

TO TRANSFORM A CITY: A PRIMER ON CITY TRANSFORMATION FOR THE CURIOUS

A monograph by
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Cities occupy a large space in the heart and plans of God. Today there are over 400 cities with populations over one million and over half the world's population now are urban dwellers. "By 2015 three will be more than 225 cities in Africa, 903 in Asia and 225 in Latin America...[that] will have more than 1 million people in each."¹ City living has a transforming effect on people. In his book, The City: A Global History, Joel Kotkin observes,

Cities compress and unleash the creative urges of humanity. From the earliest beginnings, when only a tiny fraction of humans lived in cities, they have been the places that generated most of mankind's art, religion, culture, commerce, and technology. This evolution occurred most portentously in a handful of cities whose influence then spread to other centers through conquest, commerce, religion, and, more recently, mass telecommunications.²

Cities form the creative center through which social influence flows. There is far more connectivity, financial transactions, knowledge transference, media production and seedbed for social change in the city than in the country...and it seems that it's always been that way. Socrates once said, "The country places and the trees don't teach me anything, and the people in the city do."³ Recent research gives credence to Socrates' statement of preference. Geoffrey B. West, president of the Santa Fe Institute, discovered two interesting facts regarding the attraction of cities.

First, "[A] doubling of population [in cities] requires less than a doubling of certain resources. The material infrastructure that is analogous to biological transport networks—gas stations, lengths of electric cable, miles of road surface—consistently exhibits sublinear scaling with population." Second, [A] doubling of population is accompanied by more than a doubling of creative and economic output. this phenomenon "superlinear" scaling: by almost any measure, the larger a city's population, the greater the innovation and wealth creation *per person*.⁴ The story in the Bible may begin in a garden but it ends in a city.

Unequal influence

Not all cities are equal in their influence. New York and Los Angeles collectively will shape the expressions and content of traditional media more than all other cities combined (with the possible exception of Bombay⁵). Produced in Los Angeles, the television show *Baywatch* (not that you've ever seen this show of course), for example, has been shown in 140 countries and watched by billions of people.⁶ How's that for reach? The financial cities of the world like London, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong and Frankfurt, though not the largest in size, have the greatest influence on the world economy. In the 1940's, the journalist A. H. Raskin remarked that "in a single afternoon in a single Manhattan skyscraper, decisions would be made that would determine what movies would be played in South Africa, whether or not children in a New Mexican mining town would have a school, or how much Brazilian coffee growers would receive for their crop."⁷ In the last sixty years, the importance of cities has only increased...not decreased. We cannot entertain the idea of transforming communities without thinking about transforming the cities of the world. "If the 21st century is China's century, and all cities in China are influenced by Beijing, then Beijing must be the most important place to leverage our influence," says one Christian businessman working in Beijing.

Tim Keller, Senior Pastor at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City writes, "Cities are growing in the 'Third World' at an enormous rate and are regenerating in the U.S. and Europe. In the U.S. even smaller cities have seen a renaissance of their downtown cores, as professionals, immigrants, international business leaders, empty-nest baby-boomers,

¹ Praalad, C.K. *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*. Wharton School Publishing, Upper Saddle River, NJ (2006) p. 12

² Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. Modern Library, New York (2005) p.xx

³ Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. Modern Library, New York (2005) p. 21

⁴ West, Geoffrey B., *Innovation and Growth: Size Matters*. Harvard Business Review, Feb. 2007, p. 35

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bollywood>. The Indian film industry produces more films and sells more tickets than any other country but most of its influence remains in the Hindi-speaking part of the world.

⁶ <http://www.uktv.co.uk/?uktv=standarditem.index&aID=537675>

⁷ Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. Modern Library, New York (2005) p. 95

artists, and the 'young and hip' move back in. The coming world 'order' will be a global, multi-cultural, and urban order.”⁸ How will the Church respond to this urban phenomenon? Can the cities and communities of the world be transformed?

Questions:

1. Describe the size and influence of your city. What is it known for? What are its centers of influence?
2. How is city life (family, friendships, work and leisure, etc.) different than rural life in your country?
3. How is doing ministry different in cities than in rural areas in your country?

What does it mean to be transformed?

As we think about transforming cities it is helpful to think through what we mean by “transformation.” “Community Transformation”⁹ is one of those expressions that we throw around quite freely until we actually have to define it. There are currently several definitions floating around. Steve Caper of Mission Houston says, “When a community is transformed, growing numbers of converts function as mature disciples in the city and the social, political, and economic fabric of the entire community begins to change.” Jon Sharp, formerly of Bakke Graduate University writes that a transformed community is “[a] community where justice, mercy, faithfulness, and hope pervade every city system and the church of Jesus Christ is actively engaged in making this possible.”

Gary Edmonds, formerly of InterDev and currently with Breakthrough Partners, defines community transformation as “a deeply rooted change in people’s spiritual, social, economic, physical, behavioral, and political conditions growing out of an encounter with the Triune God and resulting in their growing enjoyment of wholeness of life under the will and ordinances of God.” Founder of CitiReach International, Jack Dennison, defines transformation as “the process whereby individuals, peoples and the city as a whole increasingly and dramatically become more like God’s intention for them.” In City of God, City of Satan, Robert Linthicum asks and answers the following question: “What are the marks of an effective urban ministry [transformation]? I suggest there are four:

- Are the systems of a city being confronted and offered real potential for change?
- Are the poor and exploited of the city provided the vehicles by which they can bring about change in their situation?
- Are the middle class and the powerful given the opportunity to join in common cause with the poor to confront the systems of the city and seek their transformation?”
- Is there a spiritual transformation that is going on in that city, or are the changes only social? Are the lives both of that city’s poor and of its powerful being changed by God?”¹⁰

Transformation occurs when something is substantially changed in its character or substance. The Bible says that we as Christ-followers are to be transformed in three areas; in our minds as they are renewed (Romans 12:2), in our character as we are shaped to be more like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18) and eventually in our bodies (Philippians 3:21). In all three cases a “morphing” occurs—a change towards becoming the person God wants me to be. Personal transformation is much like personal salvation in that I have been saved (Ephesians 2:8), I am being saved (Philippians 2:12), and one day I will be saved (1 Peter 1:5) Am I now transformed? Yes. Am I currently being transformed? Yes. Will I one day be transformed? Yes.

Transformation and the kingdom

Community transformation also has an end toward which it is moving and that end is not as elusive as we may imagine. It’s called the kingdom. The first prayer request Jesus taught his followers to pray was, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10 KJV). Transformation then includes the will of God being done on earth as expressed in his kingdom. The kingdom includes physical characteristics. When God builds a city from the ground up (Isaiah 65:17-25) he addresses issues of joy in the city, infant mortality, healthcare, housing, food, meaningful work, family unity, and an absence of violence. The kingdom also includes the values that Jesus expounded on the Sermon on the Mount

⁸ Keller, Tim, *Ministry in the New Global Culture of Major City-Centers* (2005)

⁹ See Appendix A

¹⁰ Linthicum, Robert. *City of God, City of Satan*, p.194

(Matthew 5-7). In working towards bringing about these aspects of the kingdom we become a blessing to everyone in our communities—regardless of one’s faith commitment or lack thereof (Genesis 12:3). This is important to understand in working in pluralistic societies.¹¹

So what transformation are we working towards spiritually? When Jesus addressed the city of his environs he expressed his desire that each person would be in a reconciled relationship with himself: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...*" (Matthew 23:37). So community transformation then involves both a spiritual and societal component. For the past three or four years, my personal mission statement has been, "*To change the world by engaging the church worldwide in the needs and dreams of the communities so as to bring about spiritual and societal transformation.*" *Spiritual transformation* comes from helping people love God in all that entails. *Societal transformation* comes from helping people love their neighbors as themselves. Taking another cut at "spiritual and societal transformation" from a different depth and viewpoint, we might say that spiritual transformation is taking place when God’s people, the Church, begin viewing and acting toward the community as compassionately as God does and societal transformation takes place when society at large begins viewing and acting compassionately towards the community as much as the Church (and henceforth God) does.

Transformation is the result of both "compassionate deeds and passionate proclamation of the gospel."¹² We need both and can neglect neither. As missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones writes, "The social gospel divorced from personal salvation is like a body without a soul; the message of personal salvation without a social dimension is like a soul without a body. The former is a corpse, the latter is a ghost."¹³

Community transformation is not about "Christendom"—placing Christianity or the Church at the center¹⁴ of society or trying to reestablish the church as the center of the community but it is more like the kingdom leaven (Matthew 13:33) that is sown into all parts of society and lived out in such a way so that people in every sector...every domain know someone who knows and truly follows Jesus. Conversion is our *ultimate* motive but not our *ulterior* motive in loving and serving others. "Ultimate motive" means that we absolutely want every person on earth to be in a right relationship with God through Jesus. But "ulterior motive" means that we do acts of love and service towards others *so that* they become Christians (which could signify that if they don’t become Christians we stop loving and serving). It is important to remember that we don’t engage in the needs, dreams and pains of our communities so that they will become Christians rather we engage the community because we *are* Christians.

City transformation begins once the Church in the city begins to engage the city with works and words of love. We are to live seeking "the peace and prosperity of the city" that God has placed us in. We are to "pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers [we] too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7). Robert Linthicum writes, "The essential task of the church is to work for its society’s shalom—to work for the full and total transformation of all the people, forces and structures with the love of God."¹⁵ Community transformation begins when churches begin to engage their communities with good deeds and good news. The city is being transformed as kingdom structures, systems and values are lived out. And one day, when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord, (Revelation 11:15) the city will be transformed. City transformation (like personal conformity to Christ) is more like the North Star (a direction to pursue) rather than the North Pole (a destination we can arrive at). As we think about transformation we should also keep C.S. Lewis’ words in mind:

The Church’s belief in Original Sin should make us intensely realistic and should free us from trying to create a Utopia. For there is no such a thing as a Christian social ideal to which we should try to conform the

¹¹ It is important to note that in understanding Kingdom theology we are not absent from a discussion about its King—Jesus. The kingdom is mentioned over 170 times in the New Testament and over 120 times in the gospel. The church, by contrast, is mentioned three times in the gospels. To those in the New Testament, the King was never separated from the kingdom. The bookend verses of the book of Acts (Acts 1:3 and Acts 28:31) are about the kingdom. In Acts 17:7 we get a glimpse of Paul’s central message of the kingdom—"They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying there is another king, one called Jesus." Although non-believers can be engaged in "kingdom work" and often are, we enter the kingdom only through faith in the King (John 3:3-5, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 18:3)

¹² I got this wonderful expression "compassionate deeds and passionate proclamation" from Chip Scivicque of Campus Crusade for Christ in a phone conversation on November 3, 2006

¹³ Roesel, Charles, *Sharing Christ, Meeting Needs*. p. 26

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the passage George Washington quoted frequently was from Micah 4 including these verses: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever" (v.4,5). America from the beginning was broad enough to include people of other faith traditions.

¹⁵ Linthicum, Robert. *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003. p. 75

society we live in as closely as possible. After all [and this was particularly insightful] no one wants to live in 'the ideal society' as depicted by anyone else.¹⁶

C.S. Lewis notwithstanding however, the principles of the kingdom are so universally appealing that people from every tribe, language, people and nation (Revelation 5:9) will feel culturally "at home" when these kingdom qualities are present. Heidi Unruh, co-author of *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community With Good News and Good Works*, cautions against a Christendom approach:

I feel uncomfortable with the notion of measuring success by whether prayer is allowed in schools and how much biblical values are taught in the schools. I think we have to be very careful of such language in a pluralistic society. I don't think success is about "Christianizing" the public schools.... I do think that churches casting vision for talented young people to invest in our public schools is great. I do think that stable, strong families staying committed to public schools, participating in Parent and Teacher Associations, etc. is great. I certainly think churches investing in caring for schools—for teachers, for kids—in tangible, practical ways (tutoring, school clean-up days, teacher appreciation, etc) is great. But I think that we have to differentiate between common grace and particular grace. That is, there are "generic" values of the kingdom that both Christians and non-Christians can embrace—justice, health, peace, safe schools, needy kids getting the help they need, etc., and we should talk about promoting those values, as opposed to more "narrow" Christian values such as prayer or teaching creationism in the public schools.

I believe that the best approach is to identify the elements presented in "kingdom preview" passages of Scripture (Isaiah 61, Isaiah 65, Psalms 72, Ezekiel 34, Zechariah 8, etc) and kingdom pictures from Revelation 21 itself and say: "These are God's ultimate intentions for humanity. They speak of beauty, of harmony, of care of creation, of shalom, of peace, of lack of violence, of health, of security, of fruitful work, of communion with God, of brotherhood and unity, of life and flourishing and abundance." And then we say—these are the kinds of things that we, empowered by God's Spirit, want to bring "foretastes" of in our world. The vast majority of these values are such that few people disagree—it's kind of like mom and apple pie. So we find that God's people and non-believers can cooperate in many arenas to work for good ("good" defined as many of these "foretastes").¹⁷

Can it be done?

Historically, according to sociologist Rodney Stark it *has* been done. Cities, communities, and cultures have been transformed and revitalized by word and deed. By nature, spiritual movements affect life on the streets and are corrective. They transform culture. Stark summarizes the urban impact of the early church in the first few centuries.

Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world. . . Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fire, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. . . For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities tolerable.¹⁸

Luck of the Irish

The Irish have always been a tough crowd. So tough in fact that the Romans felt it was impossible to conquer them and harder still to civilize them. Ireland was not a single nation but rather a hodgepodge of some 150 tribes each with its own

¹⁶ Edited by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, *Devotional Classics*, P. 225

¹⁷ I received this note in an email from Heidi in January 2007 in response to a colleague's ten year city vision.

¹⁸ Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity*, Harper Collins Publishers San Francisco (1997) P. 161

chieftain and religious system. As a young boy, Patrick was taken captive by one such tribe where he served as a slave for many years where he learned the language and customs of the Irish. When the opportune moment presented itself, Patrick escaped and found his way back to the continent where he became an ardent follower of Jesus Christ. Against the advice of his peers, Patrick returned to Ireland to reach Ireland with the gospel. George Hunter III notes that in his 28 years of ministry Patrick planted around 700 churches and ordained perhaps 1000 priests. His strategy was profoundly simple for an itinerant church planter. Traveling with a band of believers, after leading a critical mass of people to Christ within a settlement, he left a few of his fellow travelers behind to shepherd the new church and took a few from the village along with him to be trained and mentored. It was this manner that allowed him to have an endless supply of developing church planters. “Within his lifetime, 30-40 (or more) of Ireland’s 150 tribes became substantially Christian.” Patrick’s evangelism did more than transform the souls of the Irish. Hunter notes that “Patrick’s achievements included social dimensions. He was the first public man to speak and crusade against slavery. Within his lifetime, or soon after, ‘the Irish slave trade came to a halt, and other forms of violence, such as murder and intertribal warfare decreased,’ and his communities modeled the Christian way of faithfulness, generosity and peace to all the Irish.”¹⁹

Eighteenth Century England

Think of John Wesley’s effect on 18th Century England. Michael Henderson notes that, “In 1736, every sixth house in London was licensed as a grogshop”²⁰ England was a country of drunkenness, despair and moral decay. Children labored in brickyards and mines and “less than one in twenty-five had any kind of schooling...”²¹ The rural poor migrated to the cities in droves looking for work as the primitive wheels of the industrial revolution began to turn, creating urban slums never seen before. Wesley’s goal was formidable but his mission was clear—“to redeem the nation” and “to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.”²² Another author adds

It should not surprise us that all the great revivals and awakenings included the demonstration of the gospel. John Wesley, who led revivals in the 18th century, did more than just talk about social reform. Among other things, he agitated for prison, liquor, and labor reform; set up loan funds for the poor; campaigned against the slave trade and smuggling; opened a dispensary and gave medicines to the poor; worked to solve unemployment; and personally gave away considerable sums of money to people in need.²³

Wesley’s last letter was written to William Wilberforce urging him to continue his fight to end slavery and the slave trade for there could be no holiness without social holiness.

Questions:

1. How would you define “community transformation” in your city or community?
2. What would be different? How could you tell?

A helpful exercise is to write a newspaper article as if it were written ten years from now. Start with a headline then include faux interviews with various leaders—“Our city back then was...” “We decided to work together because....” “Our catalyst to change was...” Today things are so different. For example...”

(Through the prophet Zechariah, God describes one future aspect of a transformed community:

“Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with a cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there” (Zechariah 8:4,5).

3. What would you say to those who ask you if you want your country to be a theocracy?

¹⁹ Hunter, G. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. Abington Press, Nashville, (2000) P. 23

²⁰ Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley’s Class Meetings*, Evangel Publishing House, Nappanee, IN (1997) P. 19

²¹ Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley’s Class Meetings*, Evangel Publishing House, Nappanee, IN P. 19

²² Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley’s Class Meetings*, Evangel Publishing House, Nappanee, IN P. 21

²³ Source unknown. It might be from Henderson. I had it in my notes but didn’t source it

4. Heidi Unruh makes the distinction between bringing in foretastes of the kingdom and “Christianizing” a community. What do you think? How are they similar? How are these concepts different?

Sectors of Society

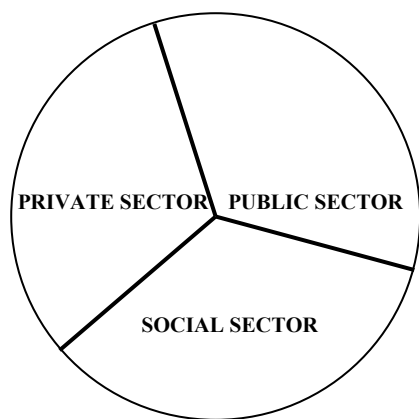
To change a community it is helpful to think in terms of the sectors of every society. Economists and social scientists recognize three major sectors of every society. Although the size and what is / is not included in each sector may vary from society to society, each city can be divided into three sectors.

The Private Sector. The first sector is the Private Sector comprised of privately owned businesses such as companies, corporations, small businesses and private banks which are not controlled by the state, all of which are privately owned and profit motivated.

The Public Sector. The second sector is commonly referred to as the Public Sector. The Public Sector is that part of economic and administrative life that deals with the delivery of goods and services by and for the government at the local, state or national level. The Public Sector is owned by the state and exists to provide services in the public interest. Such enterprises in developed countries would be police and fire services, education, clean water, waste management, etc.

The Social Sector. The third sector of every society is often called the Third Sector or Social Sector—the huge sector that embraces a wide range of community, voluntary, religious and not-for-profit activities. A not-for-profit, sometimes called a non-profit or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) may be involved in the arts, charities, education, politics, religion, research or some other endeavor. Although the Social Sector is not an agency of the state, it may have to meet state requirements to secure or maintain its charitable status.

Although there are three separate sectors, there is often cooperation and contribution between the sectors. The Private Sector pays taxes to supply much of the funding for the Public Sector. Often the Private Sector and the Public Sector contributes to the Social Sector to supply goods or services that they cannot supply or don't want to be in the business of supplying. Sometimes Social Sector enterprises will have Private Sector (profit-making) components of their enterprise. The best way to think about a city by thinking of these three sectors diagramed below:



weaken, cities dissipate and eventually recede out of history.²⁴

So ,when we think of city or community transformation we need to think about transforming all three sectors of society...if the transformation is to be genuine and lasting.

In his book, *The City: A Global History*, Joel Kotkin describes these three sectors a bit differently but he makes the point that all three sectors of society must prosper for a city to thrive. Look at what he writes:

What makes cities great, and what leads to their gradual demise? ... [T]hree critical factors have determined the overall health of cities—the sacredness of place, the ability to provide security and project power, and last the animating role of commerce. Where these factors are present, urban culture flourishes. When these elements

Robert Linthicum independently comes to the same conclusion as Kotkin while adding his own additional insight.

²⁴ Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. Modern Library, New York (2005) p. xvi

The primary systems of a city are the economic, political and religious institutions. These systems constantly interact and cooperate with on another, thereby forming either holy alliances or an unholy trinity. The systems have the potential to work for justice and economic equality for the people and wise stewardship of a city’s resources if their functioning is based on both corporate and individual relationship with God. But systems can be demonic as well, enhancing the economic privilege of a few while exploiting the poor and powerless, using the political order to further such exploitation while maintaining a city’s order and turning faith commitment into formalized religion that legitimizes ‘the powers that be’ while benefiting from the powers’ largess.²⁵

To be certain, the critical elements that are necessary to transform a community lie within the community.

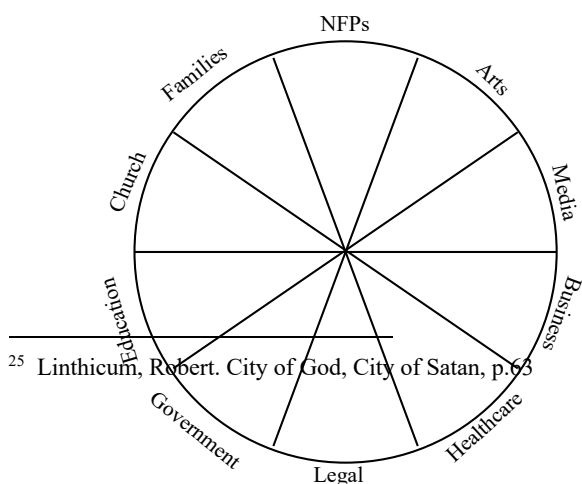
In a recent interview with Tim Russert on CNBC’s *Meet the Press*, Pastor Rick Warren outlined the roles the public sector, private sector and church play in solving big problems of the world. I have added this interview as an appendix to this paper and it is well worth the read.

Domains—Channels of Influence

The three sectors of society can also be subdivided into what might be referred to as the “domains” of society. Chip Sweney (chips@perimeter.org) and those engaged in Unite! in Atlanta refer to the domains as “channels of influence.” That’s a great term. Far from being a monolithic structure, the domains, or channels of influence, are the major social or economic structures that make up every society. Although there is no common agreement on the number of such domains, and the city can be sliced and diced through other lenses (neighborhoods, ethnicity, etc.) most everyone would recognize that communities and cities cannot be transformed unless the differing domains are transformed. Most would also recognize the following domains as needing kingdom influence and transformation:

- Churches
- Families
- Education
- Government
- Legal / Justice
- Healthcare
- Business
- Media
- Arts
- Non-Profit Organizations

So, the channels of influence in every society might look something like this:



Thinking about cities in terms of sectors and domains helps us think in terms of what exactly has to be transformed in a given city if community transformation is to occur. But how do we initiate change? How do we know and how can we tell if we are making any progress? Where do we begin?

Questions:

²⁵ Linthicum, Robert. *City of God, City of Satan*, p.63

1. How effectively have the three main sectors in your city worked together to make your community a better place to live?
2. Would you add any other significant “domains” or “channels of influence” to your community? Why?
3. How does the concept of sectors and domains help you think about your city?

Theology of the city

Most likely we need to begin with the Scriptures to discover what God says about each domain of a community. If cities are mentioned some 1,200 times in the Bible, there must be something written on healthy cities. If this particular domain is important to the well-being of mankind, then certainly it must be important to God and somewhere in the Scriptures he most likely addresses it, in either precept, example or both. If no Scripture can be found that can serve as a foundation for transformation then perhaps this domain is not as essential as we may have presumed. An ideal without biblical support cannot long endure. Do we have a theology of a healthy family structure (including one for blended or single-parent families)? Do we have a theology of the Arts or of Education?

Let’s try an example. Does God have anything to say about business? Is there a “theology” of the Private Sector? Is it possible for business to reflect the heart of God and further his purposes in the world? Some refer to business being mentioned in the book of Genesis where “Noah floated his stock while the rest of the world was liquidated” but we can do better than that! The word “business” is used some seventeen times in the Bible (NIV). This is hardly an overwhelming number but the scriptural principles around things that pertain to business like planning, decision-making, goal-setting, mission, vision, values, leadership, just compensation, sowing and reaping, training, profit, and fair treatment of partners and employees that undergird business are plentiful.

Vision

After a “theology for business” is established we need a vision of what a company or enterprise would look like if were operated on such kingdom principles. What is that compelling and attractive picture of the future that causes people to say, “Please let me be a part of this!” Recently I was having lunch with a friend of mine who sold his business to retire on a golf course only to discover that he was bored stiff and ready to get back into the game. We talked about him starting a business and running it as a kingdom enterprise where he would provide the finest services anywhere, engage in profit-sharing and health benefits for his employees and think of his employees as a pastor would think of his congregation—wanting each of them to know Christ, to discover their purpose and experience life and relationships in all their fullness. That vision has since prompted him to begin forming such a business and linking with others in his city who want to do likewise.

Leaders

Perhaps “Leaders” needs to be the first thing we consider since leaders can certainly figure out the theology and create and cast vision for this area. But for sake of illustration, let’s say that a leader or small cadres of leaders are so taken by the vision that they find themselves saying and praying “Lord help me build my business to reflect you and your kingdom.” Or for the more ambitious, they pray (like the Scottish reformer John Knox), “Give me the business community of my city for you or I die!” Leaders are those who are in the business of creating what doesn’t currently exist. They, by definition, always have agenda for change.

Some individuals have disproportionate influence in shaping the direction of any city-reaching movement. Think of the woman at the well in John 4:4-32. Her encounter with Jesus created such a stir that the people of Sychar came out to meet Jesus out of sheer curiosity. Jesus’ first encounter with people on the other side of the Sea of Galilee was in the form of one person—the Gerasene demoniac. After Jesus healed him the newly-clad, right-minded believer wanted to join in following Jesus. Instead Jesus told him to “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you...”(Mark 4:19). The former demoniac did even more; He “went away and began to tell in the Decapolis [ten *different* cities] how much Jesus had done for him. The second time Jesus ventured into the Decapolis (Matthew 7:31, Matthew 15:29-39) “[g]reat crowds

came to him bringing him the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them” and later feeds four thousand of them. What began with a man, resulted in a multitude. James Davison Hunter in an essay entitled, “To Change the World” writes,

It is... important to note that size of a population is relatively unimportant — it doesn’t take a large number of elites operating in strategic ways to make world historical changes in the direction of a civilization. Indeed...the total number of philosophers who are significant in world history is approximately 135 to 500 persons; the smaller number if we take only the major figures in each world civilization; the intermediate one if we add secondary figures. Even if we add the minor figures in all of the networks, in all of the civilizations, the total is 2,700. In sum, between 150 and 3,000 people (a tiny fraction of the roughly 23 billion people living between 600 BC and 1900 AD) framed the major contours of all world civilizations. Clearly, the transformations here were top-down.²⁶

Examples

These business leaders now have to shape their “proof of concept” so others, who need an example to follow, can do what these kingdom pioneers have done. Wouldn’t it be great that if in every community there were those business leaders who were providing well-paid jobs for well-treated and motivated employees, delivering excellent goods and services with opportunities for self-betterment, that reflected the character and values of God? Wouldn’t it be something if they trained and employed the underemployed of their communities? Wouldn’t it be great if they saw themselves as “pastors” of their businesses with the goal that each employee would reach his or her God-given potential? Can such a business exist within the Private Sector?

Consider Truett Cathy, founder and CEO of Chick-fil-A, a chain of over 1,200 restaurants, employing over 45,000 young people that produced nearly two billion dollars in revenue in 2005. Chick-fil-A’s mission statement is posted in the corporate office and in every Chick-fil-A franchise. It reads: “*To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A.*” As an extension of his Christian convictions, all locations are closed on Sundays to allow employees to attend church and spend time with their families. In 1989 Cathy received the Horatio Alger Award and in 1990 was named Atlanta’s “Most Respected CEO” by *Business Atlanta Magazine*.

Business leaders with kingdom vision can influence more than their companies. They can help to change the world! In 1983 Graham Power, a civil contractor began his first company in Capetown South Africa which eventually grew to what is known today as the Power Group of Companies (<http://www.powergrp.co.za/>). The Power Group has received numerous construction, environmental and community awards for the way they do business to better local communities. In 2003 for example one of their projects was building homes for 1,374 low-income families. Employing a management team of a mere ten team leaders, they employed 311 local contractors and 1,200 local workers and artisans to build the homes, thus empowering some 1,500 people in the process.²⁷ Their values and policies, as outlined on their Website, that reflect the kingdom are worth reading in their own right.²⁸ Each company in the Power Group also donates 10% of its profits to the Power Group Charitable fund which distributes support to four charitable organizations.²⁹

But when a company adopts kingdom purposes, God often whispers of a greater vision. In 2001 Graham Power called people of Cape Town together to pray for their community. This movement of prayer spread to other cities and countries in Africa and this past June (2006) over 500 million Christians (no, that was not a typo) gathered in event centers in 199 countries of the world for the Global Day of Prayer!³⁰ In June of 2007 they are adding 90 days of community service to flow in the wake of the Global Day of Prayer. Can a half a billion people make a difference in our communities?

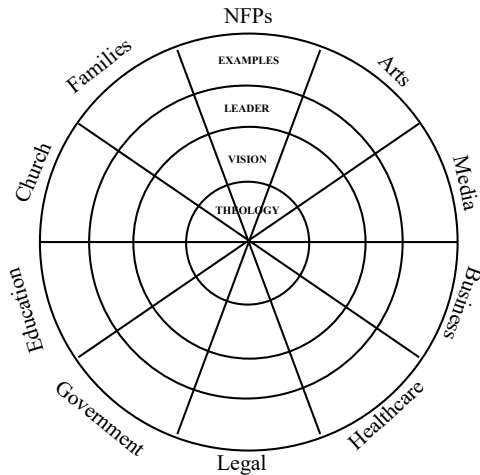
²⁶ James Davison Hunter, “To Change the World.” Wm. R. Kenan Professor of \ Sociology and Religious Studies. Director, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. University of Virginia

²⁷ <http://www.powergrp.co.za/images/Press%20Releases/IHSA%20Eastern%20Cape%20Award.pdf>

²⁸ http://www.powergrp.co.za/group/group_powerways.htm

²⁹ http://www.powergrp.co.za/group/group_charitable.htm

³⁰ http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20060605014346318C214694



In China there are several private business owners who are believers and, when asked their occupation, answer, “I’m the pastor of a church of 500 people...but they don’t know that yet.” These kingdom-minded businessmen bring doctors and dentists and manicurists (What good is a winning smile with dirty fingernails?) into their factories and as well as hire a house church evangelist or two and see “between 40-60% of employees put their faith in Jesus.”³¹ The believer who shared this story with me then added, “The gospel shouts when it comes through love.”

Theology...vision...leader...example. A diagram with these four areas identified allows a community to gage and measure the progress they are making towards transformation. Now the diagram might look something like this³²:

Now imagine if every domain of society in every community had a theology, vision, leaders and examples...would that not form the catalyst for change? And what if they worked together to take on the big problems of a community? Is it possible? There are enough examples of believers worldwide who are living out the example of demonstrating the kingdom from their domain of society. Consider Irish rock star from the band U2 who is using his influence with the G-8 nations to forgive billions of dollars of debt in Africa or speaking at America’s National Prayer Breakfast urging the U.S. to give even more to eradicate poverty, hunger and HIV / AIDs in the world.

From the domain of Media comes David Cunningham, son of YWAM founder Loren Cunningham, who directs movies in Hollywood. His last film *To End All Wars* (2004), starring Kiefer Sutherland is a redemptive story of a Scottish Regiment taken captive during WWII. I imagine David Cunningham has a very clear and defined “theology of media” as well as a vision of what media would look like when used for kingdom purposes. I could say the same thing for Gary Haugen of International Justice Ministries (IJM) with respect to the Legal System. If you’ve followed the news you may have noticed that Rwandan President Paul Kagame formed a partnership with Rick Warren and Saddleback Church with the intent on building the first “purpose-driven nation.”³³ If we believed that the poor need beauty as much as they need bread, could we develop a theology of the Arts?

The advantage of having a diagram like this effectively means we can all create a visual model of where are cities are in respect to being transformed. For which domains do you have a theology? For which do you have a vision? For which do you have a leader? For which do you have an example? We can shade in the areas that are completed while allowing the white spaces to pull us forward to pray and look for ways to make progress in those areas.

Thinking about the whole

To transform a city, then, is to see every domain influenced by the King and the kingdom. Jack Dennison provides a great matrix for how spiritual leaders of a city can think about their cities.



- Quadrant I would include initiatives to bring transformation to one of the domains
- Quadrant II would represent those tactical initiatives in one of the domains (e.g business person’s Bible study)

³¹ I heard this story from a Chinese national in January 2005 in Thailand

³² I am grateful to Vir Griggs for insights on the sectors of society from a diagram entitled “Transformative Revival: Generating Kingdom Movements in Society, which I found to be very insightful.

³³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/010/17.32.html>

- Quadrant III would represent tactical initiatives to the whole city (e.g. Luis Palau festival)
- Quadrant IV represents the scope of city transformation

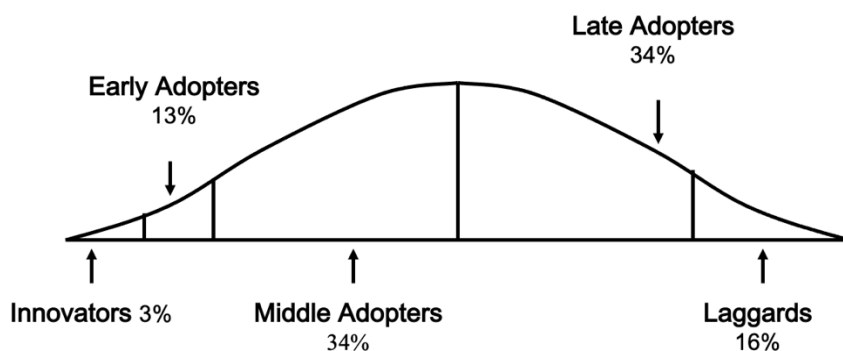
Although all quadrants are necessary to transform a city, there are some who need to always be thinking about, praying for and working towards Quadrant IV without competing with those in Quadrants I-III. Are you one of those people?

Diffusion of innovations

How are big ideas spread? How do people adopt new practices? How does change come to each of the domains or to society in general? Several years ago Everett Rogers wrote a book entitled Diffusion of Innovations. In this classic he answers the questions asked above. His thinking is most helpful in understanding how innovative change occurs in a social system. He defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas.”³⁴ He defines five categories of individuals in any social system—the innovators, the early adopters, the middle adopters, the late adopters and the laggards. Let’s look at each of these and then make a few observations.

- Innovators make up roughly 3% of a social system. They are those who come up with new ways of thinking about something and doing things that challenge and change the status quo.
- Early adopters, which make up roughly 13%, though perhaps not innovative themselves, recognize a good idea and because they possess a bias towards action begin to implement the new ideas without asking, “Who else is doing this?”
- Middle adopters, comprise 34% of the social system. They may understand the new thing but need a bit more certainty before they can buy into it. They ask, “Where is this working? Are there models I can take a look at?”
- Late adopters comprise another 34% and want to know where the new idea is working in a setting like theirs. “I can see this working in Little Rock Arkansas but are there any places in the Northwest where this is being implemented.”
- Laggards comprise 16% and are usually the last to get on board and “often end up serving on boards,” as my friend Sam Williams wryly notes. But he’s right. Boards are established to protect the status quo and the values and practices of the organization.

Rogers diagrams this distribution in a bell curve depicted as follows:



Now for a few observations: Nearly everybody can be persuaded but each group needs different amounts of information and time before they are comfortable enough to adopt the innovation. Each group is influenced by the group ahead of them. In other words the early adopters don’t look to middle adopters to inform them of what they should do or what’s coming next. The exception to this, however, can occur if the laggards are in positions of power and say, “That will never work!” in

which case the late adopters say, “Well, that’s what we were thinking sir” and influence flows from right to left and the innovators and early adopters are marginalized or fired! Another observation pertains to “critical mass.” Often times we think we need at least 51% buy in before we can move forward but this diagram suggests that unless you have incredibly high social capital with those you are trying to lead, the people who are capable of immediate buy in will only go as far as the early

³⁴ Rogers, Everett M, *The Diffusion of Innovations* (Fourth Edition), The Free Press, New York (1995) p. 5

adopters and possibly the early middle adopters. The point is, don't take a lot of votes but rather work with the willing—the early and early-middle adopters. It is the willing who form the critical mass that starts the ball rolling.

Based on this understanding, we can work toward creating “examples” in each of the domains. The early adopting leaders who create examples form a potential critical mass and help answer the question, “Where is this working?” And so the movement spreads. Erwin McManus has some insightful comments on the diffusion of innovation that are captured in the appendix.

Culture Shapers and Thought Leaders

Recently, on a trip to China, I was talking with a Christian professor at one of China's prestigious universities. He and several other professors were giving thought to which domains of society are the most influential in Chinese culture. They had identified their top three as Government, Intellectuals (including writers and artists) and Business. Identifying these leverage points helped determine where and among whom they would target their evangelism and church planting efforts. This is simply to note that some domains are more influential than others in each of our cities and countries. James Davison Hunter notes that

with culture, there is a center and a periphery. The individuals, networks and institutions most critically involved in the production of a culture or civilization operate in the “center” where prestige is the highest; not on the periphery, where status is low. And so, one may be able to get as good an education at Colorado State University as you would at Harvard, but Harvard, as an institution, is at the center and Colorado State is at the periphery of cultural production. *USA Today* may sell more copies of newspapers than the New York Times, but it is the New York Times that is the newspaper of record in America (for better or worse) because it is at the center of cultural production, not the periphery. One can sell a hundred thousand copies of a book published by Zondervan or Baker, and only 5000 copies of a book published by Knopf. But it is the book by Knopf that is more likely to be reviewed in the New York Review of Books or the New Republic, or the Washington Post Book World because Knopf is at the center and Zondervan is at the periphery. I could go on, but you get the picture. The status structure of culture and cultural production is of paramount importance to the topic at hand.³⁵

Questions:

1. If you were to draw out a diagram of the domains of your city and shade in the areas of progress (theology, vision, leaders & examples) how would you say you are doing?
2. What could you do to change the current situation?
3. Who are the early adopters that you already know?
4. As a ministry leader, which of Dennison's quadrants do you traffic in?

Working together with other churches

Community transformation takes a lot of work and no church can afford to work alone. This is where working with other churches comes into play. City-transformer Doug Small from Tampa Bay Florida says “the most dangerous question is asking other pastors, ‘Is there something God would want us to do together that we can do better together that would advance the kingdom?’” Of course we are talking about unity with other churches.

As we throw the word “unity” around, it is probably helpful to further define unity on three different levels, each that are necessary for community transformation—unity of family, unity of fellowship and unity of function. When Jesus prayed

³⁵ James Davison Hunter, “To Change the World.” Wm. R. Kenan Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies. Director, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. University of Virginia

for “complete unity” (John 17:23—“*May they be brought to complete unity...*”), he implied in that statement that there are degrees of unity that are less than complete. What are some expressions of partial unity?

Unity of Family

“*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*” (Ephesians 4:3). The apostle says that this type of unity is not something to be sought, but something that needs to be preserved. Family unity is based on our common spiritual birth. We have a common Father and have been adopted into the same family. We are brothers and sisters. Family unity is true about us as members of the body of Christ, whether we acknowledge it or not—whether we like each other or not. This is what theologians describe as our “positional unity.”

Unity of Fellowship

“*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God*” (Romans 15:5-7). The second level of unity comes when we pursue God together (“*follow Jesus Christ*”), pray and worship together (“*with one heart and mouth*”), and actively get reconciled to one another (“*accept one another...just as Christ accepted you...*”). This level of unity usually occurs when pastors begin meeting together in prayer and worship. International Renewal Ministries (IRM) has done a wonderful job of facilitating hundreds of four day “prayer summits” around the globe where, together, pastors seek the face of God through worship, song and prayer. These are often transformational times of personal and corporate brokenness and repentance as pastors learn to unite around their love for Jesus Christ rather than to divide over their doctrinal differences. Many pastors have expressed that for the first time they feel real unity with other pastors in their community and see their congregation tied into a bigger Church of their city. This unity of fellowship often continues through the year as pastors continue to pray together at weekly or monthly gatherings. Oftentimes, the outcome of pastors gathering for prayer will be communities that gather regularly for prayer and worship. Because this level of unity engenders pastoral friendships and collegial relationships, many times pastors get stuck at this stage and aren’t certain where this newfound unity should lead. That brings us to the third level of unity.

Unity of Function

“*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ (unity of family), if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit (unity of fellowship), if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (unity of function)*” (Philippians 2:1,2). Uniting around function or purpose means that we adopt a common purpose for the Church³⁶ in the city. That common purpose is already clarified by Jesus’ prayer for us in John 17:20-23:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message [*that includes us*], that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so *that the world may believe that you have sent me*. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity *to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*.

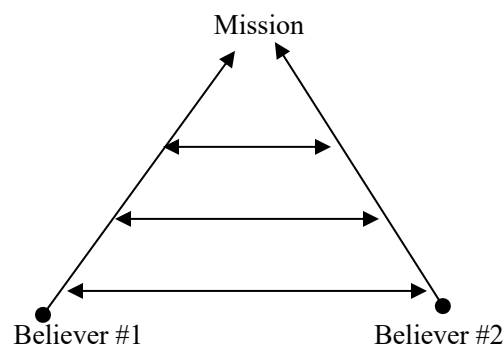
Who is Jesus praying for here? What is he asking the Father for? Jesus is praying for us. He is praying for the believers that would believe through his disciples’ message. He is praying that we would be one as he and the Father are one. Upon a first

³⁶ The concept of there being one Church in a city has been explored by many practitioners (Joe Aldrich, Jack Dennison, George Otis Jr., Ray Bakke, etc). When the apostle Paul wrote his letters, he wrote them to the church of the city—e.g. “the church of God in Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), the idea being that in every city there is one Church with multiple congregations who meet at various times and places throughout the city.

read it appears as though the purpose of this prayer is unity, but what does Jesus say? Why does he pray that we would be one? Verses 21 and 23 reveal the answer and the end goal of this prayer. V.21: *May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* V.23: *I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.* There are two purposes of unity that Jesus mentions. The first is to let the world know that God sent Jesus. The second reason is to let the world know that God loves them as much as he loves Jesus. We observe that this unity's end purpose is not for unity or the good relationships between Christians, but is instead the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel to the world.

How do we unify?

If unity is our main goal, we will never get there. Our goal, the challenge, is not unity but mission. We are unified through the unity of purpose or mission. For example, if our mission is to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33) then we can partner and work with any other believers who have this same mission and goal. The following diagram helps visualize how we unify around purpose.



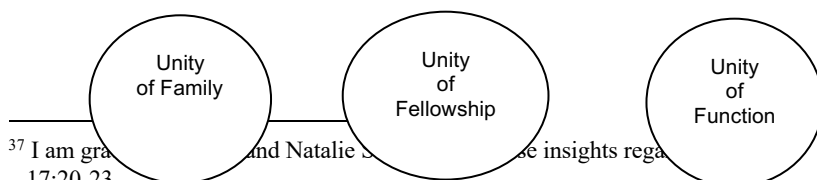
The diagram shows us that as believers pursue a common purpose or mission, we become more and more unified. But if we are pursuing our own purposes, we walk the path of disunity. We can have different roles in this mission, but we must have the same mission. You may teach, I may be an evangelist, but with the same purpose we make a great team. We make up the Body of Christ.³⁷

We also create a common mission or purpose through vision casting about what our city could be if the Church of the city were actively involved in the life and dreams of the city. Only unity of purpose is strong enough to unite pastors and churches of different denominations and keep them united. We also need to recognize that it is probably more strategic to unite pastors around purpose than it is to try to unite them around prayer. Often, pastors that are more biased to action will not attend more than a couple of prayer meetings if they sense these gatherings aren't going anywhere. Jack Dennison of CitiReach writes in his book City Reaching,

*While solid relationships form the basis for unity, we can't stop there. My observation in city after city is that oftentimes unity becomes an end in itself. So we see repetitive efforts to demonstrate our unity through citywide worship events, prayer vigils...and other similar events. These activities...are wonderful symbols of our unity but they rarely produce real substance. They make us feel good and sometimes result in great newspaper coverage, but the cities remain unchanged.*³⁸

Uniting the church in a city around a common purpose is preferable to trying to unite the church around a cooperative project. In Jack's words we align ourselves "in unity to pursue the same goals for our community while each participant determines the part it should play."³⁹

So a path to "complete unity" may be diagrammed as follows:



³⁷ I am grateful to [Name] and Natalie [Name] for their insights regarding [Topic] 17:20-23

³⁸ City Reaching by Jack Dennison, William Carey Library, 1999, p.61

³⁹ *ibid*, P.64



So sometimes unity comes in this neat little progression. In other places in the world, the unity of fellowship is achieved *as* believers unite around a common purpose. It is interesting to note that from a recent survey by Leadership Network, entitled “Church Partnership Survey, under the question, “Which [activity] originally triggered your church’s involvement?” there were as many churches who answered, “Doing a community service project together” as “Meeting together for prayer.”⁴⁰ It is the striving together towards a common purpose that brings them into fellowship with one another.

Functional unity does not exclude cooperative efforts but functional unity also implies that each church can act with a degree of sanctified independence, not waiting for permission from others to serve the community, as long as it is working toward the agreed upon vision of a healthy, transformed community.

Seeing a city reached and transformed serves as a macro strategy around which individual congregations and ministries can execute their tactical initiatives in line with their capacity and calling. It’s the Body of Christ working together. With this in mind, let’s re-read Jesus’ prayer in John 17:23—“*May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*” Again, unity was not intended to be an end in itself but a critical path step in letting the world know that Jesus is God’s Son and just how much he loves people! Without unity of purpose it’s difficult to move outside of our own ministries to impact the greater community around us.

Questions:

1. At what level are the churches in your city experiencing unity?
2. How has this concept of the three levels of unity helped you understand unity?

Organizing for usefulness

Know this—the more there is to join the more there is to leave. We are able to learn from the pioneers who have gone before. The early bird might get the worm, but it is the second mouse that gets the cheese. In other words we can learn from the successes and mistakes of others who have gone before. Many city-wide movements have split and fallen apart because they have tried to over-organize or create a litmus test (weekly leadership prayer, commitment to quarterly church gatherings, participation in a joint evangelistic event, etc.) to determine who is “in” and who is “out” in respect to city reaching. They want to divide churches as those that give life and those that don’t. Ironically the desire to unite sometimes becomes a divisive force in the city. City-reacher Copi Valdiviez of Toledo, Ohio goes so far as to say, in a hyperbolic fashion, “All churches are part of the city reaching effort. Some churches come to the meetings while others don’t even know they are part of a movement.” The unity of fellowship is fragile at best so by all means keep your organization simple. The less formal stuff you have people “join,” the less chance they can separate from anything if they get cold feet or disappointed. Keep your organizational expectation low. Author Anne Lamott poignantly says it all, “Expectations are resentments under construction.”⁴¹ Be steadfast and clear about the purpose of a citywide movement and allow pastors and churches to move in and out as time and opportunity allow.

Practical examples

Much can be accomplished as churches unite around purpose rather than theology. All around the country there are scores of city-wide cooperative efforts to engage the city with good deeds and good news. On July 29, 2006, five thousand people from 28 churches in the Orange County area of California united around the purpose of blessing and bettering their

⁴⁰ In summer 2006 Leadership Network sent out surveys to approximately 60 churches who were engaged in externally focused ministry. Out of 24 respondents, 24% answered that a service project triggered collaboration with other churches and 24% answered that prayer triggered their collaboration.

⁴¹ Connolly, Mickey and Rianoshek, Richard. *The Communication Catalyst*, Dearborne Trade Publishing, 2002. p. 151

community by working all day in 250 different locations around the county. Next year they hope to have 50 churches engaged as their circle of engagement widens.

Several churches in Omaha, Nebraska are partnering with over 60 public schools in Omaha as part of the "Embrace Teachers" movement. The idea of "Embrace Teachers" was the result of a discussion among the pastors of three of Omaha's largest churches (King of Kings Lutheran, Christ Community Church and Trinity Interdenominational Church), on how they could make a positive impact on the city. Begun in the fall of 2003, these churches and the other churches that joined them, which represent over 15,000 church members, came together to reach out to teachers through "random acts of kindness" to communicate their appreciation and commitment to the teachers of Omaha. When these parents show up, they come to register compliments instead of complaints.

A little appreciation can go a long way and sometimes it is the small acts of kindness that have the biggest impact. This past year each school was "thanked" at least three times in practical ways by the churches of Omaha through gifts or acts of service--to let teachers know how much the community appreciated them. Some teams provided large sheet cakes for the teacher's lounges on the first day of school. Other churches provided readers for the school reading program, painted halls and classrooms, redecorated and refurbished teacher's lounges. The creativity of saying "thank-you" to those who give so much to the children of the community did not end there. Teams from churches provided teachers with supplies for the classrooms they might normally pay for out of pocket. They prepared homemade bread, brownies, cookies and soup for teachers during parent-teacher conferences. They supplied morning snacks for the teachers and brought balloons for teachers' birthdays. Some teams picked up trash on the school grounds. Some went so far as to prepare pots of chili to take home so that teachers would have a night off from cooking.

"Embrace Teachers" has served in building healthy bridges between public schools and local churches. Teachers and principals have responded with tears of gratitude. One school official recently stated during a school board meeting, "We are happy to open our doors to the churches from our community that are willing to reach out to the teachers and schools." Another school official wrote to Embrace Teachers: "This is an outstanding initiative and your support and recognition of the work of teachers in the Omaha public schools are most appreciated." Still another official said, "This is where I see the church and school working together to serve the community."

Recently I was talking to a leader from a large city in the Midwest. Church leaders went to the mayor and asked what they could do to serve the city. The mayor responded that they had been given a financial grant for painting houses of elderly and disabled but they could not afford to hire painters. The churches of this city came together and partnering with Sherwin-Williams Paint Company (who sold them paint at cost) and the city (who provided money to buy the paint) kingdom-minded believers painted 29 houses in 2006. More importantly they have led 25 people to Christ through their work. Often it has been the homeowners themselves who have trusted Christ or neighbors who ask the question, "Why would you give up your vacation days to help people you don't even know?"

What is true for individuals is also true for the church. If we love only those who love us what credit is that? Even the pagans do that. It is when we step outside to love those who are not our own that the power of the gospel is seen and experienced. Jeremiah 29:4-7, provides a great example. Even though they were captives in a foreign land God urges the exiles to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you...Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (v.7). We can't transform a community that we don't really love.

Partnering with others in the city who care

Transforming a city takes more work and resources than we can possibly imagine. To attempt to do so by ourselves is an exercise in futility. Rather than creating new faith-based entities, which take up kingdom resources, why not partner with others in the city who share a common concern for things you care about? Churches are finding there is tremendous leverage when they discover they can partner with most any organization or entity that is morally positive and spiritually neutral. Working with those outside our normal spheres puts us in face to face and shoulder to shoulder relationships that spawn a thousand unlikely conversations through which people come to faith. We need to tap into the power of cross-sector networks. Again I turn to James Davison Hunter for his insight. He notes that "world-changing is most intense when the networks of elites and the institutions they lead overlap. Implied here is the overlapping of the different forms of capital – cultural capital overlapping with economic capital and/or political capital."⁴² Citing examples of the Reformation, the ending of slavery in

⁴² James Davison Hunter, "To Change the World." Wm. R. Kenan Professor of

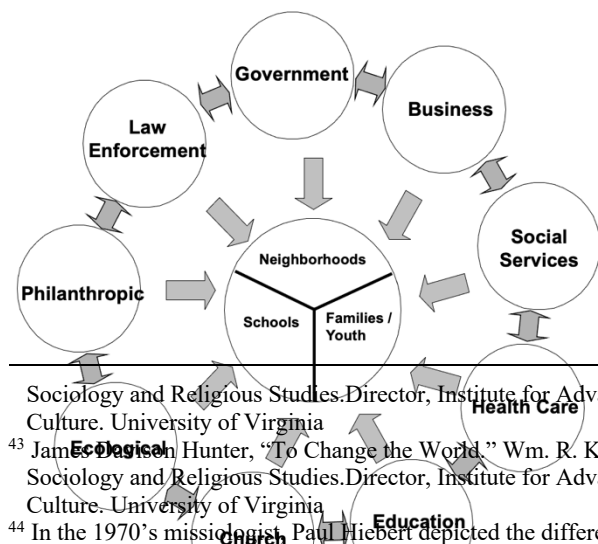
England, humanistic Marxism, literature and art he concludes, “Again and again we see that the impetus, energy and direction for changing the world were found where cultural, economic and often political resources overlapped; where networks of elites, who generated these various resources, come together in common purpose.... *in common purpose* – something we should never forget.”⁴³ We don’t partner around theology but around what we commonly care about in the city.

The Fresno Model

When the different domains of society are grasping a kingdom vision what do they do to better the community as a whole? Sure, their domain gets better, but what are they doing for the community? A healthy model of community transformation comes to us out of One by One Leadership in Fresno California (<http://www.onebyoneleadership.com/>). In most city-reaching initiatives, the intuitive thing to do is draw a diagram depicting the different domains of society on the periphery with the church at the center of the diagram influencing each of the sectors. Our friends in Fresno were a bit wiser. They realized that transforming the community was a way bigger job than the church had resources to handle. What they did was put families, schools and neighborhoods at the center while relegating the church to the periphery along with the other domains in the community. The church then takes a *catalytic responsibility* for connecting and harnessing the energy, resources and horsepower of the other domains to tackle the problems of neighborhoods, schools (elementary schools are often used to define a neighborhood) and families—the smallest individual unit in a neighborhood. The brilliance of diagramming their strategy in this manner allows them to show this diagram to anyone in any of the other sectors and it will make sense. The church can partner with any other domain and all domains based on their common love of the city...not theology. This represents “centered-set”⁴⁴ thinking at its best. Interestingly there are usually believers within each domain of society and so although the church is no longer in the central position of influence it is ubiquitous in its presence in the city. The instructions that God gives to his people living in a city are timeless. “*Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper*” (Jeremiah 29:7). The church is not to be separate from the city but actively working towards its transformation through prayer, blessing and service. Nothing happens in the kingdom until someone is served.

Influence audit

Churches often over-estimate their power but underestimate their influence in a community. By taking an “influence audit” churches could ask themselves the question, “Who do we know who knows....?” I think we will find that we are one or at most two relationships removed from leaders in every domain of society. We need to use this social networking influence, not to get our land rezoned for our church but to help form coalitions to transform our cities. The church can be the greatest of connectors in a community. God has dropped the breadcrumbs that lead us into relationships. We simply need to follow. Roughly speaking, the Fresno model can be diagrammed as follows:



Notice how the church is just one of the players in making the community better. As we move into our next section regarding transforming the church, I want to stimulate our thinking regarding the transformation of relationships. If the church is to have any transforming effect it must begin with transforming the relationships

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⁴³ James O. Hunter, “To Change the World” Wm. R. Kenan Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies.Director, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. University of Virginia

⁴⁴ In the 1970’s missiologist, Paul Hiebert depicted the difference between “bounded set” and “centered-set” thinking. The bounded set is indicated by a circle that contains what churches hold as their distinctive beliefs. The question they ask is, “Do you believe like I believe?” The result is over 34,000 separate denominations—each believing their form of doctrine in practice is closest to what Jesus wants his church to be. Being within the circle forms the basis for working together. In the centered set, there is no circle...only a dot. Theologically, the dot represents the very basics of what it means to be a follower of Christ—perhaps the Apostle’s Creed. Hiebert points out that each of our lives is represented by an arrow moving towards that center or away from that center. Distance from the center is not the most important thing about us, but rather the direction of one’s life. So he says it is better to be far away and moving toward the center than to be next to the center and moving away! Using this same diagram in reference to the community, we don’t work with people because they believe as we do but they care about what we care about in the city.

between the church and the other domains of the community—from one of distance to relationships, from skepticism to trust. Without transformed relationships there is no transformation.

Questions:

1. What do you care about in your city?
2. Who else cares about the same thing(s) you care about?
3. How can you work together with other organizations that are “morally positive and spiritually neutral?”

Transforming the Church

In spite of all the need for change and transformation that needs to take place in the domains of society, the domain over which we have the most influence and perhaps the one in the most desperate need of change is the Church. We're pretty good at telling other domains of society what is wrong with them, while ignoring the changes we ourselves can make. If the church could be changed and her people transformed and infused with kingdom living in their own domains, this would perhaps be the most powerful catalyst for transformation. Our cities can only be transformed by people, who themselves, have been transformed. Listen to Robert Linthicum's exhortation:

Were Christians really different in their attitudes and life-style from non-Christians? How far had the church faced, and grasped, the wholeness of Scripture? In short, how far had the Kingdom, or rule, of God become embodied and made real in the people of Christ? This is the underlying question facing the church in the city. How far has the kingdom of God become embodied and made real in the city's people of God? God's primary intention for the city is to bring God's kingdom into that city—to permeate its political, economic, and religious structures, to transform the lives of its inhabitants, to exorcise evil and unrepentant principalities and powers, and to place over that city, not a brooding angel but a Christ who would gather the city to himself. It is God's intention to transform every city into the city of God by making of that city the embodiment of God's rule.

God would seek to do this in every city by creating in that city a new community: the church. The community would be the very embodiment of God's kingdom in the city. In its life together, the church would practice that new social order. Through its witness, the church would call the city to participate in God's kingdom. By its solidarity with the economically, politically, and spiritually poor of the city, and by its confrontation of the powers that would seek to control and oppress rather than recognize their own poverty, the church would work for God's kingdom. That is why [Colin] Marchant insists that the underlying question to every church in every city is this: How far has the kingdom of God become embodied and made real in the life, witness, and social action of your church in this city?⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Linthicum, Robert. *City of God, City of Satan*, p.105

	Orphans Jas 1:27	Widows Jas 1:27	Immigrants Lev. 19:33,34	Prisoners Heb 13:3	Sick / Disabled Mat 25:36	Poor Gal 2:10	Aged 1Tim 5:9
Physical •Food / Nutrition •Shelter / Housing							
Spiritual •Salvation •Discipleship							
Social •Loneliness •Addictions							
Emotional •Grief •Stress							
Educational / Training •Literacy •Language •Career guidance							

Here’s something to think about that was brought to my attention by Jay Lorenzen (jaylll@aol.com) of Campus Crusade’s Military Ministry; All social movements...not just religious movements, have had a component of service to those on the margins. Think of Wesley and Patrick as well as the Labor movement and Communist movement. In an unpublished article he writes,

All social movements, regardless of type, have a restorative component. They help lead social and cultural change. All kingdom movements historically share this restorative impact--especially in correcting injustice and in caring for the poor, the widow and the orphan. The degree of focus and effect differs, but if you look closely at any significant work of God in history you will find them embracing the margins of society and seeking to bring them in.

Changing the scorecard

For churches to really engage in community they must first change the metrics of effectiveness. Churches have been great at counting noses and nickels but that may not be what God is thinking about. It’s no longer about Sunday morning attendance but the transformational effect they are having on their community. It’s not about people active in the church but people active in serving in the community. It’s not about moneys received but moneys given away. It’s not how many meetings we had in the church but how many outside organizations used our facility this week? It’s not about church growth but kingdom impact. It’s not just that metrics matter but that the right metrics matter. What keeps God “awake at night” is probably not how many people will be in church Sunday or how much money a church takes in but rather “How many people went to bed hungry?”⁴⁶ “How many suffering people have no one to comfort them?” “How many children are alone in the streets?” When a church’s scorecard is more like God’s scorecard, well that’s when transformation has begun.

Concluding thoughts

This paper is far from conclusive or comprehensive. It does not address, for instance, the role of prayer, asset-based community development, or issues of justice. This paper is more of a primer on cities written with the understanding that people don’t usually get involved in issues of justice until they have tried to be ministers of mercy.⁴⁷ People don’t serve twice

⁴⁶ I first heard this insightful statement from Reggie McNeal in September, 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia

⁴⁷ At Willow Creek’s 2006 Leadership Summit, U2’s Bono told about raising \$250m

until they've first served once.⁴⁸ People don't usually probe the systems that cause the symptoms until they have first addressed the symptoms.

We tend to overestimate what we can get done in one year and underestimate what we can get done in five years. We don't need another "40 Days of Purpose" as much as we need "40 Years of Purpose" if we really want to make a sustained and lasting kingdom difference in a community. A Chinese proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree is ten years ago." But there is a corollary that is often left out. "The second best time to plant a tree is today." We may have not done what we could have done or should have done in the past but there is no time like today to begin. So what can we do? Here are six practical suggestions.

1. Recognize that loving, serving and ministering to our communities—getting the Church outside the walls is something God is doing. He wants churches to be salt, light and leaven—agents of transformation that work very well up close but not at all over distance. It is a wave we are riding, not a wave we are causing. (As difficult as surfing is, it is far easier to ride a wave than to cause a wave.)
2. Understand that we cannot get different results from doing more or better of what we have done in the past. To create a different future, we need to think different, be different and do different.
3. Learn all you can about your city. Become an expert in the history of your city and the domains that influence your city. You can't love that which you do not know.
4. Remember you are kingdom builders not social workers. Figure out new and effective ways to combine compassionate service with passionate evangelism. Good deeds and good will is no substitute for good news.
5. This is a work of God who uses yielded people of faith, prayer and action. The world can only be transformed by those who themselves have been transformed.
6. Get started today (or tomorrow if you are reading this at night). Pray and seek out like-minded, like-hearted people who want to change the world. Every movement of God starts with one passionate person who says "yes."

*If you enjoyed this monograph, we think you'll enjoy the book, *To Transform a City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City* (Zondervan, 2010) by Eric Swanson and Sam Williams. Available on Amazon.*

in the first "Live Aid" concert to relieve hunger in Africa. This was mercy. He was compelled however to find out more...to dig a little deeper. He then discovered that poor African nations paid \$250m/day(!) to G-8 nations in interest payments. This propelled him to ask the G8 nations to forgive billions in African debt. This was beyond mercy.

⁴⁸ I first heard this saying from Casey Yorman of North Coast Church in Vista, \ California