

Developing a Heart for the City

CEF Purpose

To evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to establish (disciple) them in the Word of God and in a local church for Christian living... This includes all children especially those living in the urban centers of our world. **MISSION: known' and shown' Christ...**

Do you see this statement completely practiced by the church and CEF today?

Urban Challenges

1900 - 8% of world population lived in cities

2000 - nearly 50%

2007 - 50% of Americans live in the top 25 most populated cities --- 80% in the top 100 cities

2030 - estimated 75% of world's population will be in cities

Part of the reason for this shift - no matter what... you have an urban future:

Urbanization - the development of cities as places that draw/attract people to live

Urbanism - development of cities as a process for spinning urban values, products, lifestyles via media

Because there are always challenges in urban ministry, historically, most Christians do not want to be identified with the inner city. The greatest/primary challenge in the city is THEOLOGICAL. Where is the biblical basis for the dynamics and needs contained in the city? *Suffering, injustice, sexuality, education...* The Church must learn how to go up to the urban powerful and down to the urban powerless with equal integrity and passion.

REVOLUTION is all around us... shifts in the missions and the shift in the Gen-Next culture/generation.

Revolutions benefit society in at least 2 ways:

- 1.They help us become informed
- 2.They help us define our priorities

Read and obey the Bible through urban eyes rather than rural or traditional eyes. Discover the 1,250 uses of the word 'city' in the Bible and realize that urban ministry - city reaching is throughout the Scriptures. Read the Bible with a newspaper in hand and while spending time in the inner city.

Students: What is your response to this passage in the chapter, 'Why Evangelicals Can't Survive the City?' p.22 of Theology as Big as the City by Ray Bakke

Developing ...a heart for the city

If *Jesus* were walking with us today and asked, "What do you see? Do you see the need, the depths of despair, the pain?" Where would the Lord be asking you to look? **Refer to James 1:26-2:1**

The heart of God [biblically] responds to the disadvantaged with active compassion. This is the heart of pure/true religion. Compassion is all about connecting with the helpless condition of the hurting world. The spiritual and physical needs of this world are great. Look around, where are the greatest needs? Who is suffering the most? If you are called to Christ, you are called to compassion.

I think everyone needs a biblical reference to establish the importance of this attitude and relationship... Mary Johnson, Milwaukee

God's word teaches, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created them"(Genesis 1:27). C. I. Scofield describes the image as being found chiefly in the fact that man is a personal, rational and moral being who possesses the elements of personality similar to those of the divine person. These facts cannot be altered by social economic status, ethnic background, academic achievement nor geographical setting. Christians are Saints called by God (Romans 1:7) "and should be the minister of Jesus Christ... ministering the gospel of God." (Romans 15:16). Whatever situation, condition or environment a person is in that person is still in the image of God and Christians are responsible for ministering to their specific needs. Only through the Power of God, the Word of Word, and our intentional decision to practice the Heart of God can we develop a heart for the city and its people. This presentation should challenge your theology about the city and adjust your attitudes so that you can begin developing a heart for the city.

Reflections

1. Have you seen any difficulty loving the unlovely of the city? Why?

Increasingly, the poor have become nameless, faceless statistics. The poor are no longer our next-door neighbors, nor do they sit in the pew beside us.

2. Have you seen deeply into the eyes of children? Review: James 1:26 - 2:1

3. Have you seen children of the inner city being neglected? How?

Having to care for self and siblings, defend self, safety, inadequate/on-going programs...

4. Have you seen those negligent? Who?

Ask for student response: churches, ministries, organizations, etc.

5. Have you seen the results? What?

"When evangelicals left the city both physically and spiritually, this turf was conceded to the government and liberal churches; salt and light was removed from the city... the enemy devoured it."

6. Have you seen God's response?

"In this modern age, given the context of need in our inner cities, given the separation by class culture that exists, given our history what would Jesus have us do?" From Glen Kehrein, Circle Urban Ministries - Chicago. Have you read In His Steps by Charles Sheldon?

Q1-What do you see when looking at your city?

Look at the statistics. Ray Bakke reminds us in *A Theology as Big as the City*, "The frontier of missions has shifted to the cities. The greatest number of unreached people is no longer geographically distant but rather culturally distant. You must realize that the nations of the world are coming to the city." Today in a new millennium, missions have dramatically shifted in many ways, including from safe to dangerous, from receptive to hostile people groups, from villages and jungles to urban/city jungles. The 2000 U.S. Census revealed: 80% of the country's population lives in metro/urban areas.

Look at the trends. Everything from music to fashion, language and politics is dominated by urban trends, says Bob Bufford of *Leadership Networks*. Sociologists, market analysis and government officials pay close attention to what happens in urban America. What happens there will influence what happens everywhere.

Look at the task. There is no easy, painless or inexpensive way to minister in the city today. Urban ministry is nearly always cross-cultural and calls us beyond ourselves into uncharted territory. But city ministry is critical! D.L. Moody said, "Water runs downhill, and the highest hills are the great cities. If we can stir them, we shall stir the whole country."

Look at the Word. To practice obedience to the Word of God and participate in contemporary missions, we must go inside the city. We must cross, not only an ocean and a continent, but the street with the changeless Gospel. The entire Scriptures, including *Jesus*, demonstrate this theological practice.

Look at the Church. Where is the Church in regard to this mission field? Do our methods, ideas, and attitudes really impact today's urban kids? Do they produce devoted disciples for Christ? In *Dare to Love the Ghetto*, Keith Phillips tells about one particular church, "They took five or ten black boys from the inner-city for a week of camping experience, stuffed them full of the gospel, meticulously recorded each decision and then pitched them back into the ghetto with these words of comfort: God bless you! We'll send follow-up materials by mail. Hope everything works out."

A thorough assessment of one's attitude is crucial for two reasons: Mary Johnson, Milwaukee

- (1) If a person from outside the city goes into the city to minister with the attitude that "these children are different from others, I have low expectation for them, they will not live up to God standards because of their background, etc. this attitude will be communicated to the children, even though it is not verbally expressed. This became very obvious to me when I first attended the Good News Club. My opinion was verified last Thursday when one of the teachers asked to have a conference with me at which time she apologized for a remark that she had made about the children at a staff meeting and asked my forgiveness. I commended her for recognizing this and gave her a big hug to encourage her to continue to reflect on her attitude and express changes that need to be made in order to be effective with the children.
- (2) However, this was not a racial situation because my experience with the leaders in our church is far worst than this and they have the same racial background as the children. About six months ago the pastor made remarks from the pulpit that the girls are getting pregnant because they see other girls with a baby. We have two teen-aged parents in the past year and they are both from broken families. Last Sunday after I made the announcement about the session to learn how to minister to today's youth, one of the girls came to me and asked why did the pastor condemn the girls with babies. On Easter Sunday I was in the hall assisting the Men's class with their presentation and observed a confrontation one of the deacons had with this same girl's thirteen-year-old brother. The deacon called the boy a punk because he was in the hall waiting for his sister to change the baby and come out of the lady's restroom. This is the family that I fast for each Wednesday.

Q2-How would you Respond?

Can you see the Heart of God? What does the Bible say?

Read: Matthew 9:35-38. Which words jump out at you re. city? The word 'weary' *NKJV* is also 'harassed, dispirited, or distressed' means to be flayed open, in hopeless despair, thrown down, to be at the end of oneself - the recurring effects of those who are 'weary' can be pictured as a rock is thrown onto a pond, which results in a seemingly never-ending cycle of ripples and rings, thus illustrating the downward spiral of discouragement and hopelessness felt by the poor and disenfranchised. Jesus was moved with compassion. He saw beyond external appearances into the hearts of the people. He saw that they were unprotected, unsaved, and unguided. Jesus was a revolutionary because He lived differently, teaching a groundbreaking world order through His demeanor and behavior. His words simply magnified and clarified what He was demonstrating in the flesh. George Barna from Revolution

What are examples and spiritual applications of this dynamic in the lives of poor?

(Health insurance or transportation...)

How would you Respond?

When you walk down the streets of our cities, when you drive threwneglected, despairing, destitute neighborhoods, when you see crowds of people... How deeply do you see? Are you moved with compassion or revulsion? How does your heart respond?

Condemnation? Attitudes like: 'They deserve what they get. Why don't they get a job? Well, Jesus even said that the poor will always be with us. [Deuteronomy 15:11] How can they live like that? Don't they care? Look how dirty those kids are?

Cultural Chasm? Apprehension because of being culturally distant from those in the inner city

Curiosity? Attracted to a fabricated danger, trendiness, or self-centered glorification by going into the 'hood' and doing good deeds

Compassion? Attitude that is God-centered, which causes your heart to love, reach out, and be enriched by those in the city

Q3-What is the problem?

Rejection

When God is rejected by people anywhere there are certain consequences. Proverb 28:19

How has God been rejected in the city?

For many years people in cities across America have rejected God in their personal and corporate lives. As the results of this rejection it became uncomfortable and undesirable; families and most churches abandoned their cities; and forfeited them over to evil --- demonic forces.

As a result:

1. Deteriorating social conditions escalated because people rejected God and rejected the mess they had made. This is a spiritual mess, which resulted in a physical, social, political, and economic tragedy. Our struggle is not against the physical (poverty, abuses, etc. Ephesians 6:12) or man.

2. Poverty followed soon after. In every area of life (physical and spiritual), poverty is the result when God is rejected (examples in Nigeria or Europe). This is certainly a spiritual battle and needs a supernatural solution. **What did Jesus say about the poor and needy?**

Deuteronomy 15:7-11, 15 (remember Ephesians 2:1-8); **Amos 2:6-7, 4:1-5, 5:21-24** (Let Justice Roll Down, John Perkins); **Luke 10:25-37; Ezekiel 16:48-50**

Poverty is often a source of alienation; inequity causes anger; destructive survival and negative behavior (aggression) pull families down. Satan's plan is very effective (Thousands of years of learning the best military tyrants in human history)! Christians must view this condition with the mind of Christ.

FEAR! *Shame-Blame-Game*: Teaching should be altered to address the impact fear has on the child.

What is the problem?

Not having a current Realization of the city.

Spiritual poverty produces hardship in every area of life. Especially for children and the poor. Are they not the most vulnerable? [Lam. 2:19]

There must be a realization that unless city kids are affected by the Gospel and life change begins early, the probability is that they will be pulled into the generational cycle of crime, poverty, and ungodliness.

Sin in the city is because of sin in the Church...

Regarding your ministry with children, respond to the following:

State your purpose - Something to live for... What's your purpose? [Luke 10:27-28]

State your most important cause - Something worth dying for... (Values and passions) Do you have a cause? [1 Samuel 17:29]

State the ways you connect with kids - Nurture and care for the children you teach; equip them for living; hug them; build them up on the inside; most of their outsides are spoiled. How do city kids respond to you?

State your definition for success - What impact has your ministry made upon them? How are you measuring success?

Q4-What is the solution?

Redemption

The primary solution to the problems in the city is redemption from sin, which gives hope, salvation, and empowers people with God's Spirit:

- Redeeming hope for the hopeless conditions of children you see
- Redeeming salvation from our negative attitudes towards ministering in the city
- Redeeming power that works within you to desire whatever way God chooses to develop a heart within you for the city and its people

Go to the needy/poor with Humility, Generosity, and Compassion, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 9:7

He who has the greatest truth must show the greatest love, which is the greatest proof. Lem Tucker

We need to be reminded often of what the Lord has done for us. [Philippians 2:1] Now you can carry the same message of redemption to city kids and allow God to affect the change that no person, program, or government plan can do. This is the beginning...

What is the solution?

Resolution

In developing a heart for the city you and your ministry must have a firm resolve. A plan must be followed for resolution of its problems. It's found in three words:

Values - describe who we are and what we really believe

Vision and Resources- describes where we are going and what we will use and how we will use it

What is the solution?

Having Godly **VALUES**

Core values are consistent, passionate, biblical, and distinctive convictions that determine our priorities, influence our decisions, drive our ministry and are demonstrated by our behavior. Our real core values are exposed in the way we minister, to whom we minister, and also where we minister.

Why are core values important?

- 1.Values provide the foundation for formulating goals and giving direction for ministry.
- 2.Most strategic planning fails because values are not articulated in the beginning of the process.
- 3.Conflict arises often due to differing values.

What are 'Key Questions' in determining your core values?

- 1.What is your ministry really supposed to be doing?
- 2.What do you get passionate about?
- 3.How do you invest your time and money?
- 4.For what do you (your ministry) want to be remembered?
- 5.Are these values action-oriented?
- 6.Does your ministry's action or behavior demonstrate or address these core values?

Your heart for the city will be evident in your core values.

He who has the greater word must show the greater love, which is the greatest proof. *Lem Tucker*

Do I value people in the city?

Then you will make intentional decisions to build long-term relationships. Intentionally doing so across cultural barriers believing that building such relationships enriches ones life. The people and its diversity within the city enriches and broadens ones vision and ministry. It presents itself as an indigenous vault of resources.

Exchange ideas from students via open discussion:

- City officials
- Pastors/Christian leaders
- Moms/Dads

- Multi-tasking programs
- Schools
- Ministries

Do I value leadership development?

Will you pour yourself into those that God sends your way by taking what He poured into you and redistributing and reinvesting it into them? Making spiritual disciples for Christ in the city... [Matthew 28:19-20] Making spiritual leaders for Christ in the city... [Philippians 3:10]

It's about teaching and leading others into a life of... **Sacrifice - Suffering - Service**

Refer. Jesus...

Because we children of Adam want to become great,

He became small.

Because we will not stoop,

He humbled Himself.

Because we want to rule,

He came to serve.

Have a Christ-like attitude and risk being used or abused while engaged in discipleship (revolving door). Offer history of personal ministry in the city with many disappointments and victories.

Do you value reconciliation?

This is a result of redemption -- the end being made right with God -- now we are (can be) His ambassadors... [2 Corinthians 5:19-20] Satan has a plan to alienate and separate us from God and each other. Our racial, social, denominational, or economical status and ideologies are major barriers to biblical unity. The defining value or characteristic of a Christian, which brings about change and solutions in the city, is love for one another. To love, care, forgive, as well as repent of past failures, and seek the forgiveness, from those in the city, for past sins/prejudices will shatter the barriers that have divided numerous generations. There is no sin too great for the blood of Christ to forgive. You and I must follow His example. You and I need to repent and forgive (ourselves and others) without exception. Will you repent, forgive and reconcile with others? [Psalm 133] Consider and read this pledge for unity...

Unity Pledge

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I am committed to the unity and harmony intended for His Body, the Church. I repent and ask forgiveness for any way I have alienated others. I share remorse for every thought, word, or action that has divided the Church. I will forgive those who have sinned against me. I will pray for the unity and harmony of God's people. And I will work with other Christians to move beyond any racial barriers, demonstrating the unity of the Glory of Christ our Lord. *(card enclosed)*

Do I value risk-taking?

Willing to at least try...

It is in the heat of urban 'risk-taking' ministry that some of the most innovative and energetic ministries are developed today and pioneer paths for the church tomorrow.

- 1.After-school, mentoring, tutoring and other special programs sponsored by indigenous churches
- 2.Long-term commitments to disciple indigenous leaders
- 3.Training, teaching, and ministry development standards
- 4.Bridge teams and young teen programs

(Examples: creation of the 7MIT and song, DIS clubs, etc.)

Partnerships --- Willing to loose credit...

To facilitate a visionary/mediator to help local pastors in the inner city reconcile with one another so that children and families would more effectively be evangelized and served.

Target Groups --- Willing to be rejected...

Ministering/networking in settings where receptivity to the message is unknown, but trusting God for what to say and do... Allowing God speak through you in mixed gatherings of people

Cross-cultural --- Willing to be misunderstood...

Working and ministering across cultural lines, discussing issues, addressing problems, and offering to work towards solutions even though you may not be fully received or understood.

Projects --- Willing to fail...

Investing time, funds, and energy into projects for the spiritual and physical benefit of the city. Working on the task in cooperation with indigenous leadership and workforce knowing that the task could be done better, quicker, and more completely if done with outside assistance.

Programs-Locations --- Willing to change...

Changing programs, locations, methods, etc. This is a matter of evaluating and making hard decisions to implement changes for a greater vision in ministry. Many times these decisions will rival other ministries and be non-traditional. Most of the changes will have a higher price tag, need more workers, and have resistance and criticism.

Do I value relocation?

Are you willing to stay (live) and serve the Lord in a community of need? Living and serving in the city comes with a cost. You experience life as your neighbors. You struggle in the city with those that you intend to minister and help. You share the struggle. You have a bond - common ground to work from, which builds a trusting relationship. There is a refreshing movement that blows through urban streets of America today. It's called *incarnational* ministry, which is simply to live and be enriched (stimulated) by the people you minister to. Whether or not you presently work on "the inside" with city kids, effective ideas are born in the city and will inspire your creativity and enhance your ministry.

What is the solution?

Having Godly Vision

- 1.Desires fruitful outcomes in ministry/initiatives
- 2.Describes what the ministry will look like in five years
- 3.Develops a mental image that motivate people

Having God's Resources

Look inside the city. There is a vault of resources that cannot be found anywhere else or produce your projected outcomes like people, programs, and pulpits within the city and communities that you minister. They can supply the needs and take ownership of the vision.

What vision has God given you?

It must focus upon Christ and His compassion for those in the city. It must consider the necessity and the willingness to make a long-term commitment of staying and serving in the city.

Staying and Serving

It may take fifteen years to develop indigenous urban leadership. What are the implications when this decision is made?

- Heavenly considerations - Does God want you to make this commitment?
- Family considerations - What affect will this decision have on your family?
- Ministry considerations - Would this decision enhance or distract your present ministry and staff?
- Personal considerations - Is God really leading you in this decision?
- This type of commitment is rare and not for the weak.
- Will your vision be focused on making a long-term commitment?

Networking

A God-given vision will be inclusive of His Kingdom at-large. [Matthew 16:18-20]

This is about kingdom building... Indigenous partners and leadership with the same vision will empower people in the Kingdom if done long-term. Examples of successful networking:

- Indigenous families
- Local church-based outreach ministries
- National urban network of ministries

- Evangelistic ministry teams
- Auxiliary-Helps ministries

Church Partnerships

This is where churches, individuals, and ministries come together, sharing resources, and collaborating for a common cause or purpose with specific outcomes.

- Suburban and urban churches in collaboration
- Cross-cultural intentions in ministry events/programs
- Indigenous schools/needs
- Financial underwriting/support
- Indigenous and church-based workers

A few ministry examples:

- JC's Kitchen --- Albany, NY
- Harrabee --- Pasadena, CA
- Youth Life Center Coalition --- Durham, NC
- Adopt-a-school --- USA cities
- Lawndale Community Development --- Chicago, IL
- Extra Good News --- Durham, NC

Innovative Outreach Events

- Sports camps and clinics
- Art programs, classes, and projects
- Medical/dental missions
- Prisoners kids --- 'One Day with God'
- Tutoring-Mentoring-Homework

Creative Ministries

- Mime
- Clowning
- Graffiti art
- Drama
- Step/dance
- Comedy
- Rap/Music (CEF Holy Hip Hop CD)
- Puppets ministries

Diversity and Development

These are intentional efforts to minister cross-culturally to children, youth, and the community. You visit and get to know the community. You ask the people what they would like to see happen in their community. You lovingly and respectfully work beside them. You train and equip them to take ownership of their community. What are the results and long-term benefits to the city, your church, and your life with this approach to ministry?

Poem to illustrate effective leadership development... author unknown

Go to the people
 Live among them
 Learn from them
 Love them
 Start with what they know
 Build on what they have:
 But of the best leaders
 When their task is done
 The people will remark
 'We have done it ourselves.'

Q5-How can you begin... reaching urban kids for Christ with a heart for the city?

Read: James 1:26-2:1

The heart of God responds to the disadvantaged with an active compassion. This is the heart of pure/true religion. Compassion is all about connecting with the helpless condition of the hurting world. The spiritual and physical needs of this world are great. Look around, where are the greatest needs? Who is suffering the most? If you are called to Christ, you are called to compassion. As this calling becomes more real, as your values become more God-centered, and as you develop a more biblical vision (worldview), you will have a heart for the city.

What is your ministry plan?

1. *Make some personal and ministry adjustments*
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What are the opportunities?

1. Fulfill the 'Great Commission' (Acts 1:8)
2. Equipping, sharing, and ministering together (Acts 2)
3. Impact thousands of lives everyday (Acts 3)

What are my action-points?

1. *Pray for vision confirmation*
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Whatever you write, please, for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of your calling, and for the sake of city kids who need God and who need you... **Go the Distance!!!**

CEF of North Carolina

Education and Discipleship at the CEF Center of Light

www.gospeltokids.org

cefcenteroflight@aol.com

919.682.7317

John E. Blake