



Intentionally Urban

I'm about to die. A dozen gang members are running toward me from the north and another group is closing in on me from the east. Run? Where? My anxiety levels surge into the red zone.

I'm working the street with flyers announcing an evangelistic concert. I hold a flyer out to the gangbanger first to reach me. This will be my last act on earth. He flies by me. I'm suddenly surrounded by the convergence of these two groups. The only white face in a mob of brown and black 'high five'ing,

Abram," Genesis 12:1.

- "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh," Exodus 3:10.
- "they shall take to them every man a lamb," Exodus 12:3.
- "and of them he chose twelve," Luke 6:13.
- "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Romans 8:30.
- "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," Matthew 28:19.

within which we would actively seek to carry out the Great Commission. We deliberately committed to outreaches for which we did not have the money, planned events which forced us to rent additional space, and added staff we "couldn't afford." We consciously committed to practice church discipline and maintain a higher, rather than lower, standard for membership. We continue to fall short, but our goal is to be intentional about everything we do and don't do.

Doesn't even a surface perusal of New Testament evangelism reveal that God was intentional about something besides His plan? Wasn't the apostle Paul Spirit-led to city after city sowing the urban centers of the Roman world with local churches? Was this accidental, incidental or intentional? Aren't we pretty much in agreement that the first century believers accused of turning the world upside down were quite the wild success? In the face of the evidence, isn't it reasonable to conclude that God was as intentional about the places the gospel was sown as He was concerning the plan of the gospel? How does our intentionality regarding world evangelization stack up to God's intentionality?

Historic levels of urban populations are a reality. The United Nations projected that the world's urban population would rise to 5 billion by 2030 from an estimated 3 billion in 2003. Of course, we already know cities exert a disproportionate influence on the geopolitical stage. Will all of our triumphant missions conference church-speak about winning the world to Christ ever even come close to a reality if we do not seriously, intentionally reach the cities of our world?

It worked in the 1st century. Will it work in the 21st century?

Our goal is to be intentional about everything we do and don't do.

'Dag jack'ing, 'We showed them'ing, celebrating some kind of rout of a rival. I didn't die. I was totally ignored. It was one of those "What am I doing here?" moments.

Well, I wasn't there by accident. I was there intentionally. I was there in intentional response to the sheer magnitude of need and, not incidentally, to God's call. I am supposing His call was an intentional call.

Isn't God's intentionality blatant?

- "God created the heaven and the earth," Genesis 1:1.
- "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," Genesis 2:16, 17.
- "And God said unto Noah... Make thee an ark," Genesis 6:13, 14.
- "Now the LORD had said unto

- "and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8-9.

God was not only intentional in His plan to provide redemption; He was intentional in telling us to be intentional in carrying out His command. Just to make sure we got the picture, He made a video, if you will, titled "The Acts of the Apostles." We can forever see the intentionality of His plan intentionally pursued by the apostles in the early church.

Trying to model ministry after God's intentionality has led our church to do a number of things. When we needed to move, we intentionally declined realtors' offers to show us buildings in the suburbs, determined to stay in the city center. We established generous boundaries to mark a broad area