Developing Strategies for Reaching Cities
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It is popular, because of accessible global travel and instant world news, to refer to our modern world as a "global village." It would seem to be more correct, however, to speak of the world as a "global city."

The Urban Challenge

Today more than half the world population lives in cities. In 1900 only 8 percent did. The spectacular growth of large cities on our planet creates an awesome challenge to the Christian Church on all six continents. There are presently 300 cities of over a million people and within 20 years there will be 570. It is projected that by the end of the next century, two-thirds of the world will live in one of 1,660 mega cities of over a million residents each. That is phenomenal growth from only one mega city in the 19th century (Barrett 1986). Clearly a Sovereign God is urbanizing the world.

Much of this exploding urban growth has been in giant cities located in the Two-thirds world. Of the seven cities in 1950 with over 5 million residents, only two were in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. By 1985, 22 of the 34 giant cities were in the developing world. By 2020 it is estimated that the Two-thirds world will be home to 80 of our globe's 93 giant cities (Fox 1984, 179-85). Towns are becoming cities, cities are becoming metropolises, and metropolises are becoming megapolises. Everywhere we look there are people, people, people – lost people who need to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. What will be the Church's response?

Cities in the developing world are also continuing to expand, though more slowly. By the year 2000 Los Angeles will be a metropolis of over 14 million. Metro New York will be almost 20 million, Paris over 10 million, and Tokyo almost 24 million (Bakke 1997, 84). Three out of four Americans now live in an urban center of 50,000 or more. Half of all Americans live in just 40 metropolitan areas, and over half of these people are unchurched. When Jesus saw the urban multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them. Do we care?

America's cities are a vast mosaic of diverse cultures, languages and ethnic makeup. Detroit, for example has 100 ethnic groups. Often each group is separated from the others by invisible boundaries. Our nation's cities are home to 60 million culturally distinct peoples. Three-fourths of these are non-Christians. A Sovereign God is literally bringing the mission fields of the world to America's urban doorstep! In a few years 50 of our largest cities will be predominately minority, people of color. Will evangelical Christians continue to respond to our urban "Samarias" with benign neglect? Or will we face these urban realities with carefully thought-out strategies of outreach?

Strategy Defended

In the past, many Christian leaders and missionaries shunned strategy planning. Some felt strategic planning was incompatible with the belief in the sovereignty of God. Others contended it left out dependency upon the leading of the Holy Spirit, quenching His work. Both objections were wrong. A Sovereign God has always chosen to use human instruments to do His work. The divine-human cooperative in spreading the gospel is clearly seen in Scripture (I Cor. 3:6, 7,etc.). In Christian service we *are* to be prayerful and Spirit-controlled. But we are also permitted, yes even expected, to use our full "human energy and faculties." As missiologist Peter Wagner rightly reminds us, part of God's leading, as creatures made in his image, "consists of His using

our powers of reason to accomplish His will" (Wagner 1987, 23-4). Our Savior commands us to

love the Father with all our heart and soul and mind (Matt. 22:37).

> Provided God's servants have the proper relationship with Him, we are free to plan strategy using the methods and technology that will best accomplish the work of God in the world. The Father is interested enough in what we are doing to intervene, redirect and correct as necessary. (Wagner 1987, 23-4)

We must prayerfully commit all of our strategic planning to the sovereign out working of

His global purposes (see James 4:13-17), but then fully use our "sanctified common sense" to

advance His kingdom work. In the Old Testament, Proverbs repeatedly commends those who do

wise planning (16:9; 13:16,19; 18:15). And in the New Testament, the model urban missionary

Paul was very flexible (Yes, even "pragmatic"!) in his strategic choice of evangelistic

methodologies (see I Cor. 9:19-23). Clearly Christian missionaries today must be strategists as

well.

Strategic planning, like prayer, is the advance work of the kingdom. Before we deploy

personnel it is absolutely essential we develop our master plan. We must estimate the cost before

we build; we must count the size/strength of our army before going to battle (Luke 14:28-33).

Strategy Defined

What, then, is strategy? Wagner, in simple terms, defines it as "the chosen means to

accomplish a predetermined goal" (1987, 26). So an urban strategy is a carefully devised plan to

accomplish biblical objectives and to reach cities for Christ. "A strategy is an overall approach,

plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem"

(Dayton and Fraser 1990, 13).

Normally strategy is preceded by intensive research. We must secure demographic data, identify needy target groups, test their receptivity to the Gospel, analyze current urban and projected growth patterns, etc. We ask, "What has been happening in this city? Why has it been happening?" Strategy, then, takes this raw material of preliminary and diagnostic research and "gives it purpose and direction" (Conn 1997, 69). Obviously the better we understand the city, urban growth patterns and their significance, the better strategists we will be. Timothy Monsma explains,

> Knowledge of urban dynamics will . . .
> 1. Aid in initiating work in new areas, e.g. , growth rates, ethnic makeup, etc.
> 2. Aid in obtaining land or buildings (buying before the prices rise due to expanding population).
> 3. Aid in distributing workers wisely, e.g., where growth is most rapid, etc.
> 4. Help determine which special ministries ought to be used. (Monsma 1977, 13-14)

It is obvious from this that urban research studies and surveys are only beneficial when they lead us to a plan of action, i.e. an urban strategy.

Conn reminds us that strategy planning is ultimately a hope-filled exercise of discrimination and of faith which should "become the first step in evangelism" (75-7). Hence it is eminently practical and not mere abstract theorizing.

Advantages of Strategy

Why is a carefully articulated strategy so beneficial to urban workers and leaders? It helps us agree upon priorities and then wisely allocate our resources. As good stewards we want to avoid needless expenditures of time, energy and finances. Strategy helps us determine where and how to begin our work for God in a huge city. Clearly, if we fail to plan, we are planning to fail. We will often flounder around in uncertainty with the felt needs of a massive city shouting at us from

all sides. Peter Wagner gives six additional advantages to having a solid strategy, all of which

certainly apply to urban missions. First, a strategy "increases efficiency," helping us decide what

to do and what not to do. Second, a strategy "helps measure effectiveness," clarifying our

objectives so we can see if and when we have fulfilled them. Third, strategy "permits mid-course

correction," giving us checkpoints to regularly reassess our methodology. Fourth, strategy "unites

the team," showing each urban worker what he/she is expected to do. Fifth, strategy "makes

accountability natural." Finally, a successful strategy can serve as a training model, helping

others undertake similar tasks (1987, 32-33).

Besides these practical benefits of strategic planning, there is a surprising spiritual one as

well. Harvie Conn reminds us that God-centered planning promotes "awe and reverence." Rather

than being overwhelmed and alarmed at the immensity of the task awaiting us in our giant cities,

we must be driven to our Great Commissioner who gives us great promises of urban success and

penetration (see Deut. 6:1; Numbers 14:9; Acts 18:9-10). Conn (1997, 78) admonished us to fear

God not big cities:

> Reverence guards us from technological arrogance; awe moves us to humility
> Strategy planning calls us to worship. Jerichos, no matter how strong they look to
> the strategists, fall like houses of cards when we are ready to shout, "The Lord has
> given you the city" (Josh. 6:16).

Needed: A Comprehensive Urban Strategy

Because urban centers often are so massive and heterogeneous, a multi-faceted strategy

plan will normally be required. No one strategy will suffice. There is no "right" strategy for

every city. No standard pre-packaged approach will do. Custom-made strategies may be essential

for each city, especially for "world-class" mega cities (defined as an international, cosmopolitan

urban center with a million or more population). Church planter Ben Sawatsky explains,

> Their unique nature and staggering needs require a carefully laid plan. We must minister *to* the city as well *in* the city . . . . Traditional strategies which call for the purchase of land and the erection of buildings are costly, not frequently repeatable, and beyond the reach of national church bodies. We need innovative and contextualized church planting strategies for the world class cities frontier. (1985, 8)

Each section of the city, each ethnic people group, "each high rise, each squatter settlement has its own character and should be studied individually. Language, culture, family composition, employment – all these have a way of impinging on the strategy that is applied and the character of the church that emerges" (Allen 1986, 11).

Obviously, great wisdom is needed to arrive at effective urban strategies. Only the Lord God can ultimately equip us for this challenging task. And the place to start is not sociology but theology. Ray Bakke reminds us that "the biblical resources are as vast as the exploding cities themselves. Indeed the more than 1,200 references to cities are but a starting point for discovering God's urban agenda. We must be prepared to research the totality of the creative and redemptive themes of both Testaments" (1997, 80). Because the Scriptures and history reveal a Creator God who for 40 centuries has been building cities, we can "reflect upon God's mission in the world and humbly inquire about his sovereign purposes in the radical, even awesome, urbanization of the world in our time." We also have the record in the Acts of the urban missionary outreach of the early churches and apostles. Paul, for example, "had a veritable tool kit of urban evangelistic strategies" (Bakke 1997, 80).

Numerous urban strategies are being proposed, tested and refined today. The sheer number of proposals is, at times, bewildering. Ray Bakke, in an earlier work, lists sixteen strategies for urban mission. He then adds this insightful comment, "The mere existence of models and strategies does not guarantee health and vitality. Some cities have them in place, but they are not

functioning in the strong name of Jesus Christ with vision, compassion and competence" (1987, 192-3). Obviously, each suggested strategy needs to be evaluated according to biblical principles and priorities. The ultimate question must be: Is this master plan, when implemented well, resulting in lost urbanites coming to Christ, new believers discipled, and new churches established? The Great Commission, at its very core, mandates us to "do missions" with this threefold objective. Furthermore it is the author's firm conviction that church planting is the most effective tool for evangelism and discipleship ever created. With these fundamental presuppositions in mind, we will now quickly review five of the most promising urban church planting strategies. Space will not permit us to give exhaustive descriptions of each. Our purpose will be to prompt the inquiring reader to seek out the original source.

Five Model Strategies

First, is the **Training Team Model**. The core of this strategy, as successfully implemented by the E.F.C.A. in Malaysia, and later described by missionary Ben Sawatsky, is:

> A team of missionaries (and eventually nationals) representing a constellation of complementary gifts, skills, training and experience, will work together to achieve a common objective, the equipping of a plurality of locally based church planting teams which in turn will plant local churches. This strategy, as developed by our mission, calls for a team of trainers equipping teams of church planters with the view to "planting" and "watering" local churches. (1985, 8)

The key to this approach is found in the fact that the team of trainers does very little direct evangelism and church planting, except where necessary to model various ministry skills, or to encourage and enhance local leaders' efforts. The team of trainees, mostly layman, are carefully recruited out of a local parenting church. They pursue a rigorous training cycle at an accessible training center designed to provide classes, counseling, materials and resources for church

planting/growth. The E.F.C.A. uses an intensive four-phased five-year training program to equip national church planting teams while they are starting the new churches. Each new congregation is expected to develop a holistic urban ministry, be family-focused, aggressively evangelistic, small group-oriented, targeting the upwardly mobile middle-class, be content with being a mid-sized church, and planning on giving birth to a daughter church every five years (1985, 8-19)! Two other groups have successfully used modified versions of this basic model. In the Dominican Republic the Christian Reformed Church has seen this "Training Center" model grow over 200 new churches in ten year span (Greenway n.d., Model #15). The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, a coalition of over 60 missions and churches, has a goal to see reproducing churches planted within reach of every inhabit of Central/Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. To facilitate a church planting movement in the 15 countries of this vast region they are mobilizing both mobile and resident training teams to serve as coaches and catalysts to stir up and equip national church planting teams. Using this approach Alliance training teams, in their first five years (1992-97) helped national church planters to plant almost 2,500 new churches (The Alliance Impact 1998)!

Second, is the **Urban Resource Center Model**. The Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston, directed by Dog and Judy Hall, is probably the best known example of this approach. This nondenominational parachurch center has served as an "incubator" to jump-start over 25 new churches in the metro area. It does so by graciously providing worship and office space for up to four new congregations simultaneously, each being allowed to utilize the Center's facilities for up to two years. In addition Emmanuel serves as an urban resource center providing church leaders with updated demographic research, an urban ministry library, urban consultants, office and multimedia equipment, TEE training classes, summer interns, etc. Holistic "word and deed"

outreach ministries also serve needy inner city residents, providing youth programs, food, clothing, medical and legal assistance, biblical and financial counselors, and use of the gym (Greenway, Model #6).

Third, is the ***School Church Planting Model.*** Over 21 years ago Francis Dubose, a Southern Baptist urban missions professor, described how their Home Mission Board, in cooperation with denominational seminaries and colleges, hired qualified students and teamed them up to start new works during ten-week summer internships. Before leaving for the field, each outreach team was "intensively trained and supervised in a number skills: surveying, personal witnessing, Backyard Bible Clubs, putting on a public event such as a gospel concert, and conducting a Home Fellowship Bible Class." State conventions and/or local associations provided the students' local expenses, sponsored the new churches, and oversaw their weekly outreach ministry. Dubose claims that one summer with over 160 students on the field about 80 permanent new churches were started (1978, 138-40)!

Greenway reports that in Mexico City this school model was utilized all year round, sending students into the slums, squatter settlements, and high rise apartments, and resulted in an estimated 50 new churches planted, 45 surviving (1999, Model #5). The author is now directing a similar church planting program, termed "Project Jerusalem," out of Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. Men in the Master of Divinity program, with a concentration in church planting, are required to do a one year internship and lead a new church start under the director's supervision. The core values of this innovative, fully-accredited program are: learning-by-doing, imparting practical skills, and partnering with area local churches and mission agencies.

Fourth, is the ***Multi-Congregational Model***. This strategy is particularly designed for reaching many ethnic groups in a large heterogenous city. Daniel Sanchez, former evangelism executive for the New York State Baptist Convention (SBC) first recommended this model for churches in transitional communities (1976, 4-6; see also Wagner 1979, 159-161). Tetsunao Yamamori most succinctly describes this "multiethnic mutually autonomous" church approach:

> This is the model of autonomous ethnic churches cohabiting a single church building. The ethnic churches, including an Anglo congregation, all contribute to the "umbrella church" in finances, ministry, and governance. Each church has its own congregation, pastor, and lay leaders. Periodically, all the components of the umbrella church worship and engage in common ministries. Temple Baptist Church in Los Angeles approximates this model with Anglo, Korean, and Spanish congregations, as does Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, which includes Anglo, Filipino, Korean, and Spanish. (1979, 178-9)

This strategic model is an excellent way to economically maximize use of a large facility in a downtown setting, while planting new ethnic congregations at very low cost. It provides a beautiful witness to an often ethnically divided community, attracting the unsaved. It allows the body of believers to express their unity in Christ while at the same time recognizing and appreciating the diversity of cultures each group represents. The best how-to advice for implementing this urban model, while avoiding the potential cultural conflicts, is offered by Jerry Appleby, pastor of a multi-congregational Nazarene church in Pasadena (1990).

Fifth, is the ***Base-Satellite Church Model***. This strategic plan calls for a large urban mega church surrounded by numerous house churches multiplying into every neighborhood of the city. Frank Allen describes how the Christian Missionary Alliance has targeted ten key cities using this approach. The house churches serve as "the primary focus of fellowship, witness, and Christian instruction." The satellite house groups are smaller subsidiary units of the larger mother congregation which may or may not have its own larger permanent building. In international

cities where property is very expensive and difficult to find, public facilities could be

occasionally rented for large celebrative worship services, for "periodic conventions and

campaigns, and the united witness to the evangelical faith." A few medium-sized permanent-

building churches could be "located in key areas of the city" to provide for weekly "training of

laymen [leaders] for their ministry elsewhere, for Midweek classes, and services every night"

(Allen 1986, 12). Dubose gives five advantages of this model:

> (1) most any church can develop this style; (2) it offers a balance of impact
> (through the base) and penetration (through the home meetings); (3) it offers in
> one model the advantages of the larger church (base) and the smaller church
> (satellite); (4) it satisfies the more traditional desires (base) and the more
> innovative (satellite); (5) with its mobile and more secular expressions, it is
> indigenous to urban life. It is an international model which is proving to be oe of
> the fastest and most effective means of church growth. (1978, 143)

Currently, this cell-based church approach is called the "Meta Church Model" (see George

1992) and is producing the largest churches in the world, mostly overseas. The key for growth is

the continuous intensive training of old and new leaders for the ever-multiplying cell group. The

best known example of this strategic approach would be Paul Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel

Central Church in Seoul, Korea with over 650,000 members (Cho 1984).

Each of these urban church planting models has its own inherent strengths and weaknesses.

Each might be appropriate in a given urban context. While each model deserves careful study we

must always beware of superimposing one mission's (or church's) success story upon another.

Our goal, as we compare fruitful urban models, must be to identify reproducible structures and

principles. It would be incorrect to assume that to achieve the same urban success we must

imitate a favorite model strategy exactly. We may well imitate a particular strategic model for a

while but only in order to discover the universal principles which may also apply to our urban

situation. Then we must do the hard work of designing our own strategic plan and specific

outreach program based upon the universal principles which fit our urban context, philosophy of ministry, biblical convictions, and individual/group resources.

Fifteen Principles

Based upon the author's twenty-five years of urban ministry – most of it in cross-cultural church planting and leadership development – the following principles for planning effective urban church planting strategies are proposed. They are drawn not only from personal observation and experience but from the study of dozens of other urban strategic models.

1. **Pursue projects and plants with potential**. Urban work is always risky and we cannot afford to fail too often. We must select carefully those plants and projects with the most promise for success. Our resources are not unlimited and in most evangelical circles will dry up if we fail repeatedly. I agree with the suggestion of a CBA Urban Coordinator, Mark Marchak that as church planting opportunities present themselves, our involvement should be "determined by the convergence of six factors: need, opportunity, burden, strategy, personnel and resources" (1989, 37).

2. **Focus on multiplying ethnic churches and groups**. Currently 75 million Americans are "people of color" – almost one out of three. There are over 500 distinct ethnic groups in America. According to Southern Baptist researchers these language and cultural "people groups" communicate in 636 languages and dialects, 26 of these "major languages." Because the vase majority of these ethnic masses reside in urban areas, it is imperative we give priority to cross-cultural church starts. Evangelical church groups experiencing significant growth today credit this to their bridge-building and outreach among U.S. minorities (Romo 1999, 18-30). We must recognize the truth of McGavran's observation: people worship best and more readily receive the gospel in the language of their heart.

3. **Give priority to recruiting and training ethnic leaders.** The number of minorities in leadership roles in most evangelical groups is still far too small. It reflects not only our indifference but a glaring weakness in many urban ministries. Cross-cultural church planters are yet needed in many pioneering urban ministries but even the best will have limited impact. Ethnic leaders will be far more effective in starting new congregations. If one minority leader can be won and discipled that often is the key to entrance into that whole community.

4. **Utilize bivocational ministers, leaders and co-workers.** The cost of paying full salaries plus benefits to all church planters and team members is prohibitive. If we are to meet our urban goals and maximize our opportunities, we must greatly increase the number of church planters and assistants by encouraging many to consider "tentmaking" options. This also cuts down on "deputation" travels.

5. **Discover, develop, and deploy many unpaid lay leaders.** New church starts do not always require the direct involvement of "professionals." That is evident from the start up of the Antioch church. We will never have enough full-time missionaries. Training lay leaders must become a priority. To accomplish this goal we will need to promote urban TEE programs, local church based evening Bible institutes, distance learning and other innovative training methodologies. Teams of gifted laymen and women must be mobilized, empowered, released, supervised and given much moral support. This cuts our costs tremendously.

6. **Seek to cluster urban churches in order to build ministry partnerships.** Spinning off nearby new congregations from an already established new work – rather than starting our next church across town – has real benefits. Leaders and congregants can encourage one another during times of public celebration. As the number of new churches grow it is

profitable for emerging churches to gather with the parenting congregations and the church planting teams for periodic "pep rallies" to review what God has done and to affirm new outreach goals. This gives new converts in the smaller churches a sense of belonging to a cause larger than their own fellowship! A consortium of churches can also pool resources and give us a platform to share successful strategies and outreach ideas. We must stress that Scripture teaches the *interdependence* as well as the independence of local churches. Church associations and ministry partnerships are needed today if we are going to greatly impact large urban areas for Christ.

7. **Focus on responsive urban people groups.** Over 35 years ago Donald McGavran articulated this as one of his "eight keys" for impacting cities (1970, 322-31). Failure to recognize the resistant and unresponsive groups will often lead us into further discouragement and fruitlessness. How does one identify those who are likely to accept the Gospel? We must find those going though personal and social change. People in transition – the recently immigrated or moved, the uprooted, displaced, divorced, separated; those who have recently married, had a baby, lost a loved one, or lost a job – these will often be open to the message of hope in Christ.

8. **Develop empowering holistic ministries.** Because of the startling growth of poverty in many of our world's great cities, urban Christian ministries must be responding compassionately yet discerningly. We must address felt needs as well as ultimate (spiritual) needs. Roger Greenway has wisely pointed out that our well-intentioned "word and deed" ministries of relief can often create dependency. Quoting the familiar Chinese proverb that if you teach a man how to fish you relieve his need for many years to come, he recommends "development rather than benevolence" as "the route to take" (1989, 51-2). This offers the

poor the opportunity to earn a living rather than a handout! Good examples of American evangelicals engaged in biblically balanced inner city ministries of evangelistic church planting as well as social reform are Keith Phillips/World Impact (1975) and John Perkins (see his *With Justice For All* and *Beyond Charity).*

9. **Build people before property.** In the past the conventional wisdom was that in order to have a growing church, the new fellowship needed its own facility as soon as possible. A building would attract people. That is seldom true today. Because of the increasing costs of property and construction, it would be far better to use a rented meeting hall as long as possible. Better to focus on reaching and discipling people than constructing a building. Those who fall into that trap often commit two errors: they build too soon and they build too small! They are soon locked into a choking indebtedness and a site soon outgrown. The rule of thumb is: a church building is the *result* of increased church growth not the cause of it! Numerous new church plants today affirm that, most popularly, Rick Warren at Saddleback.

10. **Plan for multiple use of facilities.** This balances out the former principle. Eventually many new congregations will need to have their own building. Whether rented or owned, any facility acquired by a church should be multi-purpose in nature to allow for maximum ministry to the community throughout the week. Consider sharing your building with another new ethnic or language congregation to cut cost.

11. **Nurture self-sufficiency rather than patronizing dependency.** Ray Bakke contends "mission agencies perpetuate dependent ministries through the way they finance them" (1987, 48). I agree. To implement this principle we must insist on each new church becoming self-supporting within a specified reasonable time frame. Outside subsidy should be provided up front to help launch the new work. But once the new church's income exceeds her basic

expenses (for rent, salary, outreach, etc.), we must negotiate a graduated cut back of outside

support. The church panting team is expected to teach biblical stewardship principles right

from the start. No church is too poor to support its pastor. It only takes ten tithing families.

The new church should be expected to be increasing its participation in the support of her

pastor once or twice a year . Each new congregation should be encouraged o join with local

clusters of established churches as a full partner, contributing to the ongoing church planting

movement.

12. **Teach "Natural Church Development" principles of church growth.** To help new

churches reach their full growth potential, we must help their leaders understand and apply

what Christian Schwarz calls "natural" or "biotic" principles. Schwarz has conducted the

most comprehensive study ever on the true causes of church growth – more than 1,000

churches in 32 countries were surveyed. He advocates dumping what he calls "technocratic

thinking" (human success programs common in many church growth circles) and following

the laws of organic growth or "God's growth automatisms." Schwarz has isolated eight

"quality characteristics" of growing churches: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry,

passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups,

need-oriented evangelism and loving relationships. He sums up his findings: "No church

wanting to grow qualitatively and quantitatively can afford to overlook any one of these eight

quality characteristics" (1996, 15-36, 38).

13. **Build numerous stronger small churches rather than one megachurch.** Schwarz's

international research has now validated two surprising conclusions regarding very large

churches. First, megachurches (1,000 or more in worship) actually win fewer new people to

Christ than minichurches (if we look at growth *rates*). Second, with increasing church size

there is normally diminished church quality. This fact should lead us as urban leaders to focus

our new churches on qualitative rather than quantitative growth goals. As Schwarz has

observed, "Our research shows that the lack of quantitative growth in most cases indicates a

qualitative problem. Increased worship attendance is not the ultimate 'goal', with everything

else being a means to an end; it is the natural by-product of improved quality" (1996, 44-48).

This means that in order to best impact the largest number of urban people we must focus on

starting many growing, reproducing, quality biblical churches in our cities.

14. **Expect and teach reproduction.** In order to maximize impact in an urban setting we must

diligently train our workers to multiply their ministries. If the newly planted urban church is

healthy it should eventually reproduce. This is a divine principle. In all of creation living

healthy organism do not keep growing indefinitely; they bring forth other organisms which in

turn also multiply. Just as individual believers are "born to reproduce" so every corporate

body should be expected to intentionally start new churches (planned parenthood!). This also

holds true within every ministry of the urban church – we should expect to see the

multiplication of small groups, of group leaders, of resources, etc. When planning an urban

strategy of outreach and discipleship this most basic of all of scriptural principles –

reproduction – must be built in to all that we do.

15. **Rely on the superintending and empowering work of the Holy Spirit.** To build an urban

ministry that will have lasting impact – for time and eternity – we must recognize the Spirit's

crucial role. Ultimately we must realize only the Living Christ can grow His church and build

His Kingdom (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 3:6). Human ingenuity and effort alone will not.

Consciously working in the power of the Holy Spirit means saturating all of our strategic

planning in prayer, incorporating biblical (supernatural) principles of growth, preaching

Christ crucified and arisen, and gratefully giving Him all the credit when lives are transformed or churches are established. God's urban work must be done in God's way to experience His full blessing. Above all else, to see the Spirit's blessing, we must seek to serve Christ in the city for the right reason: to see His glory displayed among the nations (people groups) in the city.

Conclusion

These fifteen strategic planning principles will enable us to steer a clear course through the rocks and reefs of man's urban agendas, to finding God's agenda for our particular city. While certainly not exhaustive, these guidelines, if properly applied in each of our urban settings, would enable us to arrive at a biblically balanced and effective strategy for reaching our city for Christ. Minimum components of this comprehensive plan would certainly include evangelism (reaching urbanites with the gospel), discipleship (helping converts grow in Christ), incorporation (integrating disciples into new churches), social action (attention to human needs), and multiplication (enabling individuals, ministries, and churches to reproduce themselves). Underpinning all of this is the crucial and significant role of the local church in an effective urban strategy.

Before launching or expanding any urban ministry, it is vitally important, to take the time to draw up a long range and somewhat detailed strategy (battle) plan. Urban pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders must "do their homework," seeking the mind of God, exegeting both scripture as well as their city. Since we cannot go in every direction at once we must establish priority areas in the city to target. Normally these would be the most unchurched areas/peoples,

the most responsive, and those most strategically influential. Once these priorities have been settled we can concentrate our manpower and resources where they will count the most.

Of course, our originally conceived strategy will be somewhat theoretical. Once the ministry is launched we will obviously need to make a number of adjustments to our initial plans. Yet if biblical principles are truly undergirding our strategy, we can move forward with humble confidence that it will succeed. We can be assured Christ *is* building His Church today!

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