

Principles for Urban Ministry

Urban ministry is both an exciting and a daunting prospect, and philosophies for reaching the city abound. Though by no means exhaustive, the following list contains some key principles that Inter-City Baptist Church is trying to implement as they seek to minister in their local setting.

- **God's glory is the ultimate end**

Too often God's glory is treated as an assumption in ministry. Unfortunately, by assuming rather than articulating God's glory as our primary goal ministries easily stray from the main target. Our ministry must continually evaluate whether or not our activities are working towards our goal of glorifying God.

- **God's Word must be proclaimed for people to get saved**

Deeds of mercy may help establish contacts for redemptive relationships and may reflect God's concern for the needy, but they can never be placed on an equal level with Gospel proclamation. Apart from the verbal proclamation of the Gospel it is impossible for the unsaved to believe in Christ. We will compassionately, consistently, and boldly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ from God's Word.

- **God is the one who shines His light into dark hearts**

Faith is not produced by historical facts, human reasoning, or sense experience. God opens the eyes of the lost so that they can behold the glory of Christ and understand the significance of God's Word. Though we are willing to provide evidence as proof that our faith is reasonable, we will faithfully emphasize that all worldviews arise from faith and call men to repentance and faith in Christ. Our confidence will not be in our eloquence or in the skill of our presentation but in the work of the Holy Spirit.

- **Relationships are formed for redemptive purposes**

Relationships are not an end in themselves. We must seek to establish relationships, but the goal must always be that the relationship would be a means of glorifying God. When we build relationships with the lost, our goal is to get them into God's Word so that they can understand the Gospel. When we build relationships with believers, our goal is to get them into God's Word so that they will live worthy of the Gospel.

- **The church is God's institution for accomplishing His work**

The church is not one of many venues for Christian service—it is the venue. True believers should unite with a local body of believers in order to grow in Christ and serve God in this world. We will encourage all to whom we minister to be active members in Bible-believing churches.

- **Success is measured by faithfulness to God's Word**

The presence or absence of a large crowd reveals little concerning success in God's eyes. Faithful ministers may see little fruit, or may see much fruit. Small crowds may be due to failure on the part of the minister, but may also be because God has chosen not to open the eyes of many in that area. Large crowds may be a sign of compromise by removing the offense of the cross, but may also be a result of God's using His Word to call out many people for His Name. We will evaluate our ministry by our understanding of God's Word and not by the size of our ministry. We will also thank the Lord that He often chooses to bless in spite of our failings.

- **The Gospel is God's power to change lives**

God is still in the saving business! When God grants new life, things change. Those who were formerly pagans, slaves to sin, and enemies of God are transformed into children of light, slaves to God, and members of God's family. The Gospel has the power to free drug addicts, criminals, drunkards, homosexuals, adulterers, students, factory workers, business men, and CEO's. We will expect to see God transform lives for His glory.

- **Anyone who believes the Gospel will be saved**

The Gospel is not for a select group. God does not discriminate based on wealth, education, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or anything else. The gospel is offered to all freely, and none who come are turned away. We will preach the Gospel to all, knowing that if they repent and believe they will be saved.

- **Nothing can be accomplished apart from the Spirit's power**

Human effort is insufficient for spiritual work. We must work, and the Spirit must work in and through us. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him all things are possible. We will commit ourselves to prayer and emphasize it in our ministry. We will seek to live lives under the control of the Spirit.

- **God's Word provides the answers for the important questions of life**

God's Word gives us everything that we need for life and godliness. When counseling those to whom we minister, we dare not trust our thoughts and opinions. We must allow God's Word to shape our thinking and instruction. We will commit ourselves to prayerful reading and study of God's Word so that we can give Scriptural answers for life questions.

- **Transformed lives display the glory of God's Gospel**

Though Gospel proclamation is essential for evangelism, Gospel-worthy lives can provide credibility to our message. When we fail to live God-honoring lives we bring shame to the Gospel and contradict our spoken words. We will seek to live lives that are above reproach and are a testimony to the grace of God at work in us.

- **You must be *in* the world to reach the world**

Living in the suburbs and lobbing “Gospel grenades” into the city is not the most effective means of ministry. Living in the community provides more avenues for redemptive relationships, helps you to understand the pressures of those you are trying to serve, and lends an authenticity to your ministry. We will seek to be a part of the community in order to reach them for Christ.

- **You cannot be *of* the world to reach the world**

The world (i.e., the system of belief and thought that is in rebellion against God) should not be taken as the model of ministry for the redeemed. We cannot indiscriminately adopt any and every form of our culture and remain true to the Gospel. We must maintain radically counter-cultural lives, displaying our allegiance to God and His will. The world neither needs nor wants a cheap imitation of what it already has. It needs the light of the Gospel that brings submission to God and enmity with the world. We will maintain a Scriptural distinctiveness from the elements of the culture that are opposed to Christ’s Lordship.

- **Discipleship is not a program, it’s a lifestyle**

Discipleship is more than a fifteen part study guide or workbook. Discipleship can and should happen anytime and anywhere. It extends to all areas of life. This life-touching-life ministry takes time and commitment. We will open up our lives to others to utilize every opportunity to disciple those whom God has placed under our ministry.