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Why the City?

There are at least three compelling reasons to prioritize urban missions.

It's Biblical

Jesus came to the population center of the universe. He did not stay away because of the danger. He came in the face of the danger. He came knowing it would be so dangerous it would lead to his death. In fact, he came to die. He came to the center of need to give what was needed for sinners' rescue. He told us that if we try to stay alive, we will die, but if we give ourselves over to death, we will find life. What a compelling reason to abandon the American dream for a kingdom-first adventure!

Jesus forever attached his name, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension to a city — a city that was unholy when it was chosen by God to be the center of redemption's plan, a city which again and again would turn its back on God, a city that would reject God's Son, a city that would be the capital of the nation of God's chosen people who are remarkable for their rejection of their Messiah. Jesus clearly expected His church to reach the world by planting churches bearing His name in cities. The prescription for world evangelism was not an occasional urban tract-pass, an annual mission trip, or the funding of para-church organizations. Jesus' plan was clear — local churches in urban centers.

How does the New Testament pattern affect our approach to evangelism, missions, and church planting? Am I consistently willing to allow my belief and behavior to be guided by scripture?

It's Impacting

The record of the first-century church, as found in the book of Acts and the epistles, is nothing short of astounding. Without the technology we rely upon, the apostles were accused of filling the city of Jerusalem with the doctrine of Jesus (Acts 5:28). They were charged in Acts 17:6 with having upset the world. Luke records in Acts 19:10 that from the base of Ephesus, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Paul tells Roman believers their faith is spoken of all over the world. Yes, such statements and accompanying history are so remarkable we cannot pass it by. We must take note not only of the power of the early church message but of the power of the early church method, and then note both were birthed by the Holy Spirit.

In 1900, nine percent of the world's population lived in cities. By the year 2025, two-thirds of God's world will be urban. In 1900, there were 20 cities in the world with one million or more people. In 2000, there were 388 such cities, and by 2015, there will be 554. While 50 percent of the world's population currently is urban, the other half is unquestionably being urbanized. It is not merely the size of urban population that makes cities ideal for missions, but it is also the role cities play. Cities amplify and distribute whatever is in them. In the first century, the Holy Spirit made sure the gospel was in them in a significant and powerful way.

We must pursue a Biblical understanding of what we're seeing in world urbanization. If the earth is the Lord's

and the fullness thereof — the world and they that dwell therein — and God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, we should see a sovereign God at work urbanizing his world for the purpose of effective evangelism with maximum impact worldwide. The Spirit-birthed strategy of the first century worked. It will work now. I have one lifetime to give to the cause of Christ. How do I leverage my life and resources to have the greatest impact?

It's Needed

Among those who fled cities in the 50s, 60s, and 70s were those who claimed to have rock solid faith in the Bible and a mandate to reach the world. The exodus has been followed by an attitude of neglect, if not disdain. While the attitude may have been one of ignorance, the neglect is nothing short of shameful. Center cities across America are reviving with even more population flowing into them. The numbers are there and those numbers have names. No longer are they merely ghettos. Now bad neighborhoods are being squeezed by redevelopment and rehabbed housing. While the cities have been swelling with sinners, outdated methods and unbiblical thinking have kept many Christians far away from the urban masses. The need is great. The need is in our own country as well as abroad. It is late. The night is coming. Would it honor Christ and advance His cause to avail myself to concentrations of spiritual neediness?

Think of it. We live in a divine moment of the history of God's work in the world. We have tremendous potential to reach millions doing it God's way.