0.9 billion in Africa” (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *2007 Revision of the World Urbanization Project*, p. 31.)

The World is Going Urban

- Ten largest urban agglomerations
 - ▣ Tokyo (Japan) - 35,676,000
 - ▣ New York-Newark (US) - 19,040,000
 - ▣ Ciudad de Mexico (Mexico) - 19,028,000
 - ▣ Mumbai (India) - 18,978,000
 - ▣ Sao Paulo (Brazil) - 18,845,000
 - ▣ Delhi (India) - 15,926,000
 - ▣ Shanghai (China) - 14,987,000
 - ▣ Kolkata (India) - 14,787,000
 - ▣ Dhaka (Bangladesh) - 13,458,000
 - ▣ Buenos Aires (Argentina) - 12,795,000
 - (2007 CIA World Factbook)

The World is Going Urban

- In 2025, an estimated 57.2% of the population will be in urban areas, rising to 69.6% in 2050.
- Megacities, urban agglomerations with at least ten million inhabitants, are often what people think of when they think of cities. In 2005, there were 19 megacities around the world. The number of these massive urban areas is expected to increase to 27 by 2025 but will only compose 10% of the world's urban population.
- Large cities, those with populations ranging from five million to just under ten million, will grow from 30 to 48 by 2025, accounting for 7% of the urban population.

The World is Going Urban

- ▣ There were 361 cities with more than one million inhabitants but fewer than five million in 2005. This number is expected to increase to 524 by 2025 and include 23% of the population.
- ▣ The next size of cities, those with 500,000 to one million inhabitants, included 446 cities in 2005. That number will grow to 551 by 2025, with an 8% share of the population.
- ▣ Small urban centers, those with less than half a million inhabitants, are expected to absorb nearly half of the expected increase in the urban population between 2005 and 2025 and include 51% of the urban population

The World is Going Urban

□ American urbanization

- In 1950, 64.2% of the population lived in urban areas, while in 2000 the urban population had grown to 79.1%. There will be an estimated 82.3% of the population living in urban areas in 2010, and by 2050 the urban population in the U.S. will have reached 90.4%.
- In 2007, approximately 249,000,000 lived in cities, while only 57,000,000 lived in rural areas.
- In 2008, the twenty-five largest cities claimed over a tenth of the U.S. population, and over a quarter of the population lived in the 273 cities with more than 100,000 people.
- The disparity between those in cities and those in rural areas will continue to grow in the coming years. While the population of the United States is expected to grow by about 0.97% between 2005 and 2010, the urban population is expected to grow at a rate of 1.34%.

Reasons for Urban Ministry

- The world is going urban, so if Christians are to reach people with the gospel, they must target cities.
- Evangelical churches have largely abandoned the cities
- Cities provide opportunities to reach people groups from creative access nations
- Cities are prime locations to show the barrier breaking power of the gospel

Reasons for Urban Ministry

- God cares for the cities
 - “And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” (Jonah 4:11)
- City residents may be more open
 - “When people make a major move, such as rural to urban or immigration to another country, they tend to be unsettled. They face new values, new ways of doing things, possibly a new language. At the same time they have left behind a large portion of their former support system. Families and friends are separated, possible for the first time in their lives.” (Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God*, p. 319)

Reasons for Urban Ministry

- City ministry can spread to the surrounding areas (cf. Acts 19:9–10; 1 Thess 1:8)
 - “But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:9-10).
 - “For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.” (1 Thess 1:8).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- Gospel proclamation must be central
 - ▣ Romans 10:13–17 argues cogently and clearly that this task of bringing people to salvation cannot be accomplished apart from the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Any urban ministry that allows gospel works to replace gospel words is unbiblical. To claim that social transformation and not spiritual transformation is the goal of believers is to fail to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came to preach (Mark 1:36–38; cf. John 4:34–38).
 - ▣ “If the New Testament shapes our strategy, we will begin with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Like Paul, we will do everything in our power to win converts and will openly affirm that to be our goal (1 Cor. 9:19–23).” (Greenway and Monsma, *Cities: Missions’ New Frontier*, p. 40.)

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- True conversion results in changed lives
 - ▣ It is impossible to truly change those bound in sin apart from the work of the Holy Spirit (Jer 13:23), but it is equally impossible for those who have the Spirit to remain bound in sin (Rom 6:1–14).
 - ▣ Thus the means of changing the city is by changing the people of the city.

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- The foundation and target of urban ministry is the local church
 - ▣ The Apostle Paul was committed to planting churches wherever he went, because "he regarded the church as the unique community of believers in and through whom God was carrying forward his design and purpose in the world." (Greenway and Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, p. 45.)
 - ▣ Thus urban ministry must be carried on by local churches, and must be intended to produce new local churches. All those involved in urban ministry must be active members in local churches and either directly or indirectly involved in planting new, indigenous, reproducing churches.

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- Spiritual needs must take precedence over physical needs
- Jesus' example:
 - “That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” (Mk 1:32-38).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- Apostles' example:
 - “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Ac 6:1-4).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

□ Paul's Instruction

- “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. ¹⁰ **For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.** ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.” (2 Th 3:6-12).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- To help ensure that deeds of mercy do not force the spiritual needs to the periphery, Carson offers two helpful suggestions:
 - ▣ 1) "distinguish between the responsibilities of the church *qua* church and the responsibilities of Christians." The leaders of the church must always be consumed first and foremost with their commitment to prayer and the ministry of the Word, but the members of the church can and should be involved with deeds of mercy.
 - ▣ 2) "Preach hell," which will remind the urban minister of the need to relieve both eternal and temporal suffering and will create a distinction between a truly gospel-centered ministry and a merely social one. (Carson, "Editorial," *Themelios* 33.2, 2008)

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- Mercy and compassion are an integral part of the Christian life
 - ▣ Since those whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of Christ are being transformed into His image (2 Cor 3:18), they should begin to display His characteristics. On multiple occasions Jesus exhibited his mercy and compassion (e.g., Matt 14:14; 15:32; Luke 7:13) and called his disciples to do the same (Luke 10:25–37).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- Though this compassion should certainly be extended to unbelievers, the thrust of the New Testament is on meeting needs and showing compassion within the church rather than outside of it.
 - “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:35).
 - “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” (Acts 2:44-45).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- “And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁹ So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰ And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:28-30).
- “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” (James 2:14-16).

Key Principles for Forming a Biblical Urban Ministry Strategy

- ▣ “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:1 - 2).
- ▣ “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 Jn 3:16).
- ▣ (NOTE: Certainly believers should show mercy and compassion to those outside of the church, but almost all of the passages on mercy ministry in the NT focus on fellow believers.)

Pitfalls in Urban Ministry

- Feelings of Loneliness
- Addressing the overwhelming needs with programs
- Faulty understanding what to expect
- Over-dependence on social sciences and under-dependence on the Bible

Pitfalls in Urban Ministry

- Overly narrow view of urban ministry
 - ▣ Focusing on mega-cities and neglecting smaller cities
 - ▣ Thinking you understand the city when you only know part
 - ▣ Thinking urban ministry is only about ministry to the poor, homeless, etc.
- Having a sense of superiority
- Romanticized view of the city

Your Role in Urban Ministry

- Go
 - ▣ Planting urban churches in the U.S.
 - ▣ Planting urban churches in other countries
 - ▣ Living in the city by choice to help an existing church or to help plant a church
- Serve
 - ▣ Time
 - ▣ Resources
- Pray

Closing Stuff

- Email: bedwards@intercity.org
- Urban Ministry Internship
 - ▣ The Urban Ministry Internship, introduced this past summer, is intended to provide university and seminary students who are interested in urban and multi-ethnic ministry an opportunity to interact with a variety of ministries in the Detroit urban area during the summer. The interns gain experience in urban campus ministry, upper socioeconomic outreach, lower socioeconomic outreach, multi-ethnic ministry, and urban church ministry. The program also includes required reading, interviews, and reports in relation to urban ministry.
- Vision Tour: Thursday, 9 am - 1 pm