



URBAN CURRENT

Being Biblical

Recently I was in a small Illinois town at dinner time. Noticing a Mexican restaurant, I thought I'd take a chance even though it was in the middle of nowhere. After a great meal, I talked to the man who took my money telling him I came from a neighborhood with a great Mexican restaurant on every block. I told him his establishment ranked right up there.

"Where do you live?" he asked. A brief exchange established that his brother lived only blocks from me. My point? The Mexican who lived blocks from me had a brother and other family members living and working out in this little town.

I'm assuming you heartily believe "... God so loved the world He gave His only son" We know Abraham was promised his seed would bless the nations. The Bible uses the word nations 559 times.

"Christianity started in Jerusalem not in Washington, D.C.

The Bible was not originally given in American English but in Hebrew and Greek.

Christianity is not tied to our nation nor is it the captive of any culture.

Real historic Biblical Christianity is multiracial, transcultural, and international.

This is the faith of many faces and its truth is told in 1,000 tongues", writes my father, pastor Vernon Lyons. Do you believe this?

Even today in Jerusalem, there is the Jewish Quarter, the Muslim Quarter, the Armenian Quarter, and the Christian Quarter. This kind of sectioning was not uncommon in ancient cities.

In Acts 13, we get a glimpse of 1st century Antioch in the church leaders named. Barnabas was from Cyprus. Simeon was African. Lucius specifically North African, Manaen possibly a slave of Herod's father, and Saul, a native of Asia Minor. Not only had the church been established, it had broken through the barriers of different cultures and social classes represented in the city. The Gospel overwhelmed these barriers and this reality was demonstrated in the leadership team. What a great example!

Our nation is changing dramatically and rapidly.

More than 4 out of 10 U.S. millennials are non-white. - *Christianity Today*, July/August 2014

Most kids in Illinois will be minorities by 2020. - *Chicago Tribune*, 9/18/16

Racial and ethnic minorities make up more than half the children born in the U.S. - Multiple sources

By 2043 Americans who identify themselves as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander will together outnumber non-Hispanic whites. - U.S. Census

Minorities, now 37% of the U.S. population, are projected to comprise 57% of the population by 2060.

2.5% of American churches are multiethnic. - *Right Color, Wrong Culture*, Brian Loritts

Should we be more concerned about the country of our fathers or the faith of our fathers?

In modern America, cities first experienced multiple cultures living in close proximity. The larger cities were the places immigrants and minority groups tended to gather. This urban reality has now become the American cultural reality. We see it in sports, music, education, entertainment, business. Young people are growing up in this reality. The accompanying visuals being the norm. At your church do they see any resemblance to what they see in their everyday world?

I can almost guarantee there are people unlike you close to where you live and serve. Remember, we're not just talking about skin color or national origin. There are skinheads, bikers, skateboarders, meth heads, people who

live in gated communities and people who live in mobile home parks. You are surrounded by multiple cultures. What are you doing to reach out of your culture to serve people not like you?

This is not some Christian side street mind you; this is the main highway of the Gospel. Go to all nations! It just so happens God has brought the nations to us. Can we ignore what God has done in making world evangelism so much easier?

Being biblical is more than just saying, "We believe the Bible." It means deliberate, proactive reach beyond our comfort zone.

What are some things you can do? Look around your town, city, community, county with eyes for people not of your cultural group. Who are they? Where do they live? Where do they go to school? Where do they shop? Where do they work? Be a student. Learn. Build relationships.

This takes time. This may mean you go out of your way to get your nails done, your hair cut or your car serviced by people not like you. I deliberately drive out of my way to get my hair cut in a neighborhood dominated by a culture not represented in our church. I'm building relationship with that person and witnessing to Jesus' saving power.

Every cultural group sponsors and participates in various events and activities. Part of your learning is finding out what they are, when they are, where they are so you can explore possible connection. The same goes for organizations which may be social, business, or religious or educational.

Depending on who might be within your reach, surely this should be translated into prayer both personal and corporate.

The gospel is transcultural. We are called to be cross-cultural in our outreach. If we are, our churches will be multicultural.

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