



CITY CHURCH

City Planning Participant Guide

Week 3 – “In Our City”

In Our City

I. Our Ministry Context

- a. Spiritual Issues
 - i. Godlessness
 - ii. Nominalism
- b. Physical Issues
 - i. Poverty/Underemployment
 - ii. Social injustices
- c. Emotional Issues
 - i. Loneliness
 - ii. Crisis of identity
 - iii. Busyness

II. Old Testament Teaching

- a. The Pentateuch
 - i. Gen. 1-2 Creation – How it was supposed to be
 - ii. Gen. 3 – Fall – Spiritual, Emotional, and Physical turmoil.
 - iii. Gen. 11:1-9 – The fallenness and chaos of one of the first recorded cities
 - iv. Lev. 5:11-13 – God is on the side of the poor. Makes provision for people who cannot afford the full sacrifices.
 - v. Deut. 10:17-18 – God is on the side of the poor.
 - vi. Deut. 15:1-11 – Our call to treat the disenfranchised (poor, widows, orphans, aliens) with equality
- b. Wisdom literature
 - i. Living wisely and prudently in a fallen world. Living righteously amid wickedness. Helps us with discernment and open ears (example Prov. 10:19-21 – The value of listening and discerning speech).
- c. The Prophets

- i. Isa. 1:13-17 – Worship while oppressing/neglecting the poor/need is worthless and unacceptable worship
 - ii. Jer. 29:4-7 – Seek the welfare of the city! Their benefit is your benefit.
 - iii. Jer. 31:31-34 – New covenant is coming!
 - d. Applying these texts
 - i. OT law – Do Old Testament laws apply today? If so, how? Moral, civil, ceremonial distinctions too simplistic.
 - ii. Should Old Testament stipulations/wisdom apply to how we live today?
 - 1. New Testament a lot of what you see in the Old Testament.
 - 2. Main change is how we worship.**

III. New Testament Teaching

- a. Jesus' Ministry
 - i. Mark 1:14-15 – Jesus preaching the Gospel
 - ii. Special attention to the poor, the oppressed, the sick, and the outcasts – read the gospels!
 - iii. Matthew 25:31-46 – Stern warnings to care for those who are in need in the Christian community
- b. The Epistles
 - i. Rom. 12:1-2 – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”
 - ii. 1 Cor. 9:19-23 – Our call to be all things to all people for the sake of the gospel
 - iii. 2 Cor. 5:17 – In Christ we are a new creation (renewed)
 - iv. Gal. 6:10 – Let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- c. Revelation
 - i. Rev. 21:1-4 – A New City is on its way!
 - ii. Rev. 21:5 – God is making all things new
- d. The texts applied
 - i. In what way is Jesus' ministry instructive for us today?
 - 1. We are to seek the good of our own community and then turn our attention to outsiders.
 - a. We model care to the community
 - b. Caring for others without caring for our own is hypocrisy
 - ii. How optimistic should we be about our efforts to renew the city?

IV. Being “in the City”

- a. We're renewed people pursuing renewal
 - i. Since we have new life through Jesus, we want to share that life with others. Thus we align our lives around the heart of God, the renewal of all things. This means we actively engage our neighbors and serve our city to show and share the love of Christ.
 - ii. This theological connection between our renewal and pursuing renewal is vital. Remember the ditches we talked about last week! When we talk about "being in our city" we need to be especially careful that we don't end up promoting a bunch of philanthropic causes for no particular reason. We also need to make sure we don't overextend ourselves and thus neglect the body of Christians we're called to prioritize with our service.
- b. Nuts and bolts: what does "being in the city" actually look like?
 - i. Balance is vital – we're paying attention to spiritual, physical, and emotional issues. They go hand and hand.
 - 1. At the end of the day, we want people to know Jesus more than we want them to have fresh socks, but it's not helpful to for us to make artificial separations. We want people to know Jesus, and one of the ways we point them to the Lord is by giving people fresh socks when they are in need.
 - ii. Strategic planning is vital – we need to identify the "rhythms" of our city.
 - 1. Where do people work?
 - 2. What do they do for fun?
 - 3. Where do they eat?
 - 4. What are their "third places"?
 - 5. What do they celebrate?
 - 6. Where do they live?
 - iii. Strategic action is vital – what does it mean to identify rhythms and then weave ourselves into the fabric of our City? We have to pay attention both to 1 Cor. 9:19-23 (Paul becomes all things to all people for the sake of the gospel) and Rom. 12:1-2 (Paul warns Christians not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind). We weave ourselves into the community to the extent that it promotes the gospel. There are clear boundaries, and discernment is required.
 - iv. **The key is not adding busyness, but adding intentionality**

V. Implications for City Church, Community Groups, and Individuals

- a. Church
 - i. Not necessarily about starting new social services (although in some contexts it might be a worthy consideration), but in every context the church is called to equip (theologically and practically) individuals and community groups as they seek the renewal of the city.
 - ii. Our motivation should be the glory of God – not necessarily a specific social goal.
- b. Community Groups
 - i. A necessary source of prayer, encouragement, and gracious accountability
 - ii. Strength in numbers – groups can take on certain causes more effectively than individuals can.
 - iii. Coming soon: community groups will be challenged to find a niche or niches that they can intentionally press into and serve in the city of Gainesville. We don't want to mandate specifics, but here are some examples:
 1. Adopting a family in need
 2. Identifying a school in need and investing significantly on a volunteer basis
 3. Eating at the same restaurants on a regular basis and being intentional to get to know the people who work there
 4. Volunteer at Gainesville's Internet radio station and getting to know the staff.
- c. Individuals
 - i. Important – this will look different for different people according to our gift sets. So we speak in terms of principles rather than specifics.
 - ii. We're called to sacrificial, loving, rhythmic obedience. We need to be careful not to wrap our identity into a specific, city-oriented result.

City Planning – Week 3 Discussion

“In Our City”

Passages: Jeremiah 29:4-7

[4] “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them: plant gardens and eat their produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give you daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease. [7] But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Romans 12:1-2

[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 Corinthians 9:22b-23

[22b] I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. [23] I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I might share with them in its blessings.

Questions:

1. When you first heard our tagline articulated, what did you think the “in our city” part meant? Has your understanding of this phrase changed at all based on tonight’s teaching? Based on tonight’s teaching, what does it mean to be “in our city”?
2. How does the Jeremiah 29 passage (see above) apply to us today? Are we exiles today in any sense? How might the welfare of the city of Gainesville be advantageous to our welfare?
3. How do Paul’s words in Rom. 12:1-2 and 1 Cor. 9:22b-23 interact with each other? How is it that we can be all things to all people without conforming to this world?
4. How can we proclaim the gospel and pursue the welfare of Gainesville without doing one at the expense of the other?

5. What are some social needs in Gainesville that you are aware of? Are there any in particular that you think are especially unaddressed?

6. What are some ideas you have regarding how you might serve the city of Gainesville for the glory of God?

“The Rocking Chair”

City Planning – Week 3 (In Our City)

Sermons:

- Christ and the City: Reaching Your City with the Gospel – Tim Keller
 - <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2011/06/29/tim-keller-reaching-your-city-with-the-gospel-video/>

Videos:

- Diagnosing the spiritual condition of a city – St. Peter’s Fireside (Vancouver)
 - <http://vimeo.com/31117591>
- How Community Groups can function within a city (Soma Communities)
 - <http://www.somacommunities.org/mcvideo/>

Articles:

- What is God’s Global Urban Mission? – Tim Keller

Books:

- “Center Church” – Tim Keller (deals with what it looks like for a church to do faithful ministry in a city)
- “To Change the World” – James Davidson Hunter (talks about what it looks like for a Christian to be “faithfully present” in a given community)

For Your Consideration:

- What would it look like for Gainesville to be transformed by the gospel?
- What about doing ministry in a smaller city (Gainesville) is different from doing ministry in a larger city (like New York City)?