



Urban Ministry

THEOLOGY FOR TRENCHES



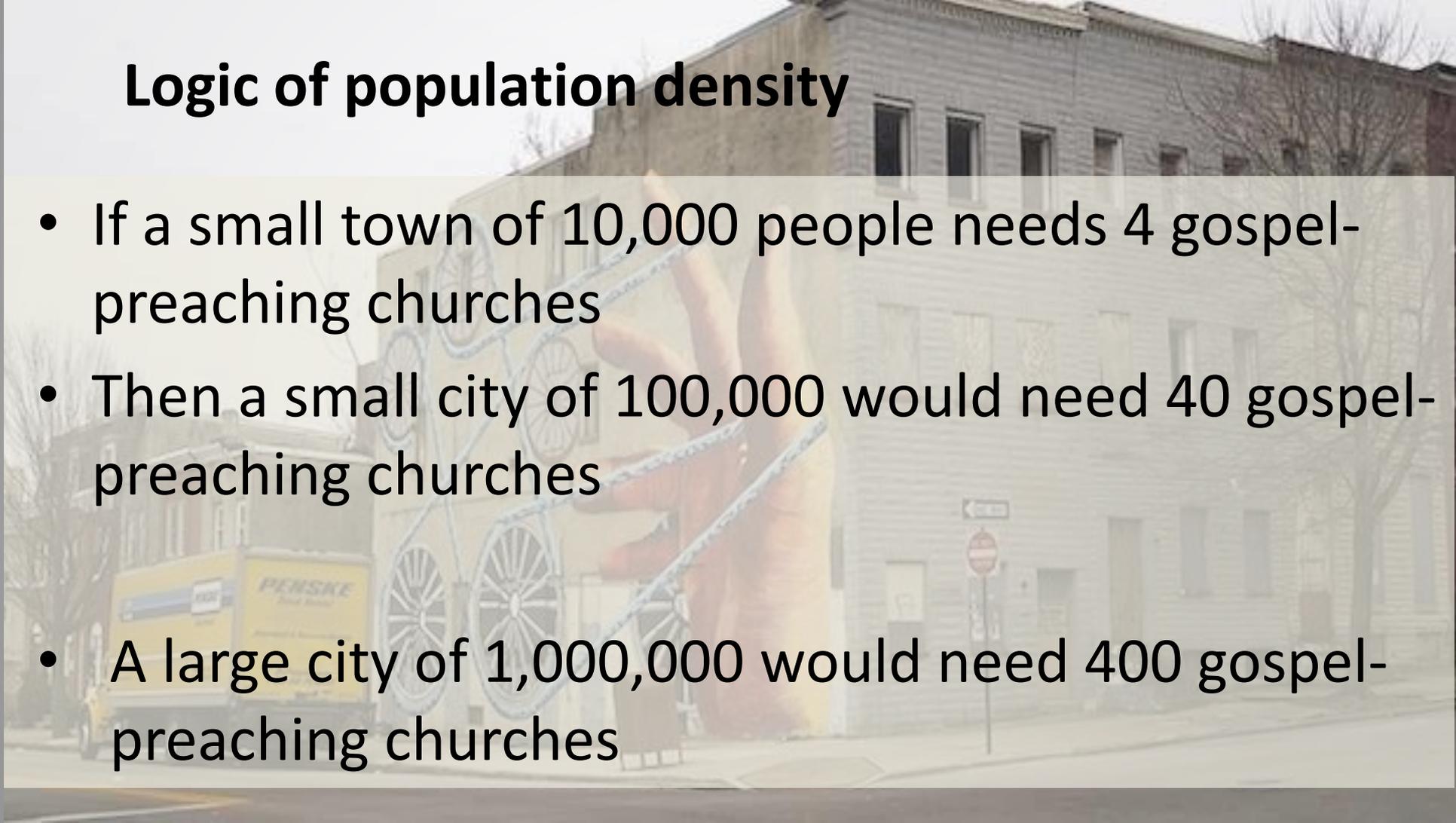
What is Urban Ministry?

- In American ministry culture, “Urban” has become a code word for ministry to people of color, or people impacted by poverty, or hip hop culture, or resource-deprived inner city neighborhoods, or all of the above.
- These distinctives aren’t necessarily bad, but they are very different, and none of them are tied by definition to the adjective “urban”. –Brad Griffin



The United States of America is quickly becoming a multi-ethnic melting pot. The church must prepare to meet the challenges associated with making disciples from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Instead of engaging in a political discussion about the value of preserving the English language in our school systems, the need to tighten boarder security, or the tensions surrounding illegal immigration, believers should pause to give God praise for the tremendous privilege of taking the gospel around the world by simply crossing the street in front of their house. Participating in the Great Commission has never been more accessible in the continental United States!

Logic of population density

The background image shows a street scene. On the left, a yellow Penske truck is parked. In the center, a large, stylized sculpture of a hand holding a chain is visible. The background consists of multi-story brick buildings and a street with a stop sign.

- If a small town of 10,000 people needs 4 gospel-preaching churches
- Then a small city of 100,000 would need 40 gospel-preaching churches
- A large city of 1,000,000 would need 400 gospel-preaching churches



Where we are headed in the next hour?

1. Why cities are more important than they've ever been?
2. What makes a city a city ?
3. What does the Bible have to say about cities?



Practical Questions

1. How to contextualize the gospel for unique city settings?
2. How to think through and apply the gospel to your city's storyline?
3. How to develop a robust, compelling vision for long-term ministry?



Importance, Characteristics & Biblical Significance

Nearly 5.5 million people a move into cities every month (i.e. a new San Francisco Bay Area is being created every 30 days)

Importance, Characteristics & Biblical Significance

- » 22% of the world's population lives in 600 cities. These 600 cities generate 60% of the world's GDP.
- » There are currently 23 megacities with over 10 million in population; by 2025 there will be 36.
- » In 1900 only 14% of the world's population lived in urban areas. The number was 30% in 1950. In 2011 the world became 51% urban. By 2050, the world will be 68.7% urban.

Al Mohler Quote

“This much is clear—the cities are where the people are. In the course of less than 300 years, our world will have shifted from one in which only 3 percent of people live in cities, to one in which 80 percent are resident in urban areas.... If the Christian church does not learn new modes of urban ministry, we will find ourselves on the outside looking in. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must call a new generation of committed Christians into these teeming cities. As these new numbers make clear, there really is no choice.”

Understand the city

In order to reach the people in the cities, we must first understand the people group we are trying to missionally reach; that means understanding the culture, understanding the language, understand the sociological dynamics, understanding the social economic factors etc.



Public theology

- The Bible although it is ancient book, theologically encourages working in cities, reaching cities and empowers readers to have an impact on cities... after all...Jesus ministered in major cities of His day.
- Community organizing, advocacy, economic development and social justice is crucial in term of public theology and urban ministry.

Luke 4:16

“As was his custom he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath opened up the scriptures, read and sat down.”

- Jesus gives a prescription for the vision of his earthly ministry. He lets us know that he is not just here to attend church on a regular weekly basis, but that he was on earth for a purpose and his purpose was one that was missional in nature..

Theology As Big As The City



“Like supermarkets, hospitals and police departments, churches will require day pastors and night pastors for twenty-four hour environments in all languages, cultures and class groups, not residing in the same communities.”

History of Cities

Four great waves of urbanization

1. First Wave: Imperial Cities – Ancient (Babylon, Alexandria, Rome)
2. Second Wave: Commercial Cities – Mid-to-Late Medieval (Paris, Venice, Milan)
3. Third Wave: Industrial Cities – 19th and early 20th (Detroit, London, St. Petersburg)
4. Fourth and Greatest Wave: Mega/Global Cities – NOW – (NYC, Tokyo, London)

A man wearing a brown fedora, a light blue denim jacket over a pink shirt, and brown pants is sitting on a concrete ledge. He has his hands clasped and is looking down. The background is a blurred city street with warm lights and an American flag.

THREE INGREDIENTS OF A GREAT CITY

1. Centers of Power
2. Centers of Culture
3. Centers of Worship



Cities Are Centers of Power

Cities were originally centers of safety, refuge, and shelter

Power is now concentrated around wealth and governance:

- Governance: Washington, D.C.
- Economics: New York, Tokyo
- Florida quote: “In the United States, more than 90 percent of all economic output is produced in metropolitan regions, while just the largest five metro regions account for 23 percent of it.”



Cities Are Centers of Culture

Majority of influential cultural products and artifacts are produced in cities:

- » Country Music: Nashville (even if most of it is idealizing small-town living)
- » Television and film: Los Angeles, Mumbai
- » Fashion: New York, Paris, Milan
- » Technology: Silicon Valley, Tokyo
- » Education: Boston

Not only do the suburbs receive CULTURE shaped by the city, they receive PEOPLE shaped by the city.



Cities Are Centers of Worship

- Because of a cosmopolitan spirit, city dwellers are uniquely open to new ideas
- The gospel is the one story that can rewrite all the misdirected stories that our cities are telling. It is the way that worship is rightly reordered and the way in which worship becomes life giving again

THREE KINDS OF CITY PEOPLE



1. Aspirational
2. Marginalized
3. Explorational

Aspirational

Cities are places where people go to prove themselves, to live out their dreams, achieve their highest desires, start new things, and advance their careers.

However, Cities can be difficult places for aspirational people:

- City can be isolating—dreams go unrealized—name-building is unsuccessful

The aspirational insecurities and idols are revealed.

Entry point for the gospel:

A NAME IS RECEIVED, NOT EARNED.

Marginalized

Marginalized people flock to cities because:

- Economic opportunity: the poor are attracted to cities because that is where the opportunities for advancement are
- Social opportunity: people who are not social outsiders or outcasts in other regions can find other people like themselves in cities

However, cities can be difficult places for marginalized people:

- Economic promises are unfulfilled because of poor social structures
- Social tolerance, when taken to its extreme, can lead to social degeneration

Entry point for the gospel:

OUR SECURITY AND WORTH IS NOT BASED ON WHAT WE EARN, AND OUR ACCEPTANCE IS NOT DERIVED FROM OUR SOCIAL CONTEXT.

Explorational

- Creatives, nonconformists, escapists, free spirits— many people are flocking to cities in search of new experiences and a fresh start.
- However, no pluralistic environment, no combination of experiences, no forged identity is robust enough to bring enduring satisfaction to the explorationist.

Entry point for the gospel:

WE WILL LIVE AN ULTIMATELY FULFILLING LIFE IN A NEW CITY



Clustered Density

- Ingenuity and imagination are amplified by way of interaction.
- Richard Florida has called this “the clustering force”
 - When my idea bumps up against your idea, the effect is one of both amplification and multiplication; our individual approaches are strengthened, while new ideas are spawned



Connective Diversity

The one phenomenon guaranteed to stifle the power of density is homogeneity.

- Density minus Diversity equals Addition – (no amplifying, multiplying effect)
- Density plus Diversity equals Multiplication – (diverse people sharpen each other)
- We need to be around people who are both *like* and *unlike* us

The City as AN Engine



Cities capitalize on human innovation to drive our world

FUEL: CREATIVITY

FUNCTION: COMPETITION

FRUIT: CULMINATION



The City as Gospel Gateway

- “Does rapid global urbanization, the nature of cities, and the growing influence of cities on our world provide us with a challenge, opportunity, and mandate for gospel-centered Christians in the twenty-first century and beyond?”
- Urban dwellers ultimately lack and need the upside-down, power sharing, worship reordering, redemptive work of Christ.



City and Creation

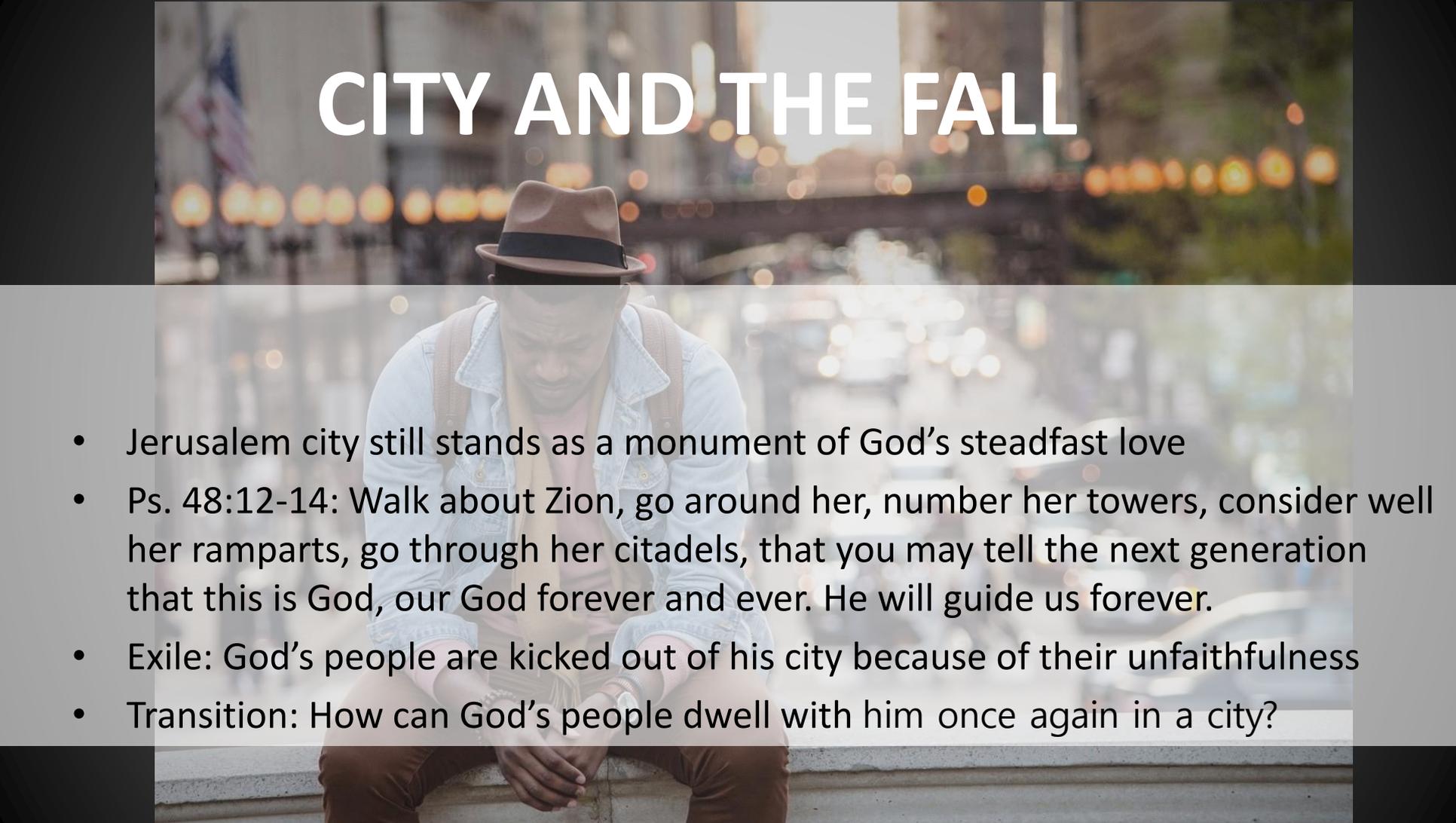
- Cultural Mandate – Gen. 1:28 – called to cultivate and care—subdue and rule
- Images of the garden in Genesis become urban images in the rest of Scripture.
- Psalmist puts the river in the middle of a city “there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High” (Ps. 46:4)
- The river and the tree of life, are prominently featured in the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Rev. 21:2).

CITY AND THE FALL



- God's urban intention continues, but is marred by human sin:
- First city is the one built by Cain for self-protection (Gen. 4)
- Cities have potential to become centers of idolatry
- Second major city was Babel: a humanistic self-glorification project (Gen 11)
- Despite human sin, God still desires to dwell with his people in a city:
- Ps. 48:1-2: Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.

CITY AND THE FALL



- Jerusalem city still stands as a monument of God's steadfast love
- Ps. 48:12-14: Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever.
- Exile: God's people are kicked out of his city because of their unfaithfulness
- Transition: How can God's people dwell with him once again in a city?

City and Redemption

- God comes down to rescue his people and dwell with them in a city again
- Jesus experiences the brokenness of the city
 - Idols of Jerusalem city (power, wealth, approval) cause the city to turn on Jesus
 - Jesus laments Jerusalem and calls it a “forsaken” city. How can a forsaken city be called ever again be called “Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken” (Isa. 62:12)?

City and Redemption

- Jesus dies “outside the gate” (Heb. 13:12) that God might welcome his people back in
 - He faithfully bears the punishment for our unfaithfulness so that his city can be called righteous and faithful (Isa. 1:26).
 - Ironically, the intensified evil of the city of man is the very instrument that God providentially uses to bring about the city’s salvation.
- Jesus rises from the dead as the first citizen of the new city
 - Changes the way we relate to our cities
 - Proclamation of the gospel—Posture of self-sacrificing, common-good service

City and Restoration

- The redemptive-historical plotline climaxes in a city. The city of Revelation 21 is “the Garden of Eden remade.” It is a garden city.
 - It is material and cultural (walls, gates, streets, fine jewels)
 - It is ultimately safe (large walls)
 - It is free from sin and brokenness (gates are always open, no fear of invasion)
 - We will experience perfect communion with God (no temple in the city)

City and Restoration

- All that the city was ever meant to be, but failed to be, one day it will be in the New Jerusalem.
- We will experience ultimate...
 - Cultural diversity and development
 - Refuge and comfort
 - Human flourishing and harmonious fellowship
 - Creativity and connective diversity
 - Unhindered proximity to the presence of God in the context of constant worship



**Contextualization, Storyline,
Ministry Vision**

The Call to Seek the Welfare of the City

- As already-not yet, sojourning people, we are called to seek the welfare of the city in the same way God instructed his exiled people to live in Babylon
- Jer. 29:7: But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
 - This Hebrew word *shalom* (translated here as “welfare”) means complete well-being, universal flourishing, wholeness, delight, and blessing.
- The city is where the people live. And God loves people! And since cities are full of people, we know that God really loves cities

Dual Dangers that Compromise Faithful Contextualization

- Abandoning your Worldview in the City (Over-Contextualization)
- Assimilating because the idols of the city become your idols
- Assimilating because you want to use the city to feed your idols
- Ironically, when we use the city it ends up using us
- First person came hoping to make it. He didn't make it, so he is unsatisfied
- Second person came hoping to make it. He did make it, but is also unsatisfied.
- Our cities are not meant to carry the weight of our worship.

Privatizing your Worldview in the City (Under-Contextualization)

Christians are to be “in the world but not of it.”

In John 17 Jesus acknowledges that his disciples are “in the world” (v. 11), while also stating that “they are not of the world” (v. 16).

- An over-concern for being in the world leads to silence in matters of faith.
- An over-concern for being not of the world leads to separation in matters of faith.
- Privatizing your faith is abandoning it. The essence of Christianity is public.

Transition: What is the alternative to abandoning or privatizing your faith in the city?

Contextualizing your worldview in the city

- The call to carefully contextualize the gospel is Jesus's command writ large: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 19:19).
- Cities are simply places full of neighbors, places with a higher and more diverse concentration of people than found elsewhere.
- Contextualize your worldview to your city the same way you would go about contextualizing your faith to an individual neighbor: listen first, speak second.

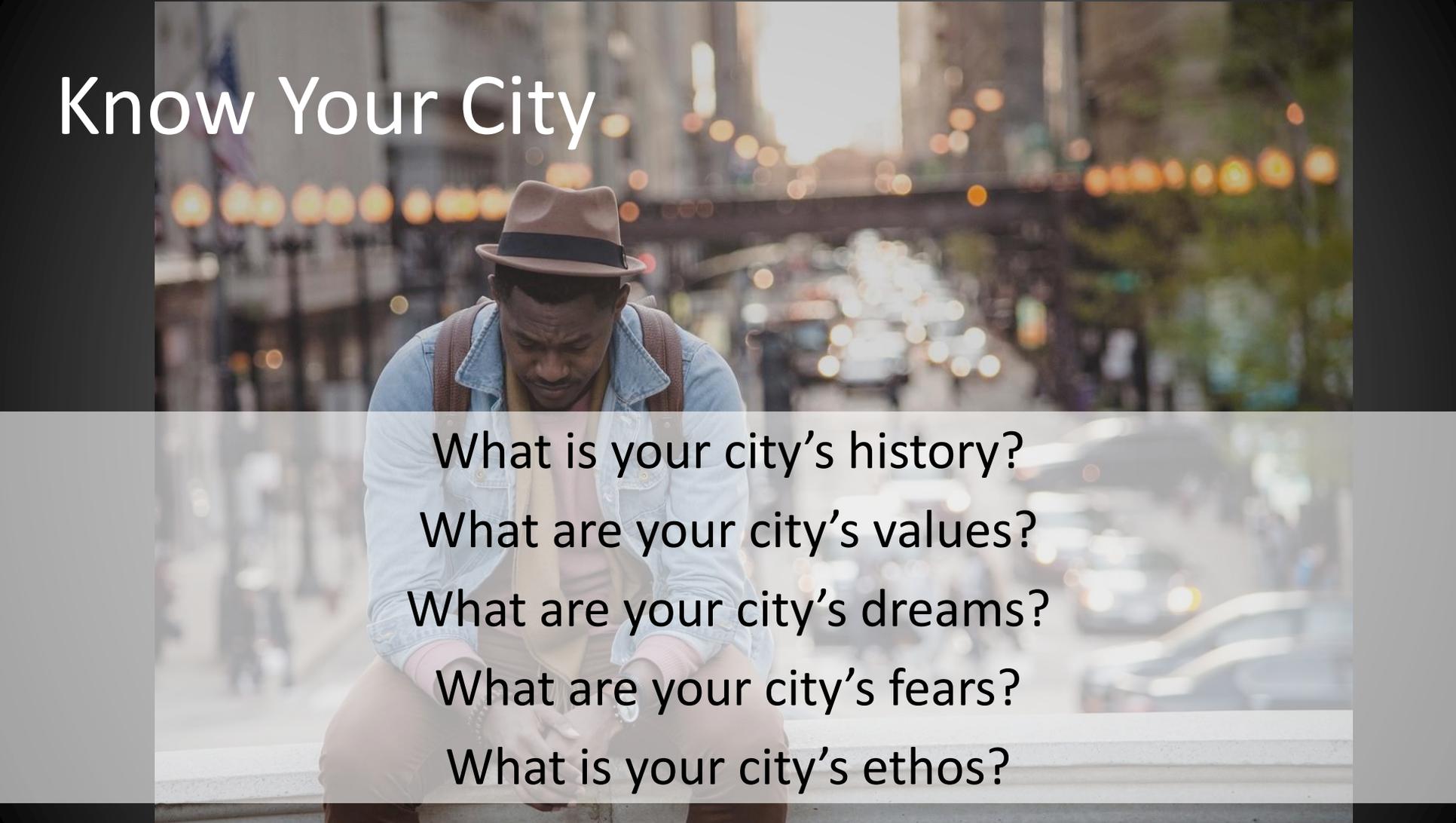


Who is Your City?



Five Questions for Contextualizing the Gospel:

Know Your City

A man wearing a brown fedora hat, a light blue denim jacket over a yellow shirt, and brown pants is sitting on a concrete ledge. He is looking down with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred city street at dusk, with warm lights from buildings and street lamps creating a bokeh effect. An American flag is visible in the background on the left.

- What is your city's history?
- What are your city's values?
- What are your city's dreams?
- What are your city's fears?
- What is your city's ethos?

Steps to Engaging Your City's Story

- 1. Know Your City's Story**
- 2. Challenge Your City's Story**
- 3. Retell Your City's Story**



Know Your City's Story

- Jerusalem: tradition—Rome: power—Athens: knowledge—Ephesus: religion
- How would you describe the prevailing voice of your city? How should this sense of your city's story shape how you live, work, worship, and witness in your city?



Challenge Your City's Story

Contextualized city ministry discerns the idols at the foundation of a city's story and skillfully confronts them, setting you up to retell them with the gospel. Every city has idols that need to be identified and shown for what they are.



Challenge Your City's Story

- If ministry in the city is not contextualized to challenge a city's unique idolatry, then our ministry will be shallow and unsubstantial.
- Our cities inhabitants must know that the idols they love do not love them back.



Challenge Your City's Story

Hopes and Idols

- Part of your city's story is built upon honorable hopes that need to be affirmed
- Part of your city's story is built upon dangerous idolatry that needs to be exposed and confronted.

Warning: Your idols will be exposed

- As we rub shoulders with the people and idols of our city, our own idols, blindspots, and prejudices are exposed.



Retell Your City's Story

- The gospel doesn't eradicate a city's story, but it brings completeness to it.
- Once a city's story has been challenged, it must be retold.
- The gospel resolves the thickening tension in the city's narrative, and shows that resolution, relief, and rest are to be found only in Jesus Christ.



Retell Your City's Story

Common error: We often make in the city is announcing the gospel without ever connecting it to the hopes and the idols of the city.

- The people of our cities are asking the question, “What sort of story am I in?”
- City ministry enters into the prevailing plotlines of the city and answers this question with the gospel



Urban Min Ideas

Outreach

- Poverty is a major problem in most cities. The urban ministry principle of outreach addresses reaching out into the community to connect with people by addressing their felt needs.



Urban Min Ideas

16 Outreach Areas

- The sixteen areas of life are: spiritual needs, addiction, crime, employment, education, financial, healthcare, housing, identification, immigration, legal issues, possessions, recreation, relationships, security, and transportation.



Urban Min Ideas

- **Community Development**
 - Community Development is the process by which local capacities are identified and mobilized to transform the community into what God intends it to be.



Urban Min Ideas

Key Areas of Community Development

- begin with felt needs of the people in the community
 - respond to those needs in a holistic way
 - are based on clear biblical principles
 - are “time-tested”
 - develop and utilize leaders from within the community
 - encourage relocation – living among the poor
 - demand reconciliation – people to God and people to people
 - empower the poor through redistribution – all community members
 - sharing their skills, talents, education, and resources to help each other
-



Urban Min Ideas

1. Community Development projects:

- Establish a Technology Resource Center and Training Course
- Build a network of after-school tutoring programs
- Transition food pantries into food stores
- Transition clothing closets into clothing stores
- Create a network of urban community gardens
- Continue to build upon the success of the Christmas Toy Stores
- Establish a micro-lending/community loan fund
- Partner with various youth athletic programs



Urban Min Ideas

1. Community Development projects:

- Put together a nutrition education program for churches
- Organize community clean-up days with neighborhood associations
- Host Poverty Simulations for youth groups and mission teams
- Organize financial budgeting courses for urban churches and communities
- Host medical/dental outreach days in targeted neighborhoods
- Continue to build on the success of the School Stores
- Replicate the English Language courses and offer at various locations
- Establish a Scholarship Fund to assist youth in urban churches to attend college
- Organize housing rehab efforts in targeted neighborhoods

EXAMPLE









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Urban Ministry

THEOLOGY FOR TRENCHES



DMin Urban Ministry

What is the Doctor of Ministry in Urban Ministry?

My Project: Urban Missional Small Group

“A COSMOPOLITAN THEOLGY FOR CREATING
AN URBAN MISSIONAL SMALL GROUP TO
REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS IN THE
CITY OF LACOMBE”



Cosmopolitan Theology

“If we began to regard all people we meet simply as fellow-humans, fellow-citizens-of-the-cosmos, regardless of their gender, skin color, physical/mental ability, sexual orientation, social class, or citizenship and nationality, it is not hard to imagine what the world would look like.”



Cosmopolitan Theology

theology that embraces and at the same time moves beyond collective identity position and group-based allegiances.

It crosses borders of gender, race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability.

It offers a vision of a global community of radical inclusion, solidarity, and deep compassion and justice for others.