



URBAN CURRENT

Boston as a base

Boston is home of the first public school, the first subway system, the first all female law school, and the first phone call in history. Called the Athens of America because of the 100 colleges and universities in the metropolitan area, the city is also a booming center for medicine, research, electronics, engineering, finance, and high technology: principally biotechnology.

Boston, as many cities are, is experiencing gentrification, producing some of the highest cost of living in the United States. Maybe that's why 70 percent of housing units in Boston are occupied by renters rather than owners. A two-bedroom apartment in Boston costs \$1,343 a month on average. The average single-family housing unit in Boston lists for about \$500,000.

This is what David Melton experienced when he arrived in the mid 1990s. The current president of Boston Baptist College says his move from Springfield, Missouri, to Boston doubled his mortgage. Later, when he moved to Wellesley, a Boston suburb, his mortgage doubled again.

Yes, there are financial reasons not to go to the city. But the Apostle Paul never went to the city because it was cheaper. The Holy Spirit led him there because that's where the souls are.

Speaking of souls ... the unofficial capital of New England, Boston, has 617,594 people in the city proper. Greater Boston is peopled by 4.5 million, making it the tenth largest metropolitan area in the country.

The city of 21 official neighborhoods grew by almost five percent from 2002 to 2010, with the white population at 47 percent, African American at 22 percent, and a growing Hispanic population rising to almost 18 percent. Known the world over for its history, its prominence in academia, and its culture, more than 18 million

people visit the city every year. In 2006, Boston and its metropolitan area ranked as the fourth largest cyber city in the United States with almost 200,000 high-tech jobs. Greater Boston boasts the sixth largest economy in the country. It was classified as an "incipient global city" by a 2004 study group at Loughborough University in England.

Pedestrian commutes are far more popular than in cities of comparable population. The city famous for Bunker Hill also has one of the highest rates of bicycle commuters.

Melton claims he became a reluctant church planter in this metropolis known as one of the birthplaces of the hardcore Punk genre of music. He was drawn to Wellesley, a suburb in Greater Boston. He studied demographics for three months, discovering that in all likelihood, 98 out of 100 people were not born again, with only 1.7 percent of the people professing to be Christian. With three-fourths of a million residents, the Yellow Pages "Churches" section was only two-thirds of one page. His church plant became the only Baptist church in Wellesley.

He is living and serving powered by a desire to be "where the need is the greatest." His attitude is "let's play hardball with the big boys." He stresses an "understanding of the importance of the role of higher education."

It seems to me these three things are motivations, attitudes, and mindsets that the generation of young Christians coming up need to grip firmly. This is the heart which will cause one to bury his or her life like a seed in a place like Boston, believing God will grow it and make it fruitful in ways that will mark eternity. Investing one's life in a place like Boston is a way to leverage one's life in a global urbanized mission field.

Remember Moody. A native of Northfield,

Massachusetts, 17-year-old D.L. Moody came to Boston for the same reason many people all over the world move to cities: to try to make some money. While working as a clerk in Holton's Shoe Store in Boston, his Sunday school teacher visited him and won him to Christ. Several decades after Moody's conversion, he returned to Boston. While he was leading successful campaign after successful campaign, this effort in the hard soil of Bean Town would be called a failure by some.

It is worth noting that it was Moody who said, "Waters run down hill and the highest hills in America are the great cities. If we can stir them, we shall stir the whole country." Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday school in a city across the ocean, was then responsible for a Sunday school teacher who came to visit young Moody in a city on this side of the ocean. Who could have known that man would in turn impact cities on both sides of the ocean?

Boston should be viewed as a base: a base of theological education, a base for urban ministry education, a base of evangelistic endeavors, a base for concerted church planting efforts, a base for gospel operations of all kinds, a base from which Great Commission projects can be launched across the region and the world.



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