

Examples to Follow!

John Blake

How are things since you took your game “on the inside”? Are you tired of the talk and complaining about city kids? Violence, drugs, loneliness, divorce -- you know the list. Have you heard it all, done it all, seen it all, and you still wonder, “Am I even making a difference at all?”

You’ve made a serious commitment to do whatever it takes to make a difference in the lives of kids today. You are visiting kids on their turf. But now what?

We all agree -- we have cried, talked, and blamed for far too long. Finally, many Christian workers are saying, “Enough is enough, today’s kids are in pain!” They scream for answers and assurance that what they do will make a difference. But it is tough.

Jesus gave us an example to follow so we can make that difference. 1 Peter 2:21 says: “For Christ also suffered on our behalf, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps.”

What was Jesus’ ministry strategy? He intentionally went through Samaria and other cities. Jesus hung out and reached out to sinners. Jesus supplied spiritual and physical needs from the least to the greatest. Jesus had only a few disciples but His kingdom endures forever.

Do you want to minister like that? There is a refreshing movement that blows through the urban streets of America today. It’s called “incarnational” ministry, which is simply to live and be enriched by the people you minister to. Whether or not you presently work on “the inside” with city kids, these ideas will inspire your creativity and enhance your ministry.

There are many notable ministries than could be mentioned here. In future issues, others will also be highlighted. These are based on the “inside” and minister to the most needy and disenfranchised people of their cities.

Junior Youth (Challenge) - New York City - Kathleen Byrnes [byrneskathleen@yahoo.com]

J.Y.C. is a partnership of C.E.F.[®] with Christians across New York City. It impacts 11-14 year-olds, who are reached through a variety of ministries. Their desire is for young people to be saved, strengthened, and to serve the Lord. A typical J.Y.C. meets bi-weekly for one hour of Bible-centered activities. Camping and extra outings are additional features.

Harambee Christian Family Center - Pasadena, CA – Rudy Carrasco [www.harambee.org]

John and Vera Mae Perkins targeted a twelve-block area of Pasadena and started Harambee, which means "Let's Push Together" in Swahili. Staff and interns work with African-American and Latino children and families through after-school tutoring, Good News Clubs[®], and summer day camps. This program is emulated by organizations nationwide and was recognized by President George Bush. There is a peculiar focus upon indigenous leadership development, which spans many years, with the goal of seeing students through college graduation and back into their community as leaders committed to repeating the cycle of indigenous development.

Extra Good News[™] - Durham, NC – Cynthia McBeth or John Blake [xgnurban@aol.com]

Child Evangelism Fellowship[®] staff and volunteers conduct a comprehensive, block-by-block visitation approach to build life-changing relationships with boys and girls. The inner city is divided into several districts. Buses transport children to the big Saturday events, which feature high-energy games, live music, one central Bible truth, the Gospel and special activities designed to grip the kid's attention. . District events are conducted with church partners for discipleship of the children and their families. Please see: ETC magazine S/O 1999 p.16, J/F 2002 p.14-15 for further reference.

J.C.'s Kitchen - Albany, NY - Pastor Charlie Muller, Victory Church [#518-434-6100]

This inner city pastor prayed and began buying property at various “city gates” (entry points) to the city. A feeding center now meets the physical and spiritual needs of youth, which is open from 3-5 pm seven days a week. It features a worship center, dining area, and soda shop with arcade games. Church based after-school programs, camps, sports, and Bible clubs are held every day of the week for children and teens. The church is on the frontlines of ministry.

Inner City Impact - Chicago - William Dillon [www.innercityimpact.org]

They exist to build the Kingdom of God . . . one child at a time. Evangelism and discipleship are accomplished through after school clubs, sports and camping programs. Staff work and live in the inner city and are available 24 hours a day. They spend time with kids seeking opportunity to model Christ and show them what it means to live the Christian life. They also attend church together.

As you can see, meeting real needs affirms the dignity of people and displays the true love of God for them. There are numerous examples across America. What will you do next? Meet me next time -- on the inside to see how and where you can make the greatest difference.

John Blake is the local director for CEF in Durham, North Carolina. For information on other ministries and feedback on this article contact CEF of Durham Area at cefceneteroflight@aol.com or call 919-682-7317.