Transforming The City

From Dream to Reality

Version 1.1

Contents:

Acknowledgments and Introduction

1. What's New in Urban Ministry

2. Foundations of Urban Ministry

3. Experiences That Shape Ministry

4. Appreciating Cultural Richness

5. Discouragement and Conflict

6. Taking Care of Ourselves

7. History and Vision

8. Professional Development for Urban Ministry

9. Learning, Relearning and Sharing

Appendices
Every once in a while God presents us with an opportunity for an adventure. For one week in November, 1994 a group of us stepped outside of our daily boundaries to participate in a collective learning adventure. Our objective was to explore how urban knowledge can be shared not by talking about it in the traditional way but by using new tools to have an experience in learning. The participants had only a general idea of what we were about to do because it was so outlandish that they might not have come if we'd tried to explain. We asked for their trust as we led them through this process. What we did hasn't been done before as a whole, but different parts of it have been done in different places around the world. We believed it "could" be done - the group listed below proved it.

It's one thing to talk "about" a process and a set of tools; it's even more valuable to "experience" them in a training environment. However, to truly gain an understanding of the process we decided to "use" it to create a (by-) product - this book. Admittedly, writing a book, by computer (with more than a few self declared computer illiterates), in less than one week, without a fixed structure, on a subject as complex as urban ministry is off the current urban ministry map. But urban ministry is being creatively developed by these same participants who daily are pushing back the boundaries of what "can" be done in the cities and adding to the collective understanding of how to do urban ministry. We took advantage of their collective knowledge and experience to create this book. It is unique, but we offer it as a beginning not an end. We hope that it stimulates your thinking and dreaming. Where you can see areas that can be amplified and expanded we invite to write the book or article or create the seminar or resource that is needed to equip the colleagues that God has called to the cities.

No one was "the expert;" we were all experts. No one was "the leader;" we all participated and facilitated as co-leaders. This book is truly a collaborative gift of the following people:

Participants

Mr. Jon Abercrombie, Rev. Viju Abraham, Rev. Bernita Babb, Dr. Raymond Bakke, Rev. Graeme Clark, Mr. Robert Culver, Mr. Stephen deBeer, Rev. Joe Ehrmann, Dr. Leah Fitchue, Dr. Donald Fuller, Mr. Phillipe Joret, Rev. Henry Kontor, Mr. George Kovats, Dr. Robert Lupton, Dr. Michael Mata, Rev. Caesar Molobatsi, Mr. Paul Miller, Mr. Craig Nauta, Rev. David Ngai, Dr. Bill O’Brien, Mr. Mackenzie Pier, Ms. Lisa Rivera, Dr. Luis Scott, Mr. Jan Gaute Sirevag, Mrs Jember Teferra, Mr. Stephen Ujvarosy

Facilitators

Ms. Lee Black, Mr. Brett Boston, Ms. Melanie Buckner, Mr. Scott David, Ms. Angle Deacons, Ms. Odile Ferroussie, Ms Cheryl Hendricks, Ms. Kyle Hollingsworth, Ms. Susan Keeter, Mr. Bill Petersen, Mr. Mike Shorter, Ms. Shelly Thomas, Ms. Helen Ujvarosy, Mr. Stephen Ujvarosy, Mr. Ralph Veerman, Mr. Henry Whitlow

This project was even a collaborative dream. Ralph Veerman first suggested that we meet The Atlanta Project team and see the Carter Collaboration Center they had built. Dan Sweat and Glenda Horton of the Atlanta project believed that this idea would work and graciously hosted a group they had never met to do something they had never seen done. Group Solutions president, Brett Boston, believed in the process and recruited the Group Solutions team to voluntarily invest much more than a week of their time in this project. The staff at IUA believed that the participants that God was bringing to Atlanta were the right people at the right time to do what had never been done before. Lisa Rivera put her heart and soul into making all the details work and assure that we were a community rather than a collection of people. The Atlanta Christian community opened their doors and hearts to us and warmly supported us in so many ways. None of us could have done it alone and the results are greater than any of us could have produced without the others.

The week was itself a metaphor of how effective urban ministry is done - in collaboration - in community - with shared ownership where not one of us gets the credit but all of us do and where God gets the glory. Please read this book as our collective gift to you in your journey in the city. It expresses what we have all learned individually and together and invites you to be a co-learner as we continue the journey.

Steve Ujvarosy

International Urban Associates

Chapter 1 What's New in Urban Ministry

Contents
About the people behind the process

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CREATING THE INTERACTIVE URBAN NETWORK

Picture a world in constant motion, undergoing the greatest migration in human history. In 1900, only 9% of the world's population lived in cities. By the year 2000, that number will be approximately 50%. The most widespread phenomenon of the 20th century is global urbanization.

In every large city around the world, Christians are creating vital, effective urban ministries. As a ministry leader you too have a vision for transforming your city for Christ. Yet many urban leaders are overwhelmed by the poverty, trauma, injustice and complexity of their cities. They feel terribly isolated from each other, and inadequately prepared for the demands of urban ministry.

Ironically, those who have worked most successfully in the city will tell you that all the information and resources you need to be effective in urban ministry already exist, either in the form of another leader's personal experience, in Christian or secular reference books, or in public documents, private files or other publications. It is also more than likely that someone knows exactly the right ministry or government contact to help you accomplish what you are trying to do, if only you knew how to find them.

On another level, you yourself have creative inner resources and wisdom in your personal experience that you may not even be aware of.

The problem in the city is neither an absence nor even a deficit of resources for urban ministry. The city itself, and the day-to-day life experiences of those involved in urban ministry, are both rich learning environments. The problem in the city is accessing the resources, both external and internal, that are already here.

Resourcing urban church leadership is the mission of International Urban Associates (IUA), of Chicago Illinois. In 1992, IUA instituted its annual Urban Strategy Institute (USI), an intensive training workshop in urban strategy development and networking for a select core of the world's top urban ministry leaders. The goal each year is to provide advanced professional training that will upgrade their skills and expand their vision of ministry.

IUA's 1994 Urban Strategy Institute was a bold experiment. The challenge? To create and demonstrate a worldwide network of resources, learning and support. The strategy? *The Interactive Urban Network.*

The Interactive Urban Network is a powerful multi-technology communications/learning system. Urban
ministry leaders can use this system to access and share urban ministry knowledge, to form partnerships, to solve problems and to receive and extend support to and from other ministry professionals anywhere in the world. The Interactive Urban Network includes:

1. A new set of high and low tech tools to access existing information and to stimulate new learning on both the external and internal levels; and

2. A technological means to share the information and learning worldwide.

This innovative combination of high- and low-tech tools for evoking and capturing new learning, and the communications technology for distributing this learning worldwide, is the Interactive Urban Network.

IUA introduced its Interactive Urban Network at the state-of-the-art Carter Collaboration Center in Atlanta, GA, in November, 1994. Partnering with three other leading edge organizations: FCS Urban Ministries of Atlanta, The Atlanta Project, and Group Solutions, an internationally renowned groupware, training and consulting company, IUA designed a one-week world-class training experience for twenty five top international urban ministry experts, using a two-part STEP UP/STEP DOWN approach.

**STEP UP: GROUPWARE AND INTERNET**

**Groupware**

What do you get when twenty-five of the world's top urban ministry experts come together for five days to brainstorm and document their ideas on what it takes to be effective in urban ministry?

That all depends on how you go about it. Give each expert equal time (i.e., one expert on stage, twenty four off): at the end of the week you'd have less than two hours of input per person. At best, there may be significant language and cultural barriers in communicating with such a diverse group.

But put the experts in a room with thirty-three networked computers and the most advanced group planning software. Let them respond to any topic simultaneously, anonymously and in their own cultural terms. Add a team of professional facilitators and editors, and what you have is an unprecedented opportunity to capture the best thinking of each individual about the underlying principles that have made their ministries effective in some of the largest cities of the world.

This is exactly what happened at the November, 1994, Urban Strategy Institute (USI) held in the Carter Collaboration Center in Atlanta, GA. A group of twenty-five adventurous IUA Associates (ministry experts who ranged from computer literate to computer phobic) met up with a sophisticated program called Group Systems V, a multi-tool integrated software package designed to facilitate interactive decision making. Of the seventeen different tools available in this program, we used three: Group Writer (to actually write the document), Group Survey (to poll the group and rank order responses) and Mood
Meter (to instantaneously measure group responses to questions on a scale of one to ten). Each of these tools involves an activity known as parallel processing: everyone is on-line and can be entering input at the same time.

IUA gave the Associates two focus questions:

1. What does it take to be effective in urban ministry?

2. How do we communicate what we know about urban ministry?

Twenty-five urban experts, working in four international teams, sat down at their computers. Little by little, then more and more, they began to write. By the end of the week they created this working document: twenty-five experts answered two of the most important questions in urban ministry today. But what now? How do we share this source material (or any other potentially useful information) with the rest of the urban world? And what about input from all the other urban ministry experts who weren't with us in Atlanta? Couldn't they extend the vision and enhance the end product with their individual experiences and the unique lessons they have learned?

Internet

Imagine getting all the urban ministry experts in the whole world together in one room to exchange ideas and support one another. Imagine an interactive medium that would allow any text to become a living document, constantly updated and revised by multiple scholars and practitioners from around the world with the best of current thinking and working knowledge. Think what it would mean for seminary students around the world to be trained on-line by the world's best faculty. Now you have some idea of what the Internet can contribute to urban ministry at this moment.

The Internet is a cooperative worldwide communications network that allows users to communicate with over thirty million people. With a computer and a modem, virtually anyone can access the Internet through a host computer in a university, a large corporation or a commercial service. The host computers are linked together in a gigantic communications web by cooperative sharing of data links around the world. The costs of maintaining these links are not passed on to the user. Once on the Internet a user can browse through files on various computers almost anywhere on the planet depending on what files the host computer allows them to access.

Internet users all have an address and can send messages to other users as well as download host computer files. This vast electronic networking resource is available to anyone, including the Christian community. Groups of users can set up specialized conferences to share ideas, information and resources without leaving home. Documents, software programs, video, graphics, audio and even smells can be downloaded off the Internet.

Urban church leaders and educators now have an open opportunity, if they will take it, to use the
Internet as a powerful tool for building networks and exchanging information to strengthen the urban church and to break down the isolation so many urban ministers endure. The Interactive Urban Network was designed to get this process started.

This book, as a working resource for urban ministry around the world, was deliberately uploaded to the Internet even before it was published. High technology is making this document as accessible as possible to as many urban leaders as possible.

However, as you read this book it you will see there is more to it than high technology. The Interactive Urban Network, which was used to produce and distribute this book, also creatively applies low or "soft" technology (what we are calling STEP DOWN technology) to the practice of urban ministry.

**STEP DOWN: METAPHORS, ART (VISIONING) and STORYTELLING**

Information, or more importantly, wisdom about what makes urban leaders effective is not necessarily the same thing as a factual understanding of urban ministry. There are many dimensions to ministering in the city. Some of these dimensions are internal: emotional, relational, spiritual, and may not be able to be expressed directly by asking what we think or what we know. We ourselves may not even be fully aware of their presence or how they effect what we do.

To help the twenty-five urban experts access these inner dimensions of urban ministry, Urban Strategy Institute planners set up a metaphor/art (visioning) room across from the high tech group writing room. Drawing people together in a stimulating, creative environment, the USI planners also hoped to offset any side effects of the high technology setup across the hall. In the metaphor/art room technology took a different form: four-by-eight-foot foam core panels, colored markers, and two incredibly talented graphic artists. (There were computer terminals in the room, but only for writers to capture the comments of the international teams as they worked on the panels.)

The two artists were in charge of sketching out the Associates' vision of a large urban ministry, using a house and its various rooms as a metaphor for a large urban ministry with its many different ministry functions and leadership requirements.

One of the reasons for choosing the metaphor of a house was to provide the international teams with a transferable concept that was applicable and adaptable to any cultural location. In this way the teams could agree on symbols which communicated a common understanding of urban ministry, but which also allowed for personal interpretation. In describing for the artists the furnishings each particular room contained, the ministry experts were led to approach the questions of what it takes to be effective in urban ministry from a right-brain (conceptual) perspective rather than from the left brain (analytical) perspective they used in their writing. This cognitive shift brought a new level of insight about their work which they could then incorporate into their writing when they returned to the high-tech room.

Each room (actually, three four-by-eight-foot panels) had three common elements: a window, to
CHAPTER 1: WHAT'S NEW IN URBAN MINISTRY

represent connection to the secular world; a skylight to represent relationship to God; and a mirror, to stand for the ministry's (or leader's) sense of self, purpose or identity. Depending on the room (kitchen/dining room, study, bedrooms, etc.) the teams chose different furnishings for the artists to draw, defining in the written descriptions the unique significance of each element. The room illustrations, with panel-by-panel descriptions, are included in Appendix D. Although the house itself, like the Kingdom of God, is not finally complete, all thirteen rooms and their furnishings taken together, give a more or less complete picture of what it looks like and feels like to be involved in urban ministry.

Storytelling was another low technology strategy of the Interactive Urban Network. Encouraging participants to relate and reflect on their own and others' personal histories, provided one more rich opportunity for inner learning. It also turned out to be an important bonding experience with fellow urban leaders at the Urban Strategy Institute. Some individual stories appear in the text. All the stories are collected in Appendix B.

In storytelling, metaphors and art (the STEP DOWN technologies of the Interactive Urban Network), the objective is to reach more of the whole person in order to create a more balanced urban minister. Through the STEP UP technologies of Groupware and Internet, the Interactive Urban Network takes advantage of the latest technology to reach more people in absolute numbers. What this means is that urban ministers need no longer work in a vacuum or in isolation. They can work smarter and harder, without feeling that they are in it all alone.

All of the STEP UP/STEP DOWN technologies of the Interactive Urban Network were integrated into the creative production and distribution of this book. However, the Interactive Urban Network and its STEP UP/STEP DOWN methods offer other applications outside the highly structured environment of the Urban Strategy Institute.

THE NEXT STEP...

The STEP DOWN low technologies: metaphors, art (visioning) and storytelling, can be implemented immediately in any urban ministry setting around the world. In materials the most it takes is some foam core board and colored markers, but it can work just as well with paper taped on the walls and charcoal, just so long as everyone can see. Stories can be written down by hand or just expressed orally. IUA expects its Associates to use these tools to enrich and enhance their ministries as soon as they return to their home cities from the USI

Setting up the high tech STEP UP processes (Groupware and Internet) may be somewhat more problematic. Of course, some urban ministries have the all the resources and technical expertise they need right now to implement GroupWare and get started on the Internet if they choose. Other will need outside funding and technical support.

However, in principle, both the STEP UP and STEP DOWN approaches are entirely transferable to any culture and appropriate in any urban ministry setting, even without technical setup. Although it is not
customary to think of software as embodying values, let alone Christian values, groupware is just a series of tools to empower interactive decision-making, and to make sure all voices are heard. If you think about the nature of groupware apart from the hardware, the principles hold; the process just takes a little longer.

...AND THE NEXT

The day that USI 94 began we warned the participants that they were told for the first time that they were going to write a book on urban ministry and given fair warning that the only way for everyone to get through the week was to be patient, to trust each other and trust the process. Not only did the USI model a variety of new learning styles but also a different model of leadership. "high ask" instead of the traditional "high tell"

The USI utilized facilitators instead of lecturers and modeled a collaborative co-leadership style that is now emerging in the most powerful and innovative organizations and businesses. USI leaders knew their objectives and believed in the participants who, as significant leaders themselves, not only followed but simultaneously led where it was appropriate. Thus the USI as a whole was a learning/training experience in the latest management theory, which participants may apply to their own ministries to make them more effective.

WE'VE NEVER DONE IT THAT WAY BEFORE

Writing this book was an adventure. When we began, no one knew what it would look like or what it would say. It was an act of faith and trust between the participants, the facilitators, the artists and the editors, none of whom had ultimate control. We even voted on the title

This book is a demonstration of what can be done using techniques that have never been combined before to create a book in just one week. For this we owe special thanks to Group Solutions President, Brett "Trust Me" Boston. As we upload it to the Internet for reflection, comment, revision and expansion, the Interactive Urban Network is officially open.

IUA is calling this version 1.0. It is far from complete, but it is historic. It goes out with our prayers for all those who labor in the city. With every person it reaches, it carries the potential to streamline and transform the way urban ministry is carried out.

We hope you will find in this book something of value to guide or encourage your urban ministry. But the book itself is not the final message; the message is: Look at what the Interactive Urban Network can do.

To quote IUA Executive Director, Ray Bakke, "The seven last words of the church are: 'We've never done it that way before.'"
To paraphrase Global Solution's unstoppable Brett Boston: If we've never done it that way before, great! Who better than us, who love the church and are committed to the city, and want to see its people made whole?

ABOUT THE BOOK

IUA's original intent was to integrate all the stories and selected passages from the room metaphor descriptions into the main text. However we actually produced too much material to complete that process and still keep to a timely publishing schedule. We have reprinted all the stories together in Appendix B. In Appendix D "The House We Built Together," we have included drawings of the room panels with complete room by room narrative descriptions. Please enjoy these chapters! The stories alone are worth the price of the book

Chapter 2: Foundations of Urban Ministry

Contents
WHY CARE ABOUT THE CITY?

As Christians we care about the city because God loves the city. The Gospel we preach is first and foremost God's gift to the poorest of the poor, who, to a large degree, now abound in the cities of the world. Our commission is to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ while we are meeting their human needs in a way that empowers them. In this task, Jesus is both our message and our model.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he said, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). We are not only to preach as He preached, but also to do for people the deeds of compassion He did. For us, that includes issues of health, housing, justice and any other areas that affect peoples' lives. So, we obey God's mandate to care for his creation and to open up the kingdom of God to as many as possible.

"As the Father" not only means focusing on the same issues and priorities as Jesus did, but also in the same style. The emptying, suffering servant that Jesus modeled goes against the grain of human nature. Too often we are tempted to deal with Jesus' priorities in one of the three ways in which Jesus was tempted in the wilderness: by magic, miracle, or power. The urban ministry graveyard is strewn with programs that fizzled because the delivery instruments took the shape of one of the three temptations. True power is the ability to achieve a purpose. The cross is the most demeaning form of death; but for Jesus it was the most powerful instrument. If we are to be effective in urban ministry, it must be ours as well.

We are here in the cities of the world because we have no choice but to be involved. It is part of our answer to the calling we received.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S AGENDA FOR THE CITY

To understand God's agenda for the city we need to get a clear idea of what the Bible says about cities. Outside resources will help us in this process as will an understanding of contextualization and a mindset sensitized to urban issues.

Too often today urban ministry programs are determined less by God's agenda for the city than by history and by the exploitive economic systems of which we have all been a part.

Historically, in most parts of the Third World the city was established by foreign colonizers at the expense of local inhabitants. These invaders built impressive structures to promote their own safety, well being, and economic activities, but abandoned them when nationalism and other forces drove them back.

Interestingly, we find in many inner cities throughout the West a similar pattern of initial development followed by desertion. At one time the best sections of town, these city centers were also abandoned and left to decay by those who originally built them. The continued development of these inner cities was no longer perceived to be in the best interests of the rich and powerful, even as fellow countrymen.

For us, this suggests that a substantial part of God's agenda for the city today, in the First as well as in the Third Worlds, will have a lot to do with the healing of historical as well as contemporary injustices.

As we look at the world today, we see that urbanization and urbanism are the two most widespread phenomena of the twentieth century.

Urbanization is the absolute growth of cities, both in numbers and size, as masses of people move into the urban centers of the world. Every nation on earth is undergoing urbanization.

Urbanism, the adoption of urban life-styles and urban values, is a product of urbanization, but is not necessarily related to living in a large city. Rural inhabitants viewing a satellite broadcast absorb the same cultural influences as city dwellers.

Urban ministry in our time is at the heart of the greatest transformation of human society in the history of the world.

Cities today are at once centers of riches and power, poverty and helplessness. As we try to understand more specifically how God would have us respond to the whole city, first to the poor and those who find themselves on the margins of society and then to those at the centers of power, we need to be able to understand what the Scriptures have to teach us about cities and urban ministry.

**UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT CITIES**

**Resources**

Most of us as urban ministers have a fairly strong background in biblical studies. We have studied the original languages, the history and culture of the Bible so we can use all these as tools to interpret what the Scriptures have to say about matters of faith.

While there is a wealth of detail on cities and urban ministry models in the Scripture (the word "city" occurs more than 1,250 times), we may not find it meaningful. Without formal training in urban studies it is difficult put what the Scriptures are saying about cities into some kind of cognitive framework.

It is important to realize that there are many outstanding information resources that will increase our ability to understand what the Scriptures are saying about cities. However, since many of these resources
may be outside our normal field of seminary study, they may be presented in a form (statistics) or a professional language (sociology or psychology) that is unfamiliar to the urban minister. To educate ourselves, we may need to take advantage of professional seminars and other training opportunities.

It will also be useful to develop a personal library of books and articles on urban studies to stimulate our thinking on cities. This background will sharpen our ability to recognize such references in Scripture.

We need to realize that there are many resources on the city, put together by many individuals and groups with access to a much broader urban knowledge base than our own. Otherwise, we are forever reinventing the wheel. Our personal urban study must have at its heart an awareness of the language and symbols of the city through which we are able to interpret the contemporary moods and processes we seek to address through our ministry.

**Contextualization**

Another step as we try to discern God's agenda for the city is to be aware of how the process of contextualization influences (or should influence) our interpretation of the Scriptures. We will look at four areas: original context, personal context, ministry context and community context.

1. **Original context.** In Scripture, we need to understand the original context before we can apply Scripture to the present. If we do not understand the context within which Scripture was written we misinterpret Scripture. If we err in this way, we will err in the application of the perceived message. To understand original context, we need to spend a lot of time looking at sources other than the Bible itself. This means gaining access to good atlases and histories as well as biographies and other stories of that time. Studying parallel history within the Roman empire during the first three centuries of the church will help us understand how people of that time understood their world. In other words, rather than taking the Bible superficially, we should enter the world of the writers of the Bible to get the full meaning of their words.

2. **Personal context.** The context of our upbringing and personal experience always plays an important (though perhaps unconscious) role in our understanding and interpretation of Scripture, and indeed, of any situation in which we find ourselves.

   For example, people who have never been in prison may find it more difficult to relate to some of Paul's prison writings. In the same way, many of us who have never been shepherds may not fully appreciate the Biblical parable of the lost sheep.

   On the other hand, it is also possible that immersion in a context may cause us to lose sensitivity to it over time. Those who have grown up in large cities may overlook the suffering that has become an everyday occurrence. We need to carefully understand the things that have formed our world view and determine, for better or worse, our response to the world around us.
As we continue to understand how our historical context influences the way we perceive the Scripture and the world we live in, we will be able to discern more accurately what the Scriptures are saying. This is a very tedious but necessary exercise.

3. **Ministry context.** Our ministries can help us to understand Scripture and its relevance for the city by providing a group or communal approach to Scripture. One way to achieve this for ourselves and our ministry groups is through community Bible studies, where all can gain from the collective wisdom of the group and contribute to a better understanding of any passage of Scripture.

Often asking a simple question like..."What is God doing in your life?" leads a group of people to reveal the contemporary realities of their circumstances. This will direct you to particular sections of Scripture in a way that will help you immediately gain relevant knowledge.

4. **Community context.** Our understanding of Scripture, our personal history and our communal appreciation of ministry must also interact with the immediate physical setting and its attendant socioeconomic elements. In the context of our community we learn the history of its people, the struggles and issues that concern them, what resources are available for ministry and which larger trends are confronting the community. The activity of God is not isolated from concrete reality and our ministry is not isolated from people who live in a real place. Our interpretation of Scripture shapes not only the form our ministry takes, but is itself formed by our appreciation of the environment where people conduct their lives.

As a whole, disciplined contextualization makes it possible for any person coming from any background to interact with Scripture in a way that enhances his or her ability to work in urban environments. However, understanding the original context within which the Scriptures were written is key to producing urban ministries that synch with God's agenda for the city.

**Mindset**

Our ability to understand Scripture is affected by the biases that we bring to it. Some of these biases are not necessarily bad in and of themselves, but they can cloud our understanding of Scripture. For instance, if we come from a background where religion and politics do not mix, we will tend not to hear and understand those Scriptures dealing directly with structural evil in society.

This is especially pertinent when we consider the biblical teaching on cities. If we are convinced that God loves the cities, our ears will be opened so that we can hear what the Scriptures say about cities. We will also begin to actively read the Scriptures with the intent and expectation of learning more about cities.

Our appreciation for cities will be enhanced further by the realization that even though the Bible opens in a garden, it actually concludes in a city. In between, God's people are seen many times in cities, such as Nineveh, Jerusalem, Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, and the list goes on. It is also interesting to note that...
cities as they exist today are already beginning to reflect the holy city in Revelation where many nations will be gathered and praising God together.

UNDERSTANDING THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE

In 1980, Glasgow built a new motorway right through the center of the city. It was a unique motorway in Europe because it had exits both to the left and the right. It was as if the motorway planners didn't know how to approach the city. Similar confusion is all too apparent within the Health Board, the Education Board and all the other agencies who also struggle to find a way to approach the city, not the least of which is the church.

Finding the right approach to urban ministry is also not easy. To do so, we need resources to understand the city and its people; partnerships to support each other and to provide a more holistic response to complex urban issues; and a foundation of personal values, spiritual discipline and commitment, to sustain the long-term involvement that leads to the transformation of individuals and systems.

Resources

Gathering resources is a skilled task. Within the Christian community are people who have skills in gathering and analyzing information about the city (town planners, librarians, statisticians). So why try to do it alone? Use the available resources.

Written resources

As we come to look at our cities, it is important to remember that many other people and agencies have walked that way before. Search for current information from city planning authorities, librarians, development agencies, education departments, social and health care departments, etc. Keep in mind that all information is written from a particular perspective and sometimes for political reasons. Technical and planning information is helpful but so also is the work of historians, artists, photographers, authors and playwrights.

Gather as much information from as many sources as possible. This is hard work. Spend time sorting out what is useful from what is not before assembling the helpful information. Find, if possible, people who have skills in research and analysis to help.

People resources

Cities are much more than locations and systems, ultimately they are about people. Take time to speak to as many different people groups as possible within the city or at least the major players. Find out when different ethnic groups came to the city and why. Asking people about their history can bring many insights.
Personal resources Two feet. There is perhaps no better way to get to know a city than to get around it, walk its streets, travel on its buses and trains, visit its offices, factories, theaters and galleries, courts and government buildings, sports centers, etc. Other peoples' understanding of the city and its people are helpful, but we need to make sure we take time to get our own view. No survey will be complete without it!

Experience shows that if we take an interest in visiting local businesses many managers will be delighted to show off their companies and explain why and what they are doing.

Mapping

Mapping is the process whereby information about city systems (transport, schools, police stations, poverty clusters etc.) are drawn out and illustrated on a chart. Mapping a city's people, resources and systems can help us see how our cities work, or don't work. Mapping will identify interrelationships, gaps, clusters.

Demography It is essential to look at the development of the demography of our cities as well as the current situation.

For example, in the Govan area of Glasgow, there are large numbers of unemployed manual laborers. This was a major shipbuilding site which is no longer a viable industry. By looking at the demography of the city in 1970, 1980, and 1990 it is possible to see the history of what is happening now--causes as well as facts. Another example would be to look at the growth of the Asian community (approx. 20,000) in Glasgow. The increasing ghettoization of the Asian community raised issues such as the consequences of white fear, and white flight and increased racial tensions.

Systems Thinking

Cities are not static; they are complex interrelated systems in perpetual motion. To understand a city is to see it in motion--transport flows, communications systems, etc. For instance, in Glasgow, a study of the flow of traffic from the suburbs to the city demonstrated that people use the city for work and entertainment, but live outside the city. The poor, through taxes, pay for parasitic suburban communities.

Power structures

Exploring the power centers in a city can bring surprising results. They are often not where we assume them to be. Look at international corporations, media personalities, sports clubs, universities, colleges and schools. Remember that power and influence do not always equate to size, money or wealth.

Understanding the Spiritual Dimensions of the City

Having mapped the city, its physical structures, systems and peoples, we need also to consider the spiritual realm of principalities and powers.
The Bible teaches us that Christian mission is essentially a spiritual struggle to overcome the forces of evil, seen and unseen. This calls those involved in urban ministry to an awareness of how evil works within and through city systems.

From the founding of the first city by Cain, the city has been seen by writers like Jacques Ellul as being anti-God. The city through the centuries has been a place of religious ritual and meaning. As such, both good and evil are seen in the systems of the city and in the effects these systems have on the lives of its citizens.

Church and Community

The model of church which we have inherited, may in some cases have had a fragmenting influence on our urban communities. Community or parish churches which once had their roots in city neighborhoods have deserted the city to become commuter churches which draw people and energy out of neighborhoods. The local church has thus become in some respects a disconnected adversary of the community. A part of the task of an urban ministry is to reverse this situation.

Network/Collaboration

Within any city there are potential ministry partners in the form of other churches, lay relief programs, etc. The purpose of a collaborative approach is to pool resources (leadership, funding, models) and create mutual support. The fundamental tool of collaboration is relationship development and the result is a climate of partnership and a sense that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Urban ministry leaders need to bear in mind the fact that we are not called to be lone rangers in the work of transforming the city. Moreover, giving people the opportunity to help others has the potential to lead all involved to spiritual renewal

Laity and partnerships

Urban ministry will always be enhanced by effective involvement of laity. This means an aggressive involvement of lay leaders at both the decision making and operational levels. In involving others we not only following biblical teaching but adding a tremendous skills base to our ministry. {Ephesians 4}

Laity

The word "laity" comes from the Greek work "laos" which simply means people. Therefore, in a truly Biblical sense, laity are all the people of God. But as the history of the church unfolded, laity came to means the non-ordained Christians. Thus developed a non-biblical clergy/laity distinction. A scriptural renewal of the church would recover the truth that all Christians are called to minister.

Personal foundations of urban ministry:
Character, Values, Personality Traits.

All of us involved in urban work bring our own identity, character, values and personality traits to our work. Urban Strategy Institute planners surveyed IUA Associates and others involved in urban ministry to determine which traits seemed to be the most helpful and beneficial to our work and to growth. Flexibility, openness, patience, willingness to experience adventure, tenacity, servant-leadership, and integrity seem to characterize the successful urban worker. As urban ministers we will be servants to others and open to learning. We must be tenacious--patient in terms of absorbing small failures and injustices and seeking the long-term health of the city and its people. Finally, we must show integrity in our actions and teachings, sharing in the experiences of our communities as fully as possible.

We as urban workers should also be very sensitive to the diverse cultures in the city and compassionate to the brokenness in the individuals we meet. A spirit of community and desire to work with others marks an individual as one who realizes he does not have all the answers and will help in developing a support network and community. Flexibility will keep us receptive to new and better ideas.

Many of us do not bring all of these character traits with us to the city. Instead we are involved in the process of watching ourselves grow in character. Cultivation of these character traits requires intentionality and we have found that being in contact with others and wrestling with ideas in community is crucial for growth to take place. Being in community and encountering others is critical for our personal growth and educates us on the skills needed to continue our ministry work.

Spiritual Disciplines

The incessant demands of urban ministry have the potential to distract us from our original purpose and disconnect us from the source of our power. Crowded calendars, past successes and other ministry team members may all interfere with our relationship to God and our ability to focus on our primary ministry objectives.

Christ teaches and models for us throughout His ministry the essential need to practice personal spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, solitude, etc. Spiritual disciplines help us reach our goals and stay on track. They give us courage, and the confidence that we are following Him.

There are also corporate spiritual disciplines such as service to the community and group prayer. The discipline of service (such as community work, child care, teaching Sunday School) builds perspective of our common humanity. Group prayer is a discipline that enables the group to collectively hear the voice of God. It reminds us that we are "one church" and that it takes a "city-wide church to fight a city-wide war."

Commitment

Fundamental to effectiveness in urban ministry is a long-term commitment to a city and to a community
within that city. There is no substitute for continuity. A long obedience in the same direction is needed, and it has to be related to a particular place, a particular group of people and a particular purpose. Moreover, given the harsh reality of the environment in which urban ministry is carried out, longevity is often the only measure of success.

The Old Testament gives us some clear examples of what it means to take a long-term view of God's ministry: Abraham bought a piece of land in Caanan to symbolize that this land belonged to God for Abraham's descendants. Jeremiah also bought a parcel of land in the midst of an urban crisis. So today we also work in urban areas to symbolize that this is God's land, and we rebuild looking forward to the day that God's Kingdom on earth is here in its fullness.

It is necessary not to set our expectations too high at the beginning, so that we will not get discouraged when quick results are not forthcoming. Make sure the commitment is visible to the community, in order to keep their trust.

As urban ministry professionals, we should be prepared to involve ourselves completely, totally in the task; it cannot be treated as an aside. The ministry will affect every aspect of our lives. Experience shows that one of the most convincing ways to show this commitment is by living in the ministry community.

**Transformation of Individuals and Systems**

Without long term commitment there will be no in-depth transformation, only cosmetic change.

Urban mission in Christ's spirit and example is dedicated to delivering people from their personal bondage to sin and guilt. At the same time it also stimulates processes that lead to liberation and transformation from unjust and oppressive public structures. Any attempt to limit the gospel's scope and effectiveness, to limit its urban significance, by reducing it to a matter of personal piety or to perpetual service programs that keep people powerless and dependent is to be resisted.

Transformation calls the city into partnerships through which the powerful are called to work alongside the vulnerable. The empowerment of individuals is central. Help is only given until people are ready to take over themselves and continue the work on their own. They should also have the ability to recruit new disciples and perpetuate the presence of the ministry. Empowerment takes time and is hard work but it is the necessary outcome of the Gospel. Experience shows that it will actually amplify the results and exponentially expand the influence of the mission work.

**BARRIERS TO MINISTRY**

According to Ray Bakke, one of the realities of Christianity today is that 85% of the barriers to creative and effective urban ministry are within the church itself. Experience shows that we cannot just give the church sufficient urban information or resources and expect them to respond to the needs of the city. In
today's world, accelerating change constantly presents us with countless opportunities to implement new visions for urban ministry. Unfortunately, resistance to new methods and unwillingness to give up control, to cooperate, rather than compete with other ministry visions and groups, greatly inhibits our ability to minister to the city. The city is a dynamic complex of inter-related systems in which it is impossible to isolate any particular problem from the whole. We need many visions to approach the city, some of which will undoubtedly challenge the established thinking about how we should do ministry and with whom it should be done. According to Ray Bakke, the seven last words of the church are "We've never done it that way before." Wherever Christians struggle for control, the poor and the city lose. Keeping an open heart and mind in a spirit of love will overcome this most deeply defended of all barriers.

In thinking about the basic foundations of urban ministry we have suggested that there are various levels of understanding: understanding God's agenda for the city, understanding the city and its peoples, understanding the personal and communal foundations of ministry, and understanding the barriers to ministry.

In Chapters 3-8 we will look at some of the many influences that, for better or worse, shape our vision and methods of urban ministry.

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**Chapter 3: Experiences That Shape Ministry**

**Contents**
CHAPTER 3: EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE MINISTRY

PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS:

Who we are as persons and as urban practitioners is shaped foremost by the many experiences of our lives. The people we meet and the crises we endure shape us and give our lives meaning and form. Since personal experience is such a powerful teacher, it is important to consider if it is possible to create or structure such experiences, rather than waiting for them to happen. At the same time, we need to be aware of the many factors that may influence our interpretation of the events we experience. Here is how one urban practitioner and his ministry have been changed by the experiences of his life.

I would like to recall two experiences that have highly influenced my Christian ministry. My first experience happened in a Christian community in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1972-73. Overall, I spent two years with this community of 25 to 45 individuals. I lived in several houses; sharing in community meals and dormitory style sleeping. The purpose of my visit was to evangelize and disciple the traveling, drug using, eastern religion-oriented Westerners journeying through Afghanistan on their way to India and Nepal.

In this setting I learned the power of both the Holy Spirit and the Christian community to effectuate transformed lives.

I saw the Holy Spirit totally transforming the lives of many ex-drug users and hopeless hippies by replacing confusion, aimlessness, and self-destruction with the desire to serve God and their fellow man.

I can recall Geoff from England, who wandered into our coffee-bar in downtown Kabul, then stayed with us in the community house. Geoff turned his life over to Christ, and then-some two years later-went on to Nepal to share his faith with great effect amongst the Tibetan-Buddhist farmers. He then went on to India to lead big healing-preaching crusades in stadiums in Northern India. Northern India has very few Christians.

Through Geoff, I learned the difference between the power of personality and the power of the Holy Spirit, I learned that we must never limit what we think God can do through an individual; never trust that we can see anyone's true gifts. Geoff was basically a quiet and shy person. When I first heard that he was preaching to great crowds in northern India I could scarcely believe it. "Geoff?!" was my incredulous reply. I learned that we must never limit what we think God can do through an individual; never trust that we can see anyone's true gifts. In fact, we are often blinded by focusing on their observable personality.
The second set of life-transforming experiences came during my involvement in Christian outreach in Nottingham, England. The two cities were very different from each other. Nottingham, unlike Kabul, did not have droves of drifting transients consciously looking for alternatives. The people in Kabul were cut off from their home roots and had loads of extra time on their hands. Consequently, what our visitors in Kabul found attractive was a Christian community, with relaxed meals, that featured conversational-style Bible studies around the table after the meal. This held no attraction to the people of Nottingham. In Nottingham, if you invite a relative stranger back for a meal, they would immediately have their suspicions raised: "What does this guy want?" So I had to ask God to show me a different approach. I was desperate to discover ways to break through in communicating the gospel. I tried several approaches, even door-to-door evangelism, which floundered when I ended up sitting down and watching an exciting European Cup Match (soccer) with my (willing?) new hosts.

Then one day I walked by an old-fashioned street preacher thinking, "Now there is something that I would never do." Can you guess the story? Not long after that I found myself on the streets with my wife and a friend feeling like a fool and attempting to proclaim the gospel to the passers-by. None stopped. So I said to the Lord, "If you really want me to do this then you have got to stop somebody because I am certainly not doing this for my own sake." Well, several people stopped and I began a continuous eight year adventure in street preaching. While some opposed this street preaching, and many were indifferent, there were also those who listened and eventually became Christians, like Richard whom we met in Leicester Square in London. We eventually brought him back to our community some miles away (so Christian community was still important). He turned his life over to Christ. But when we started to go out on the streets a few days later (this was a regular part of our ministry outreach which we expected all in our community to join, even very young Christians) Richard told me, "Oh, I'll just stay back and pray; I don't do this sort of ministry." Well, he joined us after some gentle prodding and today he leads that ministry in London. He is not a street preacher but heads up ministries to the homeless and lost on the streets of London, to AIDS victims and to homosexuals. Paul Miller - Seattle WA

What this post-Kabul experience taught me was:

- That methods are flexible, given the different contexts in which we find ourselves, while God's objectives remain fixed. It is all too easy to deify our methods as the way to do things, especially if those methods have been learned through hard experience and confirmed in their effectiveness through personal experience.
- That the bold preaching of the word of God is as important as the faithful living of the life-style of God. There is transforming power in the preached word of God and in the Christian community that is actually trying to live out its faith.
- That if we are willing to obey God and to go beyond our comfort level, then God can lead us into all sorts of exciting new ventures where we can experience afresh the power, grace, and reality of God. And certainly this is something that both the world and we the Christian community desperately need! Do I hear an "Amen, brother?" A-a-a-a-men.
ARE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES CREATABLE?

Are our personal experiences unplanned events, or can we structure them? Is it possible to create opportunities for our own development and to prepare others for urban mission?

Creating practical experiences

To a certain extent, ministering to others does require one to produce creatable experiences. Here we think of Jesus who created experiences for His disciples by taking them around with Him as He ministered. Watching Him, they learned to minister. So, today, with their leadership gifts and roles, urban leaders can create situations where others have an opportunity to share in ministry. The learning situations include evangelizing unbelievers, teaching a church body, spending time with community residents, leading a small group for mutual encouragement, and meeting social needs through street level outreach.

All these ministry opportunities lead people into experiences which enhance different areas needing development: skills, understanding, character. They enhance our learning of ministry skills, including: praying for and listening to people, listening to God, sharing from the scriptures and leading meetings. These opportunities also help to develop our understanding of what makes people tick and what is necessary for more effective ministry. Finally, these opportunities provide valuable experiences through which to deepen our character. It is impossible to deepen character without experience (i.e., Jesus learned obedience through His sufferings and not through His study). Character is formed by the responses of obedience through the small and big experiences of life in which we have to go God's way or our way. Character is who we are and not just what we know - so, by definition, "character" is not mainly a question of developing our mind through study (though study is important to inform us of God's view of the world and to give us a pointer on what responses to life experiences we should be nurturing).

Creating character forming experiences

Here leaders need to be careful. We must steer between two extremes: academic teaching which only develops a cognitive grasp of the intellectual world; and experiential teaching which so manipulates students that we risk blocking the real work of the Holy Spirit. Some consciously created character forming experiences are valid, e.g., learning to be a servant by doing practical chores (rather than only engaging in preaching/teaching assignments) and learning patience by being thrown into hard situations. It would seem that one way for leadership to avoid the temptation to overtake the Holy Spirit's role in character-building is by assuming that these character-building experiences will take place in the course of practical ministry. In other words, character building becomes a natural by-product of ministering to others rather than vice versa. The focus should be on serving others; we can then trust God to teach the necessary character lessons on the way.

Creating community experiences
Learning through community is a powerful and relatively unexplored learning tool among urban professionals. During the writing of this book we have experienced a series of new tools that create settings in which synergy can be achieved. (See Introduction and Chapter 9 for a description of these tools.) Through collaborative writing, our ideas, feelings and insights have been enriched. Tremendous amounts of wisdom can be collected in a very simple but dynamic way. It has been a creative way to share ideas without worry about offending those who have brought ideas to the table.

The community itself offers opportunities to structure our own learning experiences. Begin by deliberately visiting other urban ministries in your city and out of town. See what they have seen in the city and ask how they understand their response. Visit churches and listen to what pastors say are the issues in their community; compare those to the feelings of other community members. Visit police stations, schools, and city maintenance workers and listen to what they believe to be the issues in the community and compare these with the views of bankers, business owners and shop keepers.

Begin to put together a big picture of all the issues in the community, both the needs that are visible, and the untapped latent skills of the individuals and the system. Invite a cross section of people to come together for discussion, sharing, observations, mutual understanding and encouragement. The urban worker must develop a desire to know others, understand their observations and responses, and seek ways to take advantage of their gifts. This is crucial since problems have many levels and each level must be addressed if cities and their people are to be restored.

How do we find the time to do all of this when the demands of our own work keep us very busy? First, communicate to your co-workers and board that your understanding of effective urban ministry includes visiting and networking times. Secure their support and enthusiasm. Second, be intentional. Look at your monthly schedule and assess priorities; schedule the time for visits. Take family, co-workers, and/or board members with you to maximize time. Third, call ahead to set appointments and secure written information as background material. Finally, adopt the long-term perspective with an understanding that this is a process, not an end.

As urban professionals it is possible to structure many creative personal learning experiences for ourselves and for those who will be the next generation of urban leadership.

**CULTURE AS LENS**

As we consider the very real value of our personal experience, we do well to remember that all the events of our daily lives are necessarily viewed through the lens of our own culture. Our natural tendency to read meaning into events through these lenses may actually filter out some greater or lesser level of objective truth. What are some of these cultural lenses?

Chief among the lenses that shape and alter our view of the world and that give form to our urban ministry style and structures are our cultural histories. These are the rituals, values and notions about life...
that stretch back in history far beyond our own personal life experiences.

Our cultural history can be a powerful tool as well as a powerful set of blinders. A variety of cultural factors shape who we are, how we understand theology and how we view our work in the city. Usually these factors are invisible to us. The strands of culture and the strands of our personalities are so interwoven that we cannot recognize them as separate. Our challenge is to intentionally look at how our theology and our world views have already been shaped.

The strands of our culture are interwoven in many ways:

**Stories and songs**

From birth, stories and music create meaning for the world around us. Our simplest entertainment may teach us that God is distant, that bad children will be destroyed, that good children never question authority or that Jesus was white.

**Celebrations**

Secular rituals play a powerful role in shaping our view of the world. The celebration of Christmas, for instance, can unintentionally reinforce a materialistic view of the world that equates good behavior with wealth. National holidays reinforce certain values. In America, the Fourth of July tends to underscore a view of the world created to serve the needs of one mighty nation sanctioned by God.

**Heroes**

The cultural icons whose portraits and statues surround us exist to shape what we believe and to control our allegiance to our society. Military heroes are elevated and the wars they fought honored, even when those wars may have been fought to preserve slavery or to take the homes of the innocent.

**Sexual roles**

From the color of the baby blanket to the roles we adopt while at childhood play, it is made clear what our standing ought to be in society, who will have power over whom and how we will exercise that power.

These and other cultural lenses shape us all. Our notion of God, our reading of scripture and decisions about how we work in the city are formed before we are even aware of the forces that shape them.

**SWITCHING LENSES**

How do we consciously become aware of and expand our cultural point of view?
CHAPTER 3: EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE MINISTRY

1. Get feedback from those in other cultures. Dialogue with those who do not share your culture. Dialoguing with those who may not even share our faith, may be especially helpful in allowing us to see ourselves through the lens of another culture.

2 Travel and observe. It is important that we experience the culture of others, whether traveling outside our countries or through immersion in other cultures within our own country. Such experiences tend to highlight differences, that is, in what ways we are unique.

3 Read and study. For many, getting in touch with the forces that have given form to their lives can come from research and study.

4 Get feedback from others of your own faith. Even our most closely held beliefs about God and theology are colored by culture. We need fellow believers in Christ of other cultures to critique our theology. How have we been blinded? What truths have we overlooked or discounted? Our theological blinders are perhaps the most crucial determinants of the success or failure of the work we do.

As we become more aware of our own personal and cultural biases, we can move into other cultures with greater integrity. In the next chapter, we will look at some practical ways of actually entering into other cultures.

Chapter 4: Appreciating Cultural Richness

Contents
When I first went to Mexico, I thought there was only one kind of tea (orange pekoe). Frequently, when I was in Mexicans' homes, my hosts would ask me if I wanted tea. I was surprised when I was offered lemon tea, chamomile tea, cinnamon tea, peppermint tea, tila tea, anise tea, and so on and so on. Within the category of tea, I discovered an enriching diversity of delightful surprises. This example has helped me to appreciate the richness of various cultures.—Lindy Scott, Mexico City

CULTURAL FLEXIBILITY

Traditionally all peoples have tended to personalize space, and then transform that space into a place with meaning which reflects a collective sense of being, i.e., a national or cultural identity. However, in today's world, cultures are no longer geographically static or passive, especially in urban areas. Cities today are magnets both for indigenous rural populations and for foreign immigrants, many of whom are political refugees. The nations of the world are with us on our city streets.

An appreciation of the riches of these varied cultures and their distinctive contributions is not embraced without effort. Theologically, it comes out of an intentional and deliberate effort to respond to God's will for the entire creation and a recognition that the essential nature of God is pluralistic community.

Most of us have generally grown up within a homogeneous experience, a monoculture with a certain level of ethnocentrism and biases. To consciously vary our point of view demands not only an awareness of how others approach life but also a high appreciation for the depth of that variety. In simplest terms, cultural flexibility means viewing the immediate environment or experience from the other person's perspective. On a more complex level, it means recognizing that everyone's cultural perspective will be broadly defined by race or ethnicity, and then further shaped by gender, inter-generational and subcultural experiences, religious beliefs, etc. (e.g., there will be significant differences in life perspectives between the Korean-born elderly and the foreign-born second generation; the poor and the affluent; gang members and law enforcement personnel; Latin American Evangelicals and Roman Catholics).

The ability to value another's worldview, i.e., to move from one worldview to another, does not suggest that we unquestionably embrace the other culture's approach to life. However, if we are culturally flexible we can develop better relationships because we won't stereotype others prior to knowing them.
We do not have to deny who we are or reject our own culture. The value of cultural flexibility is that it can help us to better critique certain values within our own culture that we might otherwise hold as absolute. When we are attempting to connect to people of other origins, it helps to recognize that God has already worked in the cultures that have shaped their lives. Being culturally open allows God to reach out to us in new ways.

The urban communities we are called to serve are made up of many cultures, all of which are also shaped by their own cultural trappings. If we are to minister to those of other cultures, we must first understand how their own perspectives have been shaped. How have their systems, beliefs and behaviors been formed? How can our ministry be translated in ways that have meaning for our communities?

Our urban ministries need to value highly other cultures where they exist, even when our theology stands in opposition to aspects of the culture. As previously mentioned, our life and cultural experiences shape our individual perspectives of the world. There exists a level of security and comfort in dealing with the familiar when we are in our own context. This is natural. However, in moving appreciatively into another culture, we need to make a conscious effort to check our preferences and biases.

The presence of many cultures does not necessarily have to produce confusion even where they appear radically different from each other. By perceiving this cultural mix as a positive trait, a source of wealth to be cultivated, as opposed to a barrier to understanding and collective action, the various cultures may actually complement each other.

**DIVERSITY**

In the West we often speak of cities as centers of cultural complexity and diversity. Diversity is not a neutral concept. Throughout the world, diversity fuels the most bitter conflicts. Rwanda, with its tragic ethnic struggles, is sadly only one example of a nation torn apart by its diversity.

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**An Alternative Vision from France**

One place we can look for hope is Francophonie (500 million people, in fifty French-speaking countries, on five continents). Francophonie presents a beautiful challenge to urban Christians to practice love and acceptance across many cultures. One definition of Francophonie is "human solidarity through cultural sharing." President Lamine Guye of Senagal said "Francophonie abolishes the distance created by History and geography, and draws the hearts near". After the French-speaking colonies became independent in the 1960's, Francophonie was perceived as "a cultural commonwealth", an opportunity to re-create international (cross cultural) relationships with a different mind and perspective. It is, so to speak, "a dialogue of cultures". The motto of Francophonie is "Equality, Complementarity, Solidarity." We, as urban Christians, can redeem and adopt this motto and participate in this new idea for the world.
The church carries the message and the life-style of reconciliation. That's why Christians in Francophonie have had to repent on both sides: the colonialists from domination and pride, and the colonized from feeling of hatred, inferiority, fear or spite. This has actually happened at an international conference, when church leaders and authorities (in education, business, and government) came together from thirty-four French-speaking countries. In July, 1993, repenting with tears and acknowledgment of wrong from both sides, leaders from Europe were washing the feet of their brothers from the Third world and vice versa. Such a flow of healing was poured upon hundreds. Through their influence, thousands now carry that sweet flavor of forgiveness and reconciliation in their churches and communities. We feel it as one way our nations will be healed.

If we are humble and our motives are pure, we are able to recognize the values and riches of people from other cultures. This is how we really want to give and to receive from others. The French Christian network, COEF 5, has a logo which pictures that reality: torches are raised by hands of five different colors. As the individual torches come together, the central flame grows stronger for every one of them.

As Christians, we all will have to continue walking forward in that direction. And we will if we know the One "who created all things, that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. {Eph 3. 10} (manifold means "multicolored" in Greek) People from every tribe, every nation, language, color, sex, age and social class bring riches with them. The challenge for the church is to incarnate the reality of the Father's house here on earth with all the riches it contains. - Philippe Jordet, Montauban

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**CROSS CULTURAL RICHNESS: A MODEL FOR COMMUNITIES**

What are some practical ways the church can create cultural richness in our communities?

We might start with a core group, and "explode" this model into larger circles.

Circle 1: *The Cross Cultural Ministry Team* (the nucleus). Antioch was a model of leaders from different nations and cultural values, working together as a model of unity in absolute diversity. Their core group inspired many around them. [Acts 13.1,2].

Circle 2: *The International Church*. Inspired by their church leaders, the different nationalities could live and work together with a sense of acceptance and belonging. These people would see ministry leaders from their own and other cultures and learn from them to love others. In Burundi, Africa, the inter-ethnic church which has leaders from both ethnic groups is able to grow and be a sign of reconciliation for the city of Bujumbura.
Circle 3: *Acts of Reconciliation in the Community*. The international church pervades the community with love and security. One example is David, a pastor in Bujumbura who faced his father's killers, sadly, his own relatives and neighbors, the first time he returned to his home country. He forgave them as he was preaching to these people he knew so well. All who know him respect his voice when he leads people to forgive in similar situations.

Circle 4: *Reconciliation: A New Mentality*. New ways of living and thinking start to become internalized. Differences are now seen as opportunities to enlarge our personal vision. No one feels threatened due to his or her culture, race, age or sex.

Circle 5: *Cooperation and Networking*. We start to build connections with Christians all over the world (whatever the confession) and with all the structures in the city. Every culture carries a special "grace" from the Creator. When we have contact with another culture, we receive and benefit from it. This refreshes us spiritually and widens our cultural horizons, letting us understand in full the meaning of the word "Complementarity."

There is one final note on cooperation with different types of people in the city. It is important that community development should not necessarily be thought of strictly in terms of Christian community development. The principles of community development are as applicable to non-Christians as to Christians. Spiritual values are cohesive even if they are not exclusively Christian. Also, as Christians we are interested in developing communities with many different needs, cultures and beliefs. It is in living our lives in the midst of cultural richness that our own faith comes to life and that our faith gains meaning to those who would not otherwise believe.

**CROSS CULTURAL RICHNESS: INDIVIDUAL MODELS**

It is possible to learn to be cross cultural if we keep in mind that God loves His whole creation. We will then go out looking for the deposit of his wisdom in the cultures of the world.

One way to learn to be cross-cultural is by entering into a *relationship* with someone from a different culture. Certainly, background information on another country: its history, cultural perspectives, social mores, etc., is helpful, but actually being part of another person's social world is what begins the journey of becoming cross-cultural. This activity must not be undertaken with blinders on. We need to recognize that every culture has its strengths and weaknesses. But it would be counterproductive to enter such a situation with any notions of superiority.

Here are some basic guidelines for becoming involved in a cross cultural relationship

- Base the relationship on values such as honesty and transparency.
- Find a mentor to whom you will go whenever there is a difficulty in the relationship.
- Set a time frame long enough to allow the relationship to succeed.
- Develop an open relationship, one that accepts that both of you are likely to make mistakes.
Agree that such mistakes will not be used as evidence of malicious intent but for the most part will take place as a result of ignorance. This is the most important commitment you can make.

Besides relationships, how else do individual urban professionals engage in cross cultural learning?

*Immersion* in a totally different culture by living abroad can help cut off the escapes that offer easy retreat. It allows you to be totally dedicated to the result of the exercise without the possibility of interference from day to day activities.

It should be emphasized, however, that going abroad must never be a substitute for a cross cultural engagement in your backyard. Often overseas experience looks suspect when you cannot give an account of that same cultural group in your home city. It might be worth your while before going abroad to actually get close to the overseas culture within your home setting.

Another way of learning to be cross cultural is by *listening* to others and understanding their values. Listening is very important but equally important is resonating. The people who are different from your culture and from whom you would like to learn need to know where they stand with you. So, in the relationships that you form you must be prepared to say what you think you hear and then to share how that impacts your emotions as well as your world view. This must be done honestly regardless of what you suspect about the other person's honesty. Americans, especially, should avoid being seen as engaging in a perpetual interview. The important thing is to know that you are there to relate; in that relationship you will gain the insight that will not only shape your understanding but also your behavior in a genuine way.

To cross cultures, a certain amount of *humility* helps. Keep in mind that one's culture and beliefs are not (necessarily) superior to one's neighbor's. They might just be different. You might also need to accept that your cultural values are not only different but at points also very much lacking. When you notice this do not vilify your own culture totally but do acknowledge such a reality.

*Story-telling* is a powerful medium for quickly crossing over into another's worldview. There is something bonding about sharing from our respective life experiences, especially when those experiences highlight nuances unique to our culture. Information about significant people, heroes, social relations, foods, attitudes, conduct and philosophies of life, for example, tend to emerge through the telling of our life stories. However, story-telling should not be a substitute for serious *study* of other cultures. Readings in anthropology, psychology, sociology, autobiographies of significant people of other cultures, and literature from other countries or subcultures are also helpful in gleaning insights into other cultures. Be ready to recommend informative, thoughtful resource materials to others who want to learn more about your own background.

**CULTURE/COUNTER-CULTURE**

In our concern to embrace the various riches of cultures within a given community or society, as
Christians, we must also understand the difference between a plurality of cultures coexisting in a community (socio-cultural richness) and willful divisions which undermine and undercut the distinctiveness of Christian unity. Various forms of riches contribute to produce the Unity which is both dimensional and conceptual, distinctively Christian and culturally open and embracing.

One danger as our world becomes more and more interconnected is that certain positive cultural values (e.g., the importance of the nuclear and extended family in many cultures of the 2-3 Thirds world) are likely to be lost. Increasingly, we see the destructive effects of free market societies that prize the bottom line above all else. Also, at times we need to recognize that some cultural values are downright sinful (e.g. Apartheid). These cultural transgressions need to be recognized, confessed and changed.
A Story of Discouragement From Bombay

It had never been a busier time in Bombay. The ministry and the Indian urban network were growing. I had come back home before Christmas from a hectic travel program with trips to make overseas and nationally when, suddenly...crash! Before Christmas we heard and experienced the trauma of our daughter's serious problem in her school. She was shattered; we were broken.

How could we recover? Whom could I tell? I shelved travel programs and put everything on hold. At the end it set me back literally nine months of ministry time. I felt I had let my colleagues down both at home and internationally though I knew I was not to blame. Things were going very well. I should not have been surprised at this interference as I have noticed obstacles like this come repeatedly as Satan attacks us at crucial moments in our work. It is not just happenstance!

It was clear that crucial decisions had to be made. The first one was to spend time to care for my family. We changed schools, wondering if we should go so far as to stop schooling altogether in order to lessen the pressure on our daughter. Those were depressing days but full of learning experiences and days of family togetherness and reorientation for all of us. God has taught me about the primacy of family and keeping that foundation intact. The relationship between myself, my wife and my daughter has grown closer. I realize afresh that in ministry, the support and strength of the family is at the base of ministry.

I also found that in a personal struggle it helped me to be transparent and even vulnerable about my struggle. I shared my struggle as openly as possible with peers in ministry in Bombay as well as prayer partners in other places. People were encouraging as well as encouraged themselves. Don't we all struggle in our busy lives to keep our families intact? - Viju Abraham, Bombay

Battling with principalities and powers in our ministries inevitably touches our families. It is crucial that we both expect this and respond with spiritual weapons as well as be transparent with our peers when we are wounded. It is also vital that we don't allow our spouses and children to be sacrificed on the altar of our schedules and programs but be willing to compromise when needed to keep our families intact. Broken families will ultimately result in broken ministries. Our ministries are often like lovers that compete with our families.

Discouragement and conflict also effect ministries directly and internally.
Conflict in Atlanta

Today, we are in Atlanta where preparation for the Olympics has the city literally buzzing with construction and activity. The churches are networking and creative grassroots ministry models are sprouting monthly it seems! Atlanta is a "model of victory and racial reconciliation" to the world. But as we look closely, we see one of the most creative and entrepreneurial ministries called "FCS." In 1993, the FCS staff decided to attend the CCDA Conference on Racial Reconciliation together. On the day of travel, some clear signs of conflict began to show.

We began to realize that the staff who registered for the conference first got rooms in the Conference hotel. Those who signed up later were housed in an overflow area distant from the conference. What we began to realize was that these groups were, without exception, split down the middle by a line of race. Exploring the logistics further, people began to compare and found that some were getting child care service and others weren't; some were being paid for their time on the trip and others were not. Again, this fragmentation came along racial lines. By the time we arrived to the Reconciliation Conference, we were so fragmented racially we weren't even talking to each other!

What could we have done to prepare for this? It took a series of family staff meetings where we began to discuss it and provide opportunities to apologize for our insensitivities. It took months to rebuild the trust among this staff.

Of course in the future, we will be careful in our room assignments, salary considerations and travel arrangements! It could be said that the whole painful experience has been a great teacher and that out of a negative situation came learning and understanding of an old problem. Also, the resolution of a situation of conflict and discouragement has established a more Christ-centered and Christ-like modus operandi.

These two experiences show us that conflict can start at the personal level and move outward. Or, it can be cultural and work backwards even to the extent of destroying personal relationships. In urban ministry, we face both of these.

Identifying the sources of conflict

According to Amitai Etzioni, in the Foundations of Modern Sociology Series: Modern Organizations, there are four common sources of conflict:

- Contextual or environmental
- Institutional
- Ideological/Theological
Since 85% of conflict resolution is in the recognition of the source of the conflict, diagnosis of the conflict source is critically important. If this can be accomplished successfully, an environment of respect, trust and unity can be created.

In a discussion of the four sources of conflict we find that contextual or environmental conflict could be represented by the trauma of an earthquake. This kind of trauma calls upon all of the resources of the urban ministry system, because it impacts people at the core of their basic needs: food, shelter, and security.

Institutional sources of conflict deal with the conflicting roles of people within a system. A classic example is the conflict between the maintenance manager of a facility whose function is to maintain facilities and the program director whose function it is to use them.

Ideological and theological conflict sources often run along the lines of clashing world views and images which often function as unexamined assumptions. For example, if one's dominant image is militaristic, (Christians as soldiers and the church as "army") and another's is pastoral (Christians as sheep, with the church as sheep-fold), conflict will result. There will be those who can relate to "Onward Christian Soldiers" and those who better relate to "His Sheep Am I."

Very little of what manifests itself as conflict between individuals is truly personal conflict. Rather, conflict between persons often arises out of environmental, institutional, or theological tensions. Because outside tension can lead to conflict between persons, it is essential that we correctly diagnose the origin of our personal preferences, ideas, or needs, and keep this separate from what is the good of an institution or common cause. Mis-diagnosis is probably the chief source of inter-personal conflict and inevitably destroys relationships.

In the city, we all know that how we deal with environmental conflict can lead to conflict in the family. We all live under tensions; urban ministry must be flexible because we all take our shots.

One thing is clear: conflict does not just go away; we have to manage it.

**Resources for conflict resolution and intervention**

Fairly soon after we changed the structure of our organization, an atmosphere of resentment and mistrust began growing among the staff. From management's point of view, most, if not all, of the changes were positive. The staff, however, perceived the changes as a threat. Problems of communication continued to increase and indeed the whole work was cast into an extremely vulnerable position. Executives felt that their ability to manage was under question and tried to assert even more control, while staff withdrew into their own projects, ignoring management and causing further conflict.
The way we resolved this issue illustrates some of the resources that can be used in conflict resolution.

- **Outside help and Wisdom.** The staff and management executives were asked to go to their own support groups and outline the issues, hurts, and pain in order to get an unbiased viewpoint.
- **Improved Communication.** The structure of the organization was changed from vertical to horizontal so that all key staff would attend meetings of directors and executives.
- **Team structures** were formed and were encouraged by fixed weekly meetings which would include a larger amount of time praying together.
- **Executives would spend more time** alongside staff in situations where there might be areas of conflict so opposing parties could see each other's point of view.
- **Training.** A program of training was developed for staff and volunteers including conflict resolution skills.
- **Retreat.** Greater care was taken to have regular staff retreats to build good relationships away from the stress and strains of the city.

Now it can be said that the whole painful experience has been healed and that out of a negative situation a much stronger work has been forged. Not only that, the resolution of a situation of conflict and discouragement has established a more Christ-centered and Christ-like atmosphere.

Conflict is inevitable. As a matter of fact, all ministry design needs to take conflict management seriously. Conflict, moreover, needs to be seen as a necessary part of growing and maturing as an organization, and a vital element that can spark the growth of the whole organism.

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**Chapter 6: Taking Care of Ourselves**

**Contents**
I had a dream one night. It was a most dreadful dream about the city and all its horror and danger. There was a sinister figure dressed in a gray coat with a hat that covered his face. I never saw his face, but I know he must have been the devil. He came through the door as if it were a curtain but yet the door was there. He just sort of folded it back. He didn't come in my room but seemed to be going up the stairs as if in a tenement. As I and unknown others sat there, he returned through the door and began to go from room to room as if he knew the place. He seemed to have found something and as he held it in his hands, I attempted to call the police. And then I woke up crying. I don't know what this dream meant. But as I reflected on it during the morning and throughout the day the word of the Lord came to me, saying "Unless the Lord builds the house the labor is in vain." I was attending an urban workshop at the time and my thoughts centered on the hopelessness, despair and degradation of the city. And I thought that all we are trying to do is at best just a drop in the bucket.

At the same time, my thoughts turned to the Bible; to the story of Job and his faith despite and all the evils that had befallen him. And I thought of Job's declaration, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him... all the days of my struggle I will wait, until my change comes."

It seemed to me that with the city, sometimes that's all we can do.-**Bernita Babb**, New York

The very real suffering in large cities, and the intense demands and stress of urban ministry can exact a great personal toll and undercut our work if we do not know how to handle them. As we see in Mark 1, Jesus himself experienced these same kinds of pressures from the urban crowds and even from his own disciples.

The Lord Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This presupposes that together with all of our ministry towards other people we also need to minister to ourselves. No one else takes care of the urban minister. Our boards tend to want to get maximum performance out of us. Our families need our energy and attention. Our church and community want us to be involved in every program. No one but God and ourselves can be the care takers of our lives. We must become somewhat self-protective (in the best sense), otherwise we will burn out or break down before our best years of service are fulfilled.

There are things that we can do that will enhance our own spiritual well-being and that will enable us to better love and serve our urban neighbors. These activities fall into three categories. First, those that we do *just with the Lord* and by ourselves. Secondly, those that we carry out with *good friends*. Thirdly,
CHAPTER 6: TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

those activities that build us up through the ministry of groups of people. In this chapter we will explore possible activities in those three areas.

JUST YOU AND THE LORD

"To thine own self be true" This old maxim packs a lot of wisdom. In the same way we minister to others so, too, in our ministry to ourselves we must know what makes us tick.

- Do I know what makes me angry?
- What do I do when I'm stressed out?
- How do I react when I'm put down?
- What do I do when I'm lonely?
- How do I handle disagreements and conflict?
- What do I do when I've failed or when I've sinned?
- When I am down, how do I get up?
- How do I restore broken relationships?
- Do I recognize certain physical symptoms of emotional or spiritual problems (e.g. nailbiting, pigging out, etc.)?
- What disciplines does God utilize to minister to me? Prayer and fasting? Reading the Bible? Listening to music? Taking a walk? Being quiet?

Many urban professionals have found ways to cultivate real well being. For example:

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I get out of the city at least one day per week for relaxation, reading and restoration. My favorite activity is boating. I do this alone, with the family and with neighbors and staff. It is my way of disconnecting regularly from the phone and doorbell.

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I get away from the city three different weeks for reflection and writing. This gives me perspective and physical restoration.

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I am unable to disconnect from ministry while I am in my neighborhood. Even while I am mowing the lawn, I am thinking about the neighborhood and neighbors as they walk by or stop to talk. So I must get away regularly; otherwise I will eventually become depleted spiritually and physically. I also take three weeks vacation away from the city.
The disciplines I have built into my life are reflection (journaling); Scripture study (adopting a book a year); prayer (thirty minutes daily and one extended time weekly); study (reading list); and exercise (three times per week).

We are holistic people; sometimes a good run in the park or a long walk does wonders for our emotional health. Spending time in reflection and in the observation of nature is often very restorative. (John Stott practices bird watching for rest and recreation).

YOU, THE LORD AND A FRIEND

In order to remain whole or to regain wholeness, some sort of spiritual discipline is necessary. Christ teaches and models for us throughout His ministry the essential need to practice spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, solitude etc. Disciplines can heal, guide, direct and deepen our love relationship with the Father. What they accomplish goes beyond our routine activities, basic strengths and innate abilities. Spiritual disciplines center us; they help us reach our goals and stay on track. They give us courage, and the confidence that we are following Him.

It is possible through individual inquiry, contemplation or advice to discover our own unique path to discipline. But all of us also need help in creating spiritual discipline in our lives. Where do we get the help we need? Consider:

- retreat centers
- places of beauty and art, music
- a wide range of literature on the subject
- Christian communities
- Spiritual direction (Find someone who is skilled to guide you in the deeper things of God and correct error in your life)

Once we begin, time management is crucial. Practice of the disciplines should be written into the daily schedule or day-timer. Start slow. Be reasonable. Know yourself. The key is to start at a reasonable place and time. Don't try to spend a whole day in solitude if you have not done this before. Start with minutes/hours. The most important thing is to find a spiritual director to help lead and guide you into the disciplines.

It is also healthy to seek the spiritual counsel of a good friend or mentor. As you seek the Lord's will in your life, and depend increasingly on the Holy Spirit, an enriched journey may result.

Try to establish a spiritual and prayer relationship with someone you trust so that you can share your heart, thoughts, pain and plans. Seek out a person who will also share with you. Your purpose is to establish accountability and to ensure that you are listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit. By
reflecting back to your spiritual partner what you are hearing you may find affirmation or a check on your motives to ensure that you are remaining in tune with the Father and His will. Later, as you report back to you friend, both you and the friend can examine both your decision-making process as well as your commitment to follow through. Soon, a more responsible attitude develops relative to seeking and following the Lord.

You may find it useful to seek out a pastor, a nun, or some other person of the cloth who has special gifts as a spiritual advisor. A twenty-four hour period in a retreat center or house, with or without the assistance of a spiritual advisor can provide precious time for you to seek out the lord, share with Him your special needs or to seek His leading in a given area of your life. Contemplation, quiet time, and prayer support during a time set aside to connect with the Lord can be a time of inspiration, revelation and sanctification

In summary, it is imperative that we submit ourselves both to the Lord and to a trusted other for spiritual accountability, reflection and support. This process is specifically important for those who experience "dry spells" or for those whose strong wills may get in the way of the Lord's will.

YOU, THE LORD AND THE COMMUNITY

Where two or three gather together, God is in their midst. This Biblical truth confirms the blessings of community. So, when we are in community with the Lord and others, we are essentially at our best. There we find unity, strength, and sharing of ideas and visions.

Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were in community before the foundation of the earth and in that community created the world, so also we, as we truly relate in community, can create order out of confusion, peace out of turmoil and love out of hate. Being part of a community means respecting the local values, fitting into the local culture while relating Christian values to the culture, and knowing what social, political, and economic systems are appropriate.

The community may be as varied as the family, ministry, church, neighborhood, club, or organizations. Maintaining times of fellowship with these teams keeps one effective. This can be accomplished through retreats, picnics, recreation, theater, workshops, seminars, consultations, and through worship.

In community, as in other areas, we need to be intentional, as these urban professionals have found.

My family disciplines include one or two weekends away per year with my spouse. I plan to spend focused attention with every child every week. I spend four weeks a year in vacation grouped around school holidays and summer.
My community disciplines include a community meal every other week. Our community also seeks to serve one another through mutual child care, laundry service, housing, and shared possessions (car, appliances, etc.)

It is especially important that the teams of people we work most closely with minister to each other. Care must be taken and time must be built in to feel empathically with each member and find ways to meet their needs. (For example, if a parent of a team member is discovered to have cancer, the entire team needs to set aside certain other "business" and dedicate the time and energy necessary to meet the needs of the team member and family).

RELATIONSHIPS: THE FIRST DISCIPLINE

The key to all of life is relational maintenance with the sacred people of my world: myself, my family, my community, and God.

What is the priority of personal relationships?

Relationships are essential because relationship most truly reflects the nature of God. God's eternal cry for our reconciliation is echoed most powerfully in the words of his only child on the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus literally died in the company of two unfortunates. Yet even at his dying moment, as throughout his life, Jesus thinks not of Himself but of others.

As servants of God, we have three spiritual relationships: one with God, one with Jesus and one with the Holy Spirit. It is how we live out these three relationships that shapes all our remaining relationships: with those we love and those we do not love, those we understand and those we do not understand, those we know and those we do not know. Our best human relationships, therefore, are not necessarily those we desire, but rather those that we are challenged to have in spite of ourselves because they provide a witness to our spiritual relationships. In the words of Ray Bakke, "there is no spirituality that is called biblical that does not model the Trinity which is relational."

God's gift of Jesus is his way of modeling the significance of community. In community we have the opportunity to experience what is both most truly human and most truly divine. In community we enter into God's grace. God's love for us in the person of Jesus, speaks to the need for us to be personally authentic in our day-to-day relationships, just as we seek the person of Jesus in our own struggles to strengthen our relationships with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The striking aspect of these spiritual relationships is that nothing absolutely meaningful happens outside their scope. Our identity, therefore, has meaning only in the context of these spiritual relationships. Who we are has less to do with who we think we are than with who God calls us to be at any given moment in any given human relationship. Whenever we answer God's call in a particular human relationship, that
relationship then becomes spiritual.

Ultimately, what all of this means is that we don't really know ourselves outside of our spiritual and human relationships. Real self knowledge is only acquired as we interact with others and are obedient to God in those interactions.

As we meet God face to face, we catch a glimpse of who we are in His sight. With this in mind, humility should be our calling card when we enter into human relationships, knowing that we need others in order to more fully understand and accept who God has created us to become.
At a time when our work within the city was in serious decline and when many of areas of the work had become stagnant and ineffective it was important for us to re-envision the work (Glasgow City Mission). We discovered that the vision which had initiated urban mission in our city and in many other cities around the world was not only good then but good now. We looked at aspects of that vision, e.g.

- home cities as places of mission
- proclamation of the gospel by caring for the poor
- use of laity for mission
- interdenominational structure
- mapping of the city and placing projects in strategic areas

We then took these and other elements of the initial vision and re-captured them in a contemporary mission statement adding to them fresh visionary ideas of our own to meet present needs. Going back to our roots and focusing in again on our original aims and objectives as an organization has revitalized our work in a dramatic way. We are again becoming a model for City Mission work around the world.- Graeme Clark, Glasgow.

History is an endless source of models and wisdom for urban ministry. We take inspiration from the Bible, from our personal histories, the history of the church in the city, and from theological history. While God works in our personal history, he also works in spite of that history. Constructing simple group histories through story collecting can greatly enrich our communities. We need to be aware of the many ways that history can or should shape and direct our vision and our methods of urban ministry.

THE BIBLE AS SOURCEBOOK FOR URBAN MINISTRY

The world of the Bible was far more urban than many people realize. More than 100 cities are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and the word "city" occurs 1,250 times; 1,090 times in the Old Testament and 160 times in the New Testament. Ray Bakke, in his study of cities in the Bible, found more than twenty-five different kinds of urban ministry in the historical books of the Old Testament alone.

In the New Testament, it is clear that the gospel conquered the Roman world by penetrating its major cities. What Paul did on his missionary journeys in Acts was to go from city to city, finding culturally
appropriate ways to introduce the Gospel in each city.

While the Bible begins in a garden, it ends in a city. History itself presses forward toward the vision of the new Jerusalem in Revelation.

Even this very brief overview suggests that the Bible has much to say about urban ministry. What are some specific biblical models and themes that can guide urban professionals in their work?

**BIBLICAL MODELS**

Nehemiah looms large as an historical urban ministry mentor

Nehemiah wrote the most contemporary practical urban handbook in scripture. He was a lay man who caught a vision for rebuilding his city and prayed for the right opportunity. When the time was right, he asked his boss (the King) for a leave of absence, a government grant and in-kind gifts; he mobilized a volunteer service project and rebuilt the city of Jerusalem in fifty two days. In a most radical and practical strategy, Nehemiah recruited people of faith from the suburbs to relocate into the city and reneighbor it. Almost every aspect of city ministry is included in this practical book: politics, safety, labor issues, financing, decision making, self-interest of the volunteers, the role of the church and scripture, commerce and trade issues, credit policies, and a host of other relevant issues familiar to urban practitioners.

Other Biblical characters model different urban leadership styles.

What are the odds that an ex-convict from an extremely dysfunctional family (ten half-brothers and multiple step mothers) will make it as an urban leader? Joseph was betrayed and sold into slavery in Egypt where God gave him an ability to interpret dreams. That gift landed him a position as Secretary of Agriculture for the most powerful city-state on earth. Joseph models for us the values of persevering through years of isolation and using his official government status to benefit the multitudes.

Talk about long-term leadership training programs: Moses was classically educated in pharohic studies and then spent 40 years in the desert tending sheep in preparation for leading a nation. The son of a welfare mother, he was a partner in a bi-racial marriage and needed his father-in-law's advice on how best to manage his affairs. Moses also made the hard decision early in life to turn his back on the privilege of the court and to identify with his own people in slavery and poverty. His model is one of moral courage and long apprenticeship on the way to becoming an effective leader who practiced community development with poverty-level migrant immigrants.

Esther's leadership strategy was to enter a beauty contest for "Miss Ancient Persia" and marry the king. Raised by her uncle she used her influence with the king to change the unjust laws that were threatening the life of the Jewish settlement. Her courage and advocacy for the powerless spared many lives. Esther models working for good within an evil corrupt system.
BIBLICAL THEMES

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there is a rich variety of themes relating to urban ministry.

Homelessness

{Genesis 4:13; 12:10-20; Hebrews 11:8-9; Numbers 32:15; 35:11; Deuteronomy 26:5; Leviticus 24:22; Joshua 20:2; Ruth (whole book); 1 Samuel 18-31}. The theme of homelessness pervades the Bible. Adam and Eve were evicted from their garden home. Being homeless was one of the things Cain feared as God confronted him over the murder of Abel. Job had to leave his home because of the great traumas he experienced and could not return until these were resolved. Abraham became voluntarily homeless in order to follow God. The people of Israel and Judah experienced numerous exiles. People were forced to mortgage their homes because of poverty as they rebuilt Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time.

Jesus, too, was homeless-first as a baby born in a borrowed stable and then as a refugee in Africa. As an adult he had no place to rest his head. The early Christians counted homelessness as part of the cost of their apostleship; the last book of the Bible was written by a man forcibly removed from his home.

Since homelessness is one of the most challenging problems in large cities today, the passages noted above help us to discover something of God's attitude to homelessness. In particular, we see that it is impossible to separate the theme of homelessness from the issues of justice, righteousness and mercy, all characteristics of God.

Seeking the Shalom of the City

{Jeremiah 29:7} God calls us to join Him in seeking the shalom of the city. It is not enough to value only the people in a city; we need to value the city itself. We see that persons benefit from healthy families and that families benefit from healthy communities.

The theme of shalom helps us recognize the value of investing for the future of a given community - for the long haul. Building a house and planting a garden are not overnight endeavors; it takes time to prepare, to gather resources, to cultivate. These efforts also involve the larger community, including family. The notion of shalom is also holistic in the sense of addressing the man-made environment as well as nature. We do not have shalom unless all these aspects are addressed.

Well-being and the City

{Isaiah 58:9-12} Our own well-being is connected to what we do to show compassion and seek justice within the city. When we seek these things God guides and satisfies us and makes us strong.

Macro-Ministry and Micro-Ministry
God calls Jonah to be concerned for every lost person in the city and for the city itself. Urban mission embraces a macro view, the big picture of the whole city, but also a micro view, each individual and family.

Holistic Ministry

The picture of the New Jerusalem also helps in understanding the holistic dimension of the church's work: seeking the health of young and old, providing for the physical as well as the spiritual needs of God's people.

Compassion

Urban ministry is motivated by a deep compassion for the "harassed and helpless."

The City Redeemed With All Creation

In the New Jerusalem the whole of creation is to be redeemed. The structural environment is transformed and through its heart runs the river of life which waters the tree whose leaves are for the healing of all nations. The same multi-cultural city the Bible speaks about is at our doorstep today.

God's Focus on the Poor

It is overwhelmingly clear from the Bible that one of God's primary concerns is for the poor and the oppressed. That is how Jesus defined His ministry during His time on earth: good news to the poor, bad news to the rich. Early Christians took all this very literally and shared their wealth with anyone in need. The New Testament characterizes this kind of practical action as pure and faultless religion in the eyes of God.

It is the same in the Old Testament. God judged Sodom because it neglected the poor. The legal system He established in Leviticus was designed to protect and support the weak and the outsider, especially immigrants, who were to be treated the same as the native born. When the poor complained to Nehemiah about how they were oppressed, Nehemiah confronted the oppressors and told them exactly what they were doing wrong. Speaking through the other prophets, God explained over and over to Israel just how He expected them to treat the poor: with righteousness, justice and compassion.
The above passages are only a few of the many scriptures that demonstrate God's concern for the helpless. However, they are sufficient to show that one primary focus of urban ministry must be to extend justice and compassion to the poor.

**Leadership**

{1 Samuel 1 -7} The greatest crisis of our cities is ultimately a crisis of leadership. This story of leadership begins as Hannah's personal crisis of barrenness coincides with the national crises of immoral spiritual leadership. She prays for a son that she will return to the Lord.

God calls Samuel and discovers in him someone He can trust to become the prophet for the nation. Samuel exercises spiritual authority over the whole nation, calling them to repent, gathering them. Seeing their devotion, God delivers them from the Philistines, and Samuel continues to serve the Lord all of his life.

Samuel's story reminds us that God's first step in doing a new work for his people is to raise up a leader.

**Interaction of Faith and Power**

The books of {I & II Kings} are a reminder that when Israel demanded kings, they got exactly what they asked for. Their kings almost universally abused power and abused the poor. Even our heroes, David and Solomon, consistently killed, misled and succumbed to the lure of power. Solomon, wise as he seemed, consorted with the women and gods of other cities.

For us, to understand governmental power is to understand that it universally works against the poor. The role of the church, even when in partnership with the government, must always be one of godly skepticism. Inevitably, the power of the government - any power - will begin to corrupt the mission of justice and mercy to which we are called.

**Action, Perspective, Passion**

{Luke 19:41} Jesus approaches the city, as the prophet foretold, riding on a donkey. He expresses His love for the city by declaring dramatically his willingness to come as a servant of the city. Faith is expressed clearly through action.

Jesus sees the city, not its splendor but the harassed and helpless: the outcasts, prostitutes, tax-collectors, sinners. He teaches us how to see the city with a divine perspective.

Jesus weeps. We can only marvel at this divine passion for the city. It is not enough to analyze the needs of a city; we need to weep for its brokenness.

There are, of course, many more scriptural themes that could apply to urban ministry. The more we
come to Scripture with minds sensitized to urban issues, the more urban wisdom we will find.

**PERSONAL HISTORY AND VISION**

There are many ways our own personal histories shape our vision and methods of urban ministry.

One urban professional says,

I am aware that my middle-class values and my European heritage bring a unique influence to my ministry. I like order, careful planning, organization, budgeting - things that serve me well in running an organization but do not enhance my ability to relate to people.

My personal history of having been thrown in with an active ministry reaching out to the spiritual, physical and social needs of non-Christians has formed me by shaping what my expectations of the Christian life are.

It has shown me that the Christian life is one where we can and should reach out to people, where we can expect God to reach out with and through us (we are not alone!), where we can more effectively reach out as we do so as a team rather than alone.

God is constantly working through the events of our lives and in the lives of those around us. Here is the story of how one IUA Associate's ministry has been shaped by his life experience.

My ministry included contact with a shoplifter who had a wife and five daughters. The shoplifter was taken to court where he risked the loss of his home and the opportunity of schooling for his daughters, as well as imprisonment. We discussed the situation at church one weekend.

Early in the following week a church leader met a man who asked for a lift to go into town. The elder had accidentally picked up the very man about whom they had discussions the week before. The man was going on trial. Church leaders decided to attend.

I went to court and asked for leniency, but because of his habitual crime the man was sentenced to 6 months’ imprisonment. In South Africa short-term prisoners were sold to white farmers as indentured servants. Our desire was to see a benevolent White buy this man. In this way the church could carry on
with his rehabilitation under more favorable conditions. Otherwise, he would be exposed to the deplorable conditions of South African prisons.

We made arrangements for the prisoner to be connected with such a white man, but when they met the white man exclaimed, "Oh, no, this is the guy who wiped me out." Just as in the case of Paul and Onesimus we were able to persuade the white man to take the prisoner. Paul says, "If I am your father in the faith then you should treat this slave as you would treat me."

The white man released the prisoner every night because he was connected to the church. The church was able to demonstrate compassion to the prisoner because of the compassion I learned from the model of my father.

The more I reflect on my life the more I am aware of how much of who I am and what I do has been shaped and built upon my life history. For me, this means observing my own father's many years of selfless devotion as a teacher to Soweto's poor, my personal experience of pain and marginalization as an ethnic minority in South Africa, my education and training, and my interpretation of Scripture.- Caesar Molabotsi, Soweto

What we learn from Caesar, and from the other two urban professionals who began this section, is that reflection on and awareness of our personal histories are vital steps in understanding who we are as urban leaders.

WHO DETERMINES HISTORY?

While personal history may shape us, it does not have to define us, as these two urban practitioners realize:

My personal history effects me greatly; it forms the prism through which I view life. On the other hand, it does not absolutely determine what I do because the sovereign God can and does break through graciously to reinterpret history and to add new history to my life. Sounds grand, doesn't it?! Well... it is rather grand.

My personal history in the southern United States has given me a deep feeling about the city and about the racial divisions of the city. Additionally, my exposure to people of faith who did not succumb to racism has given me a belief in the possibility of change...belief that histories do not necessarily determine our futures.
Whatever the history, God is sovereign. This truth is especially relevant in the many disturbed areas of
the world where there is great suffering. However, it is also the way we ourselves respond to the bitter
experiences of life that leads to either growth or despair. Again, Caesar Molabotsi, of Soweto, has much
to say:

In our experience in South Africa we find that a lot of people are destroyed by their history. However,
there is also a realization that one can walk back into history with Christ, realizing that this can be done
with integrity because He was the same yesterday as he is today and will be tomorrow.

The example given to us by President Mandela is one such case in point. He could walk back into his
particular history, encounter the people in that history all over again and do it with a heart that is full of
forgiveness, which Christ makes possible for any one who asks. He has shown a remarkable ability to
not only forgive, but also to never allow that history to serve any other purpose than to help guide him in
a positive and reconciling way in the present and into the future. For him, history is a deposit of
experiences that should make us wiser to the end that we be effective in building a better situation today.
To take history otherwise, President Mandela would condemn the future with negative acts that try to
right what can not righted because it does not exist in real time and can never be recaptured.

I have come to learn in life that when God allows you to go through a particular experience it is meant to
make you an expert. Only when you have gone through some trial will you be able to empathize
effectively with others who may be going through similar or related hardships. For example, the history
of the black person in South Africa ought to prepare one to not only philosophically oppose any form of
oppression, but also to give one the skills and tools to effectively intervene where there is any form of
oppression. This, however, is not always the case. It is up to each individual to specifically recognize
that despite what happens, history does not have to lead to tragedy but can rather improve and strengthen
one's resolve to engage in positive and meaningful action on behalf of others who are thus affected-
Caesar Molabotsi, Soweto.

In the end, it would appear that it is we ourselves who determine the effects history will have in our
lives.

LOOKING AT CITY HISTORY

Looking back to see what God has done in the history of our own cities encourages us to believe that He
is able and longing to work in our cities today.
This is especially important, because as global urbanization accelerates, the largest cities of the world are acquiring status and influence that extend well beyond their national borders. These powerful megacities are known as World Class Cities. These cities influence the way the world thinks about freedom. These cities influence the way the world thinks about money. These cities influence the way the world thinks about God. Yet it is in these very cities that we can see the past and current history of God at work.

One such mega-city is New York City. If we look at New York from two very different moments in time, we see a series of common crises. In 1857, 30,000 men were idle in the streets of New York. Drunkenness was rampant and the nation was divided by slavery.

Since 1987, New York City has suffered the loss of 500,000 jobs. A quarter of all men between the ages of 18 and 24 have contracted the HIV virus. The nation is still divided over the issue of race.

Going back to 1857, God raised up a praying businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier, who began a noontime prayer meeting on September 23rd on Fulton Street. The first meeting attracted six people. The next week there were fourteen and the next week twenty-three. Within a matter of weeks thousands were gathering in daily prayer. There were so many conversions that the New York daily paper stopped running the obituary column and began running columns of all those who had been converted the night before. The revival spread southward to Philadelphia, and westward to Cleveland.

This businessmen's revival also became the galvanizing force of the anti-slavery sentiment in the north. Eight years later, in 1865, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Over the next thirty-five years more African Americans became Christians than any other ethnic group in the history of North America.

Returning to the present, since 1987, 30,000 people from 800 churches in Metro New York have been meeting in concerts of prayer. Leadership from InterVarsity and Campus Crusade mobilized pastors and churches to come together. The prayer movement has brought believers together from every ethnic and denominational background. The prayer movement has addressed the great spiritual, moral, and racial problems of the city.

In 1990, Korean businessmen sent forty Black pastors to Korea on a cultural exchange as a result of a pastor's prayer gathering. In 1991, Billy Graham spoke to 250,000 people in Central Park. In 1992 1,000 believers prayed in the Javitz Center against the teen AIDS crisis. That same evening 3,000 teens pledged themselves to a life-style of abstinence before marriage.

In New York City today, we see the fulfillment, in part, of the Old Testament promise in Isaiah 62:6-7, to bless the world through an intercessory people. On our very doorstep God is fulfilling, in part, the New Testament prophesy of Revelation 5, of intercessors from every tribe and tongue.

Cities are the vortex of history, drawing into their centers both the past and the future alike.
HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

We can also look to the history of ideas for some measure of understanding of urban ministry today. It is, of course, not possible to separate thinking from subjective influences. If our theology determines our response to history and to the contemporary situation, our history also determines our interpretation of and response to theology.

The important question is how to acknowledge the presence of errors and lies in any particular historical motif in order not to contribute to foundational weaknesses that will undermine our approach to urban ministry.

With this question in mind, the history of Christian theology in the western world offers some interesting perspectives on why many western or western-based churches appear to have failed to develop a sustainable and clear vision for urban ministry today. Historically, the church had such a vision, and took an active and effective role in ministry to the poor. In the modern western world, that vision and ministry have fragmented and weakened. What happened? Why is it that instead of focusing on ministry to the poor and vulnerable, the church in our day and culture has shifted its attention to sociological issues like urbanization, social mobility, technological change, secularization and the breakdown of modern society?

While these phenomena are undoubtedly important for understanding large cities today, some would argue that a major paradigm shift in modern theology (conservative and liberal alike) has also contributed substantially to the western church's current lack of concern for the poor.

To understand this paradigm shift, we need to be aware that for most its history, the Christian church embraced a God-centered theology. However, in the modern western world (19-20th centuries), this classical or God-centered theology fell out of favor, and was replaced by a human-centered or sociological theology, more in keeping with the 19th century philosophical turn to Self. The hope of the transitional theologians was that with this new orientation the church could better address what they thought of as the changing human condition, especially the condition of the poorest and most vulnerable. In other words, the thinking was: transform the human condition with human-centered theology.

The great irony is that "fighting fire with fire," (human centered theology for the human condition) has not served the poor. Unlike many indigenous theologies today in Africa and Latin America, human-centered theology grounds Justice (the foundation for social ministry) in human ideology and political power rather than grounding Justice in the very character of God, where it forms the basis for community life and ministry.

Social ministry was in fact the most accepted, most effective, and most creative in periods of history when transcendent theology (e.g., the tradition of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Reformation era Protestants) dominated the thinking of the western church. In our day of human-centered theology, the
church in the west is the least effective, least motivated and in the greatest conflict about its social responsibility.

In the absence of a transcendentally grounded idea of Justice, much of social ministry in and by the west is today guided by political and economic ideologies. This can be seen in the ongoing battles between church-growth capitalists and community development socialists. But this is political ideology masking itself as theology, not transcendent, biblical theology being lived out as ministry. Most western church-goers today would not be able to make this distinction as they tend to know more about their political convictions than they do about either the bible or theology. One legitimate way for the western church to recover its concern for the poor and vulnerable, is to reconnect its contemporary theological reflection to its historical roots in the transcendence of God. Another possible approach might be to step outside the western theological context altogether and consider what is being said by liberation and indigenous theologians in the Third World.

DO IT YOURSELF HISTORY

Like individuals, every local community has its own story. To work effectively in urban ministry, we must actively and continually seek out those stories, because we cannot create sustainable local ministries without continued growth in our understanding of the local historical context. This is analogous to the scientific community where ongoing research is the basis for all progress in scientific knowledge.

Here are a few simple guidelines for constructing local community histories

- **Talk to everyone.** Stories of diverse ranges of people are necessary to determine what data must be collected to build a historical understanding. The more the history of a place revolves around the experiences and encounters of a wide range of its civic population-residents, workers, investors, households, and civil authorities-the stronger the impact it comes to possess.
- **Seek stories everywhere.** Don't overlook archives of families, churches, civil institutions and community centers.
- **Let the history takers become the story tellers.** Faithfully retelling stories helps us to reflect on the meaning of the story.
- **Look for key words and facts** that come out of the re-telling to point the way to historical understanding. This also may help to integrate the many different stories into a coherent interpretation.
- **Encourage the entire community to own its history.** A common ownership of the story is important if the lessons of history are to be adopted and applied.

Chapter 8: Professional Development for Urban Ministry
CHAPTER 8: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR URBAN MINISTRY

To build effective ministry organizations, urban ministers need to develop both a theoretical understanding of how urban systems work, and a whole range of practical professional leadership and managerial skills. The foundation of any successful work in the city is the ability to build and maintain relationships and partnerships. This chapter will explore how the ability to correctly interpret what is going on in our cities can make our ministries more effective. It will also identify some of the most important skills in three professional areas: Organizational Development, Ministerial Leadership and Relational Development.

UNDERSTANDING URBAN SYSTEMS

Urban ministries usually come into being in response to some breakdown in the larger social systems of the city. As leaders of ministry organizations, we need to understand this larger context.

The ability to adequately analyze the context of our work and to effectively isolate the trends that affect our constituencies within the broader urban community is very critical for the effective undertaking of ministry within the urban setting. As urban ministers we have all learned basic skills in Biblical exegesis. However, we oftentimes lack the training to properly analyze and interpret the city landscape. Exegesis of the urban text, or how to read the city and its various "subtexts," is an art which urban ministers need to develop.

The process of relating our work to the larger urban community involves some understanding of urban systems: the inter-related forces that shape the community, including the man-made physical environment (infrastructure and superstructure) the cultural environment (social, political, economic, educational, etc.) and the spiritual (religious) environment. As we learn more about how urban systems work, we will get a better sense for what kind of ministries might ultimately transform those systems. As one urban practitioner came to realize,

Principalities and powers are far more complex and destructive than the limited personalized notions of sinfulness that I had long carried with me. Individual conversion will not address the power of structural evil.

Understanding urban systems is the larger context. How well our ministries operate within that context depends to a large extent on the strength of our management and organizational skills. As ministry professionals we owe it to the urban peoples and communities we work with to be as fully equipped and
CHAPTER 8: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR URBAN MINISTRY

A high level of professionalism is also expected by the donors who support urban work and by the other agencies to whom we relate in our work in the city.

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Even the simplest urban mission work deserves our best professional efforts. However, the desire to do all things as well as they can be done and the need for Christian agencies to model the highest quality in urban work may be a drawback if we exclude people because of lack of skill. Excellence can motivate us to provide the necessary training so that people of all types and backgrounds can be involved in the work.

True professionals are not mechanical and unfeeling. In Christian ministry where the whole ethos is about being Christlike, the absence of care for those with whom one works definitely shows a lack of spiritual values.

In working relationships where there is pressure to maintain a high standard of professionalism, many leaders fear they will lose control if they try to introduce a more caring, open atmosphere. This mindset reflects the old fashioned, top-down, secular value system which unfortunately has been co-opted into the Christian world as well. That model has already failed; the most innovative industry thinkers and corporations are now finding new more democratic directions. Yet for the sake of keeping their jobs, employees will continue to tolerate almost any abuse as long as human institutions carry on with the same old ineffective model.

We all know we perform at our best and find our jobs more fulfilling when we work out of a sense of joy and feel supported in every aspect of our work. In urban ministry however, more than anywhere else, one has to work very hard at creating a caring and loving environment while still maintaining the highest standard of professionalism. Try it—it works!

Before the actual task of building an urban ministry organization begins, it's important to get to know the community.

**ENTERING THE COMMUNITY: TAKE YOUR TIME**

On entering an urban community the first thing for the urban minister to do is slow down. Pause; take a step back and discover the signs of God's hand in public life. Various authors have emphasized the fact that God has gone before us in our communities. Oftentimes Christians enter urban communities at top speed, full of arrogance and zeal. We develop strategies for ministry and launch projects, before we've adequately discerned God's Spirit at work, before we've found signs of the presence of God in unexpected places. We lack the humility of Christ, so impatient to develop our own vision that we fail to see God quietly at work. Remember, we are working with God, not on our own.

Learning to exegete the community takes a certain level of discipline at first but can easily be cultivated.
CHAPTER 8: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR URBAN MINISTRY

into a natural process employed whenever one is in a new environment. The following are some tips to use to read and assess an urban community:

1. **Look at the structures.** Determine what kind of structures predominate or are being built: are they residential or commercial? They will help determine whether it is a residential, business or some other district. The level of maintenance needed and currently employed can suggest the ability of the residents to maintain or how invested the landowners are in maintaining the community. Also, determine how long the buildings have been around. Usually the style and materials used can suggest the period when the community or neighborhood was built. Are there changes in the uses of the structures: is the theater now being used as a marketplace or a church? What other changes are occurring? Who is leaving and who is replacing them? Why is this happening?

2. **Look for "scraps of life."** Do not overlook the artifacts people leave about their property: do they reflect certain age groups or types of households? Are they ethnically or culturally specific? Are certain values articulated by them? Also, make note of the kinds of items or services offered by the local businesses: Again, are they ethnically or culturally specific? Are they for the immediate residential community, or for others from "outside?" What do the costs say about the clientele?

3. **Look at the signage.** Competitive marketing companies have done the demographic research and will promote products and services in a manner appropriate to the target populations who live in or frequent the area. Therefore, read the billboards: what is being sold? Is the language used the dominant language of the area? Who is the target audience? Likewise read the window ads or signs placed by business or land owners: what is being sold and for how much? Do not overlook bumper or printed stickers as they reveal much about the people buying them: what religion or political perspective is being espoused? Where did they go to school? What is their ethnic ancestry?

4. **Look at space.** No, not outer space, but how space is used. Looking at the kinds of structures in a community is one way to assess how the local population or political powers interact with the space, i.e., how they define it or use the land. Most urban land is defined by topology: a river or mountain range, or by human construction, the placement of a rail system or freeway. These elements of the natural and built environment can become demarcation lines for certain communities.

On a more personal level, living space reveals certain values or priorities that residents may hold, for example, vehicles parked on what would be considered the front lawn or raising crops or livestock on the land immediately surrounding the residence. In some cultures, the front yard is an extension of the living room and everyone is welcome to participate in festive occasions. But in other cultures, the back yard or garden area is host to private celebrations.

5. **Sounds and smells.** Exegeting a neighborhood can be a sensory experience. Keep your ears attuned to the kinds of music played by the residents or heard on the street: Does the music cater to a specific age or cultural group? Also, you do not need to be a linguist to appreciate different languages, as intonations and speech patterns will differ from one group to another. If you hear many different patterns, it may be
a sign of a rich multicultural setting. Aromas can reveal preferences in certain foods, which in turn point out the ethnicity of the resident or restaurant clientele. The smells of an elegant boutique will certainly differ from the smells of an alleyway in skid row.

6. **Look for signs of hope.** Keep an eye out for evidences of God's people at work—they could be future partners and certainly key resource people. On an immediate level, look for the presence of churches and parachurch organizations. Read the leaflets handed out in the neighborhood or notices in the local paper about religious activities or programs.

It will take time to get to know and be accepted by the community and to learn to work together as a team. Make this time quality time. A thoughtful initial introductory period sets the right tone for a collaborative spirit and the building of a good team foundation.

As urban ministers move more slowly in developing a ministry or project we open ourselves to learn from those who came before us. As we discover signs of God's presence, a vision for ministry will evolve.

**SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY**

Unfortunately, the urban church has largely neglected this process of discovering God in the city. The overall failure of Christians to engage in public life and to see God at work in the city has undermined our theology and distorted our Biblical understanding. The remedy is to find ways of identifying God at work in the city and in its people. If we have to escape the city to find God, our understanding of who God is and of His transformative presence in urban communities is inadequate. If we're not able to discern God in public life, our understanding of the Lordship of Christ should be questioned. In effect, we implicitly question God's ability to survive by some of our conduct.

Urban spirituality simply means finding God in the city. The city should be a place of hope and growth. We need to develop the skill of living in the city as Christians while we grow spiritually as persons, and professionally in our ministries. Urban spirituality is an art, a distinctive style of living, of connecting what we know of God to what we understand about the complexities of the urban world.

One of the best ways of making this connection is through networking. Networking has become something of a buzz-word in urban ministry. However, without networks we would fail to discern much of God's work and presence in the city. Networking is not about information; it is about communication, the interchange of ideas and resources and the building and development of relationships between various groups—churches, businesses, leadership and other service organizations. In networking, the urban minister is able to identify where God's Spirit has already planted vision, and how He has already erected signs of his Kingdom. As urban ministers we need to identify these footprints of the Spirit, and then connect and build on them.

Once we have a strong sense of the community, and of God's presence there, it's time to look at what it
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organizational development is the process of creating structures to implement and develop a ministry vision as it unfolds. To build sustainable, effective organizations the urban minister needs to develop professional skills in participatory development and community mobilization, human resource management and organizational management.

Participatory development and community mobilization

If an urban ministry is to be self-sustaining over the long run, the urban minister needs to ensure that significant input into all strategic planning comes from the community itself, including the decision of whether or not to pursue a particular ministry.

In our strategic planning for self-sustaining ministry, it is vital to develop work which builds on the capacities of community people. One should beware of a leadership style from which the community is excluded or isolated. Participatory decision-making and organizational development require that the ministry team, as well as the community, have a voice in strategic planning.

The urban leader should have a style which fosters not only participation but ownership of the ministry. Lasting, sustainable ministries are only built where the local people own them. The urban minister will know some of the goals have been reached once community people start to challenge and question ministry leadership. We have to create an environment in which people are challenged to grow to independence and maturity.

The question of sustainability is a key question in urban ministry. Many organizations and groups set out full of vision and develop creative and exciting ministries, only to stumble when their own capacity to work or outside resources fail. An initial part of any strategic ministry plan should be asking hard questions about the appropriateness of a specific project in a certain community, especially in terms of whether the local community will be able to carry out management of the ministry long-term, and whether the project can be funded until it is financially viable.

Human resource management

No one urban leader will have all the diverse human resource skills needed for ministry. However, at a minimum, the whole process of staff development: recruitment, training, evaluation, mentoring and team-building should be familiar enough to the urban leader so that he or she can develop a team who will share the responsibility of ministry. It is up to the leader to model the quality and excellence, in preparation and action, that will be expected from the ministry team.

The other critical human resource skill for urban leaders relates to community organizing. The most
skillful community organizers take care not to create dependencies, but to mobilize tangible and human resources so that the community can address its own issues and concerns.

In the development of sustainable organizations, the ability to empower others is probably the most important ingredient. The time we invest in community leadership development and the upbuilding of human capacities on our ministry teams will return the strongest results in effective and sustainable ministry in the city.

Organizational management

With respect to organizational management, the urban leader should have the ability to establish clear goals and objectives for ministry, which can be turned into workable, operational plans. As these plans are carried out, the urban leader should engage in ongoing analysis and evaluation, with clearly defined measures of success, to assess whether or not the ministry is on track and meeting its goals.

Fund development, marketing and financial management are also important in an era which calls for entrepreneurial churches in the city.

MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

John Stott has defined leadership in urban ministry as "a holy discontent with things the way they are," a discontent which leads to the construction of alternative visions for the city. But vision alone does not define leadership. Keeping a vision alive is the true test of a leader, and for that we need skills in envisioning, motivation and communication. A leader's relational abilities, social skills and personal qualities also play a profound role in an organization's success. Question the leader who does not entrust the vision to others or who does not invest in new leadership.

Envisioning

It is useful for urban leaders to be skilled in the art of envisioning. Envisioning is the ability to construct a mental picture of what the solution looks like, conveying in simple language how we get to the destination, and constructing a basic strategy of how we are going to get there. Visioning, that is, actually drawing out a metaphorical picture of the solution, may be a helpful tool in this process.

Motivational and communication(s) skills and tools

Urban leaders should be able to motivate and encourage wherever they engage people in the community or in their own organizations. Motivational skill is the ability to inspire others on the journey into the city, to convince people of the importance of the city for the church and for missions, and to recruit others to join the urban journey.

Urban ministry leaders will usually have well developed inter-personal communication skills. Leaders
should be able to tell the story of their community and to convey their ministry vision to others, using a variety of media. Using appropriate technology can greatly enhance a leader's ability to communicate. Whatever the medium, it is important to share information without condescension. We need to openly bring to the table the gifts and abilities that God has given us. But equally important is that those gifts are brought without judgment.

**Relational abilities and social skills**

Well developed relational skills are essential to inspire confidence and trust, to make people feel at ease, to create a space in which empowerment takes place. The urban leader should be a bridge-builder with the ability to cross barriers often created by culture and class, and also to translate the process for the other partners involved in the rebuilding of the community.

**Other essential characteristics of the urban leader**

Taking Jesus as our model, urban leaders should be servant leaders. This may mean choosing the road of downward mobility to authentically identify and show solidarity with urban peoples in our communities.

A servant leader is self-confident and has a godly self-image, not grasping for control or manipulating people and situations, but willing to lead through service and example. It is especially important in working across cultures that the urban leader be willing to release control. The desire to control is not a fruit of God's Spirit; it is, in fact, a very real barrier to cooperation amongst those in urban ministry.

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**A Story of Servant Leadership from Ethiopia**

Leadership development abroad requires a sensitivity to the indigenous culture and a willingness to redefine our concepts of empowerment. During my visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, one of the tasks that I had volunteered for was the final preparation of the building to be used by the InterChurch Urban Congress. While I had intended to do the carpentry and electrical work as well as to set up the sound equipment, it was immediately apparent to me that I was being pushed into leadership. I went to Addis to be servant to the community, but it became obvious that the technical skills were already in place. What the community wanted was for me to assume responsibility and authority, to plan, direct, mentor, validate, and approve the final product. I discovered that I could model a servant/leader role by merely doing whatever the community called me to do with a servant heart.

Later, I learned that in Ethiopia, guests must be treated with honor and respect. To allow a guest to take a servant or worker role would reflect poorly on the host. I felt empowered by this community because they put the leadership mantle on me without requiring me to first demonstrate leadership skills.

During a seminar on indigenous leadership development at the congress, we shared the lessons we had
both learned in the preceding weeks of preparation. We discussed the difference between leadership and management and identified the attributes of leaders as well as management skills that could be taught and learned. The seminar produced a design for another seminar to be presented to indigenous leadership that would respect Ethiopian culture in addition to teaching basic skills. Finally, we concluded that trust was extremely important to the process of leadership development. -John Hirt, Pittsburgh

Personal qualities

Besides professional leadership skills, there are a number of character and personality traits that will help urban leaders to be more effective in their ministries.

First, urban ministers need to be flexible. Things in the city just don't work the way they do elsewhere. Suburban models of ministry often do not fit in the city. Pre-planned programs or projects oftentimes prove to be failures. Flexibility is also a vital component of creative urban ministry; creativity is hindered if we lack flexibility.

Perseverance in the demanding urban context is a second prerequisite. Long-term involvement without perseverance will leave the urban minister disillusioned. The urban minister needs to surrender images of worldly success and quick solutions, and find ways of surviving in the daily struggle of urban ministry.

Patience is another essential character trait for the urban minister. The rebuilding of the community seems always to take at least three times as long as anticipated. If the need for results and the need to keep to predetermined guidelines is followed too fanatically, the result is the alienation of the community and the loss of personal faith. Impatience often leads to ministry without community participation. When the leader does things for people, planning and implementing on their behalf, real empowerment does not take place.

In the isolation and brokenness of urban communities, commitment is one of the most important qualities an urban minister could have. If God's people want to be trusted and if they desire to develop ministries with a lasting and transformative impact on society, they need to demonstrate long-term commitment.

Leaders who need to be the star of the show have limited value in urban ministry. It is unwise for urban leaders to be lone rangers, or for vision to be invested in only one individual. Although leaders oftentimes carry the seed of a vision, they need the skill to plant this seed meaningfully so a shared vision can unfold in a community. Urban ministry leaders should be people who can gather all the different role-players in such a way that mutual visions are discovered, which together can transform society.
Ultimately the real test for urban ministry leaders, just as for any other leader, is whether they have invested in the formation of new leaders. Only when new leaders have been developed through the ministry, leadership style and life of the urban minister can a leader be considered to be effective.

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In urban ministry, as in any other ministry, Christ is our model; for us, demonstrating Christ-likeness is vital. In developing our working relationships it should be our goal to relate to others as we relate to (or are related to by) the Lord, taking into account that all human beings are thinking individuals with their own wills, wishes, dreams, values and human dignity. Anytime we relate to people we need to be sensitive to all these issues.

In this section we will touch briefly on some aspects of relational development, both internally within our own ministry team, and in partnerships with individuals and groups outside our ministries. We will also offer a model for building partnerships.

Developing relationships in the ministry team

Most visionaries find it difficult present a vision to their team in such a way that everyone can identify with it. However, for people to truly work together as a team, it is important for the leader to make a conscious effort to tune in the majority. It is easier for everyone if the whole group is on the same wavelength and able to work in a spirit of unity. Finding common ground will open lines of communication and bring about free discussion among all the people.

Urban ministers everywhere stress the importance of this kind of consensus-building. Yet, in our endeavor to reach consensus few of us spend the time and energy it takes to do things out of love and mutual respect. Very often it is easier to be pushy, manipulative or patronizing, in the interests of doing a job quickly, efficiently, on target. There is, however, no short way around; the work of building lasting and quality relationships requires time.

Impatience is counter-productive to relationship development. Sooner or later we lose the team we set out to build and end up alone, which is even more disastrous in urban ministry. Our Lord's relationship with us is that of companionship, friendship and participatory, joyful action in extending His kingdom. We too should relate in an environment which empowers participation, in a spirit of freedom, and not suffocating or obstructing the free flow of opinions and ideas, which are more enriching and wholesome and guarantee good relationship development and ensure good team building.

Conflict is a reality in urban ministry teams, just as it is in any group. The urban team leader needs skills in dealing with conflict resolution and mediation. The ability to negotiate between alienated individuals or groups is a significant leadership asset. The greatest enemy of the urban church is not conflict, per se, but unresolved conflict, which destroys teams, organizations and vision.
Networking and partnerships

Partnership is God's nature. The whole Trinity decided to create humanity. Together they called the first people of Genesis into partnership to serve as stewards and managers of creation. These beautiful accounts of partnership in the earliest chapters of the Bible should move us into bold and creative partnerships within our own urban contexts.

In this section we will explore some general thoughts on the importance of relationships as a foundation for partnerships in urban ministry, followed by a detailed description of how to partner and an outline of some possible obstacles and drawbacks to partnerships.

Partnerships = Relationships

At the foundation of all meaningful and transformative partnerships are solid relationships of commitment and trust, nurtured over long periods of time.

These kinds of relationships are even more vital in a complex urban society. Like it or not, urban ministry is rooted in a secular and pluralistic society which has come to consider the church largely irrelevant. To regain its credibility the church needs to engage this society and find ways of developing meaningful relationships with it.

At the same time, the only way to effectively deal with the overwhelming issues we face in some of our urban communities - deteriorating inner cities, shantytowns, slums, squatter communities - is to take a holistic approach in which the whole body of Christ will work as one, and in which the church will seek relationship and even partnership with those in the public arena. For the church to develop contextual ministry which addresses the challenges of its communities, it has to move away from a mentality of exclusiveness and isolation.

The unity of Christ's body should be rediscovered in the city. The urban church should affirm this unity and let it be very concrete and practical. For the church to impact the world, it has to move out into the public sphere with boldness, interacting not only with other churches or Christian groups, but also with the business sector, government agencies, secular development organizations and other groups which we encounter in our journey.

The ability to facilitate dialogue and partnerships is essential for urban ministry people, especially in interaction with groups outside of our own ministries. Given the fact that objectives, mission statements, styles, and personalities vary greatly, the ability to make sure that everyone feels heard and that mutually satisfying "win-win" solutions are found is extremely important.

Because partnerships are so vital to urban ministry, it might be helpful to consider what they are and how they work.
What is partnership?

Partnership is different from mere networking. Networks are groups who link and share information because of a common interest. A partnership goes beyond the simple sharing of information; partners commit themselves and their resources to work together to fulfill a common purpose.

Ministry partnerships are generally horizontally integrated or vertically integrated. An example of horizontal integration might be a group of youth ministries in a city who decide to buy and operate a youth camp in the country. It is horizontal because it is all one type of ministry.

A vertical partnership is more holistic, bringing together a variety of approaches and kinds of ministries to address multiple facets of a problem or a wider range of community issues. An example of vertical partnership might be a group of neighborhood churches who are looking for ways to meet the needs of their community in Christ. Their strategy might include youth work, elderly work, single parenting workshops, drop-in centers, camp ministries, day care and a host of other ministries all actively, consciously linked to reach the local community for Christ. The youth ministries cited as an example of horizontal partnership are a vital element of reaching and serving the community - but, they are just one of the strategies needed to fully reach the community.

The business world realizes the need for vertically integrated strategic partnerships in order to successfully complete complex tasks. To make a sophisticated product like a car, industry must integrate a number of specializations. Plastics can be used for many products, but plastics alone will not make a car. Building an automobile requires the integration of plastic with steel, electronics, engineering and many more techniques and materials.

So it is with building an effective urban ministry. Networking as a technique is important both for building relationships and as the first step in developing a partnership. But why is developing partnerships so important to urban ministry?

Why Partner?

Working in partnership with others rather than soldiering on alone is better for several reasons. We should partner in our ministries because:

Partnership is practical. It

- saves money.
- reduces duplication.
- builds morale, especially among specialists who often do not see their vital contribution to the whole ministry.
- multiplies resources.
- encourages holistic ministry and the integrating of specialties.
Partnership is *Biblical*:

- God lives in community and relationship; partnership in ministry is in His image.
- The Gospel is the good news of restored relationships. Partnerships demonstrate that restoration.
- Jesus linked our credibility in the unbelieving world to whether we have oneness with one another in Him \([\text{John 17:21}]\).

**How to partner**

Partnerships do not just happen. They require strategic vision and practical, steady deliberate work. Strategic alliances go through at least three stages from the first glimmer of an idea to an effective force for the Kingdom. The main stages are *Exploration, Formation, and Operation.*

**Exploration**

1. The final success of the work depends on building a common vision from the beginning. Start by listening. Find out what others are doing. Get to know their history, their vision, their problems and their needs.
2. As you listen, also try to identify common objectives or common needs that most of the potential partners share.
3. Build good relationships personally with each of the potential partners.
4. Do not minimize the differences of partners; freely acknowledge distinctions of purpose, history, style, theology. Do not minimize differences but do focus on common concerns.
5. Recognition of a common problem or need is an essential starting point. Potential partners must identify with a limited, high-value, achievable objective that will give participants a sense of fulfillment and progress.

**Formation**

1. Pull the potential partners together in an exploratory meeting.
2. Do not hold this meeting too early; not until you, as the partnership facilitator, have met individually and know their needs and have built a level of trust with each partner.
3. Have limited objectives for the first meeting that are understood by all the attendees of the meeting.
4. Aim to set limited project goals in the beginning. Setting too ambitious goals will probably cause failure.

**Operation**

1. Having had the initial meeting and set objectives, now actions vs. words really count.
2. A person with a vision and practical day-to-day follow-through is essential to get the partnership functioning and seeing it eventually bear real fruit.
3. Evaluate progress
4. Concentrate on communication. We all need specific communication to keep us encouraged and committed to a vision.

**Obstacles to Partnership**

Relationships in urban ministry are not simple and smooth. A few real dangers exist.

1. *Fear.* The greatest threat to meaningful relationships are our own insecurities about the unknown. This fear blocks our ability to trust people we see as different from ourselves. Urban ministers rooted in God should be able to reach out to others across any barriers.

2. *Superficial relationships.* Quality relationships are essential in urban ministry. Only when urban ministers are centered in quality relationships, only when partnerships are developed on solid relational foundations, will they contribute to the city in positive ways.

3. *Diversion.* Some relationships may take us away from the focus and objectives of our ministry. We should be selective about the kinds of relationships we enter into and about the groups or people with whom we develop partnerships, not because we want to be exclusive, but because the wrong kinds of relationships can dilute our ministry focus.

4. *Prejudice, racism, sexism and classism.* These evils are very real in every urban community. Look for them; be aware of them. Urban leaders need to consciously disentangle themselves from prejudice in their communities, taking steps to challenge existing prejudice and envision and propose alternatives.

Relationships matter. Urban leaders who know how to build and nurture relationships create ministry organizations that work.

**Ask the Experts**

According to twenty-five urban ministry experts polled at the 1994 USI, the most effective urban leaders are skilled in:

- networking and partnerships
- communications skills (interpersonal communications and communicating a vision)
- building relationships
- relating cross-culturally
- mobilization of community (especially mobilization of the poor)
- funding strategies and financial analysis
- strategic planning and goal setting
- negotiation and conflict management
- ministry team building
- understanding the city through a systems approach
- exegeting the city to develop contextualized ministry
- understanding spirituality as applied to urban ministry
Chapter 9: Learning, Relerning and Sharing

Contents
In the first eight chapters we have been trying to answer the question: What does it take to be effective in urban ministry?

In this chapter, our focus will shift to:

1. How do we learn what we need to know for effective urban ministry?
2. How do we continue to learn and stay on the cutting edge?
3. How do we share what we know?

HOW WE LEARN

How do urban practitioners learn? Here are two very different responses:

Life experience was helpful but honed by formal training (graduate school, leadership development programs, field-specific institutes)... and the training itself tested by life experiences. But the formal training did not all take place in seminary. Other disciplines and schools of thought were extremely instrumental in my work. Such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, urban planning, political science, public policy and economics and fields as communications, business administration and management.

For me, life experiences were absolutely foundational and formational. Formal training came in drips and drabs and enhanced the ministry I was involved in. Life experiences were guided however through a mentoring process (I was not just learning on my own). I was involved with a ministering community so that the learning experience was both guided by others and protected by others.

By life experiences I mean "guided doing." Experience does not necessarily teach you anything. You need to be guided into the right sort of experiences (i.e. ministering to people) and then, in those experiences where analysis of the experience is important, come to the right conclusions about the experience (i.e., one can learn the WRONG lessons from an experience).

IUA Associate, Henry Kontor (a Ghanan doing urban ministry in London) has yet another approach to
In 1993, I visited John Perkins' ministry in Pasadena, CA. John Perkins told me I was free to visit any of the staff meetings being held, as well as any of the consultations. I observed the way staff and committees worked, as well as the way the entire office operation was organized. Perkins never told me what to do, or indicated an approach or a method in urban work. I just followed John around, listened, observed, took notes, and then reflected on all I was seeing and experiencing.

I would return to ask John questions for clarification and by way of comparison with other experiences I had in other parts of the world.

I came to the moment with both formal training and prior experience. But this particular two week period added fresh information and insights that kept prior formal and informal learning from becoming frozen or unengaged in current realities.

A year and half later I again traveled to the United States from my base in London to Atlanta, GA to participate in an Urban Strategy Institute. In this commitment to stay on the cutting edge, I also dealt with ways of sharing and passing on to others what I am learning about the urban agenda.

Formal training and life experience; life experience and guided learning; independent, self-directed learning: from three different practitioners we have three seemingly different models of learning.

What we are looking for are some of the underlying principles of learning that prepare us for urban ministry. These basic principles will transfer to other contexts, countries and cultures but the applications will take different forms.

A number of foundational themes on learning came out of our writing and interaction at the Urban Strategy Institute. They were: the city and the learner; intentional learning and active reflection; pushing the learning envelope; finding resources; and creating a learning environment.

THE CITY AND THE LEARNER

Cities in our world today are in a process of continual change and any Christian work which addresses the true needs of the city must embrace this fact. It is therefore important to stay creative. There is always a danger of becoming reactive. Like the city itself, learning is a dynamic experience where change is the only constant.

Within the city, each learner is unique. Life experiences, training and culture all conspire to create unique learning styles. Learning styles are not definitive. We all use a variety of styles. Nevertheless, each person will have a dominant style that he or she needs to recognize and balance with other styles to
make the best use of learning opportunities.

Conventional ways of learning include:

1. Theory: Book reading, research, classroom, understanding principles.
2. Observation: Watching others from a distance, a passive form of learning.
3. Apprenticeship: Mentorship, walking alongside a leader, direct supervision in hands on work.
4. Experience: Jump in and do it! Trial and error.

In talking to urban practitioners, they tend to be more experiential and hands on learners (#4). Exploring the urban frontier also appears to attract a certain kind of person: the adventurer, the risk-taker, the entrepreneur.

The Urban Entrepreneur

An opportunity motivates me to learn. When I see a deal to be made, a resource to be exploited, a creative person with an idea - I get motivated to explore. I learn what I need to learn to package and market a vision. I will become an expert in order to sell a new ministry venture. I will learn from experience, both personal and external, so that I can promote the mission.

However, there are others who learn differently, who come along later and settle into the established urban setting. Most of us in this part of the journey learn by watching (Observation, #2) and by working along side those who have already been down the trail (Apprenticeship, #3).

INTENTIONAL LEARNING AND ACTIVE REFLECTION

Intentional learning is usually thought of in terms of formal seminary or university training, or in such professional growth activities as acquiring bibliographies on philosophy, theory, praxis, anecdotes, etc., all of which enhance the learning curve. It may also include intentional participation in consultations that cross-fertilize, correct, stimulate. Intentional learning works, but as intentional as we are about learning, we must also be intentional about where we learn, i.e., seminary fortress versus the urban field and our own day-to-day experience.

One other key dimension of intentionality is sharpening our sensitivity to learn in the unguarded moments when the "a-ha" experience jumps out at us. That means we consciously put ourselves in an ongoing learning mode, recognizing the importance of the subjective and intuitive as well as the cognitive. This kind of daily learning and relearning are what we choose to do; they do not happen incidentally.
On the whole, experiential learning in the urban field is critical because it leads to internalization, whereas theory or observation may not provide practical applications. However, here too, experience alone does not posit learning. Only reflection helps move the experience to a truly learning activity.

It can be especially instructive to meditate on our negative experiences. Even as values do not develop apart from moral dilemmas neither does substantive learning develop apart from dilemmas, crisis or experiences. It is often in reflecting on our failures or in admitting to error that we come to new levels of success or understanding.

Unfortunately, in urban ministry pressures of time and schedule often dictate that only the tyranny of the urgent gets the immediate attention, and current crises are always competing with the time needed for reflection and internalizing learning experiences. Into our priorities it is important to plan for the evaluation of our experiences and for deciding how to integrate those lessons into our work. Retreat time is crucial in this regard, in that it affords the urban minister time to reflect on what God would have her or him to know through the learning experiences.

**PUSHING THE LEARNING ENVELOPE: LEARNING & RELEARNING**

The city is ever evolving, and the urban landscape is an extremely dynamic text to engage. It is important that we challenge ourselves to move into new areas just beyond our level of knowledge and experience.

We need to approach this new learning creatively and holistically. It is critical to look below specific problems to find out why they occur, otherwise our lives and solutions will be reactive. It is also important to keep a positive frame of mind since much of our valuable learning may come from bitter experiences.

Here are some practical suggestions for pushing the learning envelope (see also "Entering the Community," Chapter 8):

1. **Walk your neighborhood** regularly and other communities as well, as your work takes you there.
2. **Deliberately engage resources** outside your field, especially in the areas of community and leadership development, public policy, philanthropy, economics, planning and organizational development to challenge your notions of what you should be doing and/or your sense of effectiveness. It is often possible to glean new learnings from interactions with persons steeped in these other fields. They provide perspectives that may be enlightening as well as instructive.
3. **Attend selected conferences** where many of the experts in a particular field gather. (You might be surprised at how receptive many of these other field experts are to someone who is in ministry and how often they welcome the urban minister's perspective on the issue.)
4. **Explore new areas of service and ministry** as well as new areas of knowledge.
5. **Test your conclusions.** Solitary learning is inconclusive; on the other hand, learning is validated
when experiences are shared and owned from the perspectives of all of the groups which make up the whole of the urban practitioner's environment.

1. *Let go of perfection*. To continue as learners year after year, we need to have a perspective that does not expect to get everything right at last. Organizations will never be in a state of dynamic equilibrium. They will never be all that we hope they will be. Rather, they will always be in a state of constant change and evolution. Learning is dynamic. We need to focus our energies on coping with, managing and grappling with the constant change.

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### The Cutting Edge Learner

I stay on the cutting edge by living in the city, experiencing on a daily basis the issues, wrestling with the full range of emotions that effect urban dwellers, and keep trying new things that may offer some practical solutions to the problems that the city brings. I refuse to become cautious. I continue to take risks, to fail, to learn from my failings and to try again. The books aren't written on this stuff yet I believe that we have to live out the books that will be written on how to do effective urban ministry.

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### WHERE ARE THE RESOURCES?

There is in every large city a wealth of resources which makes the city a stimulating and rich learning environment.

*City leaders* in both private and public sectors are normally within easy reach. These individuals have valuable experiences and insights to share. Anyone can reach them by telephone, courtesy visit, or letter and obtain very useful information. They have notes and summaries in their personal files which are valuable. Some urban leaders may offer one hour consultations each month, cost-free. They usually have access to published books and periodicals in a variety of subjects which are available on a temporary loan basis. If not on hand, they will know where to access materials or persons with the pertinent information you seek.

Tools for urban ministry are also found in *libraries, media centers, bookstores, video outlets, collaboration centers, global marketplaces*, etc. These centers contain vast resources, voluminous data and technology, which, when fused, help us to stretch beyond existing boundaries into new, unexplored and unfamiliar informational terrains.

Many urban ministries have developed networks of *field workers* and *retired executives* who can provide in-depth guidance within their field of expertise.
The city, as a center for advanced technology, research and funding, is also ideal creative ground for developing \textit{new resources}.

\section*{Ministry Mapping}

In March, 1994, a friend of mine from Dallas, the president of a large corporation, wanted to make a difference in urban ministry in his city. He told me about a new project his company had just completed to identify the key corporate players in his field by mapping out all the ego-information patterns to show the connections between the various industries. He wondered if such a system could have any applications to urban ministry.

I worked with Lawton Higgs, whose twelve years as a Birmingham pastor had given him vast experience in urban ministry, and with computer expert, David Young, to create a \textit{ministries map of Birmingham}. Through the device of symbology (the use of geometric figures) we pictured judicatories, denominations, agencies, public/private partnered ministries, and grassroots movements, with a particular color code and geometric shape for each type of entity.

With a computer-generated design of inter-connecting lines between the various symbols, we were able to see the city in a completely new way. Further, the mapping of people, programs, processes, and projects, and the points of intersection of all these yielded for us immediate insights about where and to whom to turn for almost any kind of resource needed. Interestingly, the map also showed that most of Birmingham's public-partnered ministries were outgrowths of the civil rights movement.\textit{-Bill O'Brien}, Samford University, Birmingham

Read the \textit{local papers} which identify important resource people, documents and programs in the various articles, editorials and features they carry.

Above all, \textit{people} within the city are its best resource. People from within the urban community have a variety of experiences from all walks of life. They have in many cases the most practical and useful knowledge and insights. Their information about the neighborhood, and their understanding of why problems exist, will help us better assess how their lives are affected by our intended good works.

With all these resources at hand, the real question for urban ministry appears to be not "Where are the resources?" but, "How do we create better learning environments to take advantage of all the city has to offer?"

\section*{CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT}
A personal learning environment is created by an attitude of flexibility, openness to change and the ability to take risks. The status quo, no matter how inadequate, always feels more comfortable than the unfamiliar alternative. Learning by its nature means facing the unknown and that is often threatening. The learner will sometimes become a dedicated follower, listening intently, working hard. Other times, learning involves launching out on one's own, taking risks and failing, learning from those failures, and returning to try again and again.

The urban field is an optimal learning environment because it is always challenging us to find practical solutions to new and existing problems. However, we need to be living and walking our mission in relation to and in the neighborhood with the people we are called to serve.

On an institutional level, the value of academic learning is limited unless it is directly connected with practical application in ministry. This is the great challenge for theological education. Unless Seminaries and Bible schools find a way to incorporate more community-based training, their graduates will have been trained for churches that no longer exist. This is not a condemnation of foundational classical curriculum. But that curriculum must be a part of a more holistic learning experience that integrates the learner into the very climate and places where learning is to be applied.

In organizations, learning is fostered by providing information and authority for decision-making to those closest to the end product. The old model of managers and supervisors holding back critical information while trying to motivate those below them to increased productivity is self-destructing. Smaller groups convened to solve problems and to create new procedures and products result in greater ownership of the process and in real learning.

Learning in organizations is also fostered by engaging in the process of understanding the systemic connections that underlie specific problems.

Too often organizations deal reactively with problems without understanding the causes of the problems.

Learning is a dynamic enterprise. For the urban minister this is a critical element a creative life-style that contributes to vital ministry. Yet it does not solely pertain to the minister's own personal development but also entails the transmission of such learning to others.

**SHARING WHAT WE KNOW**

Most Urban workers have little time to pass on the lessons and skills we learn. This is sad because many times we will find ourselves reinventing the wheel. While many of us have a passion for the pursuit of knowledge there needs to be a desire to not only share that knowledge but to also share where and how knowledge can be acquired on one's own.

We ourselves need to teach as much as others need to learn. As any teacher knows, the learning process is a mullet-dimensional, dynamic experience where the teacher or facilitator also learns and gains new
insights, both from the interaction with the context and from the learner. In other words, both the teaching and the learning are reciprocal.

This section will briefly outline a process for sharing urban knowledge. In this process, we: know the objective; put a value on what we know; know the teacher; know the learner; choose the tool. While the outline itself is fairly complete, most of these areas could have used more input. Perhaps one reason they were not more fully developed is because as urban practitioners we have not given the transmission of our knowledge the priority it deserves.

KNOW THE OBJECTIVE

In each individual teaching situation, it is important to have clearly defined educational objectives. Our overall objective is to strengthen each other and to transmit what we know about urban ministry in order to prepare the next generation of urban leaders. The specific objective to achieve such a goal will be determined by the context or the setting of ministry.

PUTTING A VALUE ON WHAT WE KNOW

The urban leaders' teaching role is to guide as well as directly provide any relevant information that is available. In doing so, we must make sure that what we know and want to share is something that has been rooted in real work, day to day life and proven to be practical and of benefit.

A first step in determining the actual value of our urban knowledge would be to ask questions such as:

- where did/do you find the reality based subjects, skills and abilities that tend to be of most value/least value?
- how do you assess the value of what you know?
- what are the real world guidelines for your assessments of value (non-theological bench marks)?

KNOW THE TEACHER

The urban minister as teacher should appreciate and be fairly comfortable with the knowledge, skills, and information she or he may have. However, just as important as recognizing what we know is being honest about our limitations. Knowing our own strengths and weaknesses in transferring information and skills is crucial to the learning process. A good teacher will know where to find the resources to fill in the gaps.

KNOW THE LEARNER

The effective teacher will become aware of the learner's style through questions and observation and then take a look into her tool kit of methods and materials. How a person learns is often shaped by his or her personal history. As such, the teacher or facilitator of learning will need to have a solid sense of the
learner's life experience. The result is personalized discovery.

**CHOOSE THE TOOL**

What tools, techniques, technologies can we use to transmit our knowledge to a new generation of urban leaders? Again, everyone has a particular learning style and the teacher must be sensitive to the appropriate tool or pedagogy to help the learning process take hold.

Approaches to transferring knowledge and skills parallel the four conventional learning styles: theory, observation, apprenticeship and experience.

**Formal classroom**

Through teaching modules, inter-term courses, regular semester offerings, and continuing education opportunities, the practitioner can pass on valuable lessons honed on the anvil of involvement. While classroom learning is limited, it can be enriched with field trips and by bringing in resource persons. Another way is through classroom teaching. I found this to be less appropriate with adults, but given resource and time constraints, this option has nevertheless been constantly used. This learning can be enriched with field trips and the use of resource persons brought into the classroom setting.

**Mentoring**

An urban practitioner can become a mentor to others. It is even more effective when the teacher, with intentionality, chooses a group of willing learners who will commit to this process. One way or sharing what I know has been through mentoring colleagues and friends in the same field of ministry.

**Urban internships**

Another tool is found in the formal urban exposure program design, usually as a component of an academic program, sometimes called "field-based learning." This design seeks to provide transformational experiences though intimate immersion in environments which contain cultural diversity/ various urban communities/ various urban churches and ministries. Included in this exposure would be local, national, and international communities experiences. A one or two year internship in the inner city while part of a formal training could be a more valuable learning experience than a Ph.D. at a university in a disconnected setting.

**Ministry residency**

This is a comprehensive formal concept of ministry training which requires thorough study of the historical, theological, cultural and scriptural contexts of ministry in addition to a working knowledge of urban studies. The residency program includes:
1. Exposure to a number of different urban encounters so that practitioners can select a ministry that is close to their hearts.
2. Meaningful participation in a limited range of activities to help practitioners feel integrated in this type of ministry.
3. Gradually increasing responsibility in a larger part of the mission, and for a longer time.
4. Enlarging the mission and taking wider responsibility.
5. Experienced ministry residents sponsor new practitioners using the same principles.

**Collegiality and networking**

The practitioner either joins or creates local, national or international forums for the sharing and comparing of experiences, challenges, opportunities and needs. Locally, this can easily be accomplished through brown-bag lunches on a regular and ongoing basis. National and international networks of urban workers can be created by teleconferences and Internet.

The tool of networking deserves special attention because it speaks to the relational and communal facets of the Gospel. Since the Gospel depends upon relationships and community for effective witness, networking is valued because it creates and nurtures shared visions and missions. Networking permits the flow of critical information between and among persons and communities, establishes appropriate boundaries for critiques, celebrates and affirms the creation of new knowledge, identifies critical information gaps, challenges and confronts universal application of the traditional and protects urban ministry from the domination of the pedestrian.

**Economic development activities**

Essential tools for urban ministry can be found in economic development activities. For example, organizations like CCDA are appropriately equipping urban churches to function entrepreneurially. Churches are encouraged to assume what Bakke calls "ecological theology," in ministering to the numerous and complex systems that make up the urban landscape. Economic development tools can be found thought the creation of small business collaboratives, community co-operatives, housing initiatives, etc. The use of this tool seeks to empower the local community through the strengthening of its financial base.

**Internet**

By harnessing this technology a practitioner can dial into forums and/or join or create bulletin boards that provide almost limitless avenues for disseminating information and insights birthed in the urban arena.

Another Internet application might be an on-line ministries studies degree program with input from urban experts all over the world. Such a program would allow students anywhere on earth to access a high level of urban training while greatly reducing the need to travel abroad. The problems mentioned earlier of seminaries and universities being out of touch with the realities of urban life could also begin
to be addressed by direct interaction over the Internet between faculty and those in the urban field.

The Internet would allow documents (such as this book) to be uploaded in one location and downloaded anywhere on earth, for free. On the Internet, books need no longer be static documents, obsolete as soon as (or perhaps before) they are published. Rather, they can be part on an ongoing international dialogue that can inform and encourage the whole church.

Other

Seasoned urban practitioners can write and distribute training materials and write books; They can also visit city churches to motivate urban congregations and ministers.

**STEP UP/STEP DOWN technologies and the Interactive Urban Network: Experience**

The STEP UP/STEP DOWN tools and the Interactive Urban Network used to write and distribute this book (see Chapter 1) make up an integrated system for accessing and sharing urban ministry information. Introduced at the 1994 IUA Urban Strategy Institute, the purpose of this system is to provide a new kind of resource for all those involved in urban ministry.

The Interactive Urban Network combines a variety of technologies: groupware, computer networks, the Internet, metaphors, artwork and storytelling. Each activity informs the others, helping to draw out and extend the collective and individual urban ministry knowledge base.

The process is still largely untried in the urban world where one encounters every imaginable level of computer literacy and/or technophobia. To succeed, everything will depend on building trust and a continual flow of encouragement in a non-coercive atmosphere. However, by introducing the Interactive Urban Network, IUA hopes to stimulate awareness of how high and low technology can contribute to urban ministry and to bring this knowledge to those on the frontlines of urban ministry where it is needed the most.

Many of the other resources discussed above could also be expanded through the creative use of technology. Resources for urban ministry are everywhere. To gain full advantage from these resources, we need to choose the best tools we can.

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**Appendix A: Participants**

**Appendix B: Participant Stories**

**Appendix C: Facilitators**
The PARTICIPANTS:

These twenty-six people form ten countries and diverse backgrounds have collectively written the content. You can view brief biographies for each of them and links to appropriate homepages where available.

Mr. Jon Abercrombie
Rev. Viju Abraham
Rev. Bernita Babb
Dr. Raymond Bakke
Rev. Graeme Clark
Mr. Robert Culver
Mr. Stephen deBeer
Rev. Joe Ehrmann
Dr. Leah Gaskin Fitchue
Dr. Donald Fuller
Mr. Phillipe Joret
Dr. John Hirt
Rev. Henry Kontor
Mr. George Kovats
Dr. Robert Lupton
Dr. Michael Mata

Rev Caesar Molobatsi

Mr. Paul Miller

Mr. Craig Nauta

Rev. David Ngai

Dr. Bill O'Brien

Mr. Mackenzie Pier

Ms. Lisa Rivera

Dr. Luis Scott

Mr. Jan Gaute Sirevag

Mrs Jember Teferra

Mr. Stephen Ujvarosy
Each participant was asked to tell a story from their experience that taught them an important lesson in Urban Ministry. These are their stories:

Jon Abercrombie - Atlanta GA USA
Bernita Babb - Bronx NY USA
Ray Bakke - Chicago IL USA
Graeme Clarke - Glasgow SCOTLAND
Bob Culver - Atlanta GA USA
Stephan deBeer - Pretoria SOUTH AFRICA
Joe Ehrmann - Baltimore MD USA
Leah Gaskin Fitchue - Philadelphia PA USA
Phillipe Joret - Montauban FRANCE
Henry Kontor - London ENGLAND
George Kovats - Seattle WA USA
Michael Mata - Los Angeles CA USA
Caesar Molabatsi - Soweto SOUTH AFRICA
David Ngai HONG KONG
Bill O'Brien - Birmingham AL USA
Lindy Scott - Mexico City MEXICO
The FACILITATORS who planned and orchestrated this process:

Mr. Brett Boston
Ms. Melanie Buckner
Mr. Scott David
Ms. Anglea Deakins
Ms. Odile Ferroussie
Ms Cheryl Hendricks
Ms. Kyle Hollingsworth
Ms. Susan Keeter
Mr. Bill Petersen
Ms. Helen Ujvarosy
Mr. Stephen Ujvarosy
The House We Built Together

To help the twenty-five urban experts access these inner dimensions of urban ministry, Urban Strategy Institute planners set up a metaphor/art (visioning) room across from the high tech group writing room. Drawing people together in a stimulating, creative environment, the USI planners also hoped to offset any side effects of the high technology setup across the hall. In the metaphor/art room technology took a different form: four-by-eight-foot foam core panels, colored markers, and two incredibly talented graphic artists. (There were computer terminals in the room, but only for writers to capture the comments of the international teams as they worked on the panels.)

The two artists were in charge of sketching out the Associates' vision of a large urban ministry, using a house and its various rooms as a metaphor for a large urban ministry with its many different ministry functions and leadership requirements.

One of the reasons for choosing the metaphor of a house was to provide the international teams with a transferable concept that was applicable and adaptable to any cultural location. In this way the teams could agree on symbols which communicated a common understanding of urban ministry, but which also allowed for personal interpretation. In describing for the artists the furnishings each particular room contained, the ministry experts were led to approach the questions of what it takes to be effective in urban ministry from a right-brain (conceptual) perspective rather than from the left brain (analytical) perspective they used in their writing. This cognitive shift brought a new level of insight about their work which they could then incorporate into their writing when they returned to the high-tech room.

Each room (actually, three four-by-eight-foot panels) had three common elements: a window, to represent connection to the secular world; a skylight to represent relationship to God; and a mirror, to stand for the ministry's (or leader's) sense of self, purpose or identity. Depending on the room (kitchen/dining room, study, bedrooms, etc.) the teams chose different furnishings for the artists to draw, defining in the written descriptions the unique significance of each element. The room illustrations, with panel-by-panel descriptions, are shown below. Each room can be viewed either as a room with multiple images and narrative or as panel by panel. Although the house itself, like the Kingdom of God, is not finally complete, all thirteen rooms and their furnishings taken together, give a more or less complete picture of what it looks like and feels like to be involved in urban ministry.

Front Cover for Book..(102K .jpg)

The Images with text:
The House We Built Together

Front Porch (52K)

Living Room (89K)

Kitchen/Dining Room (128K)

Library (190K)

Adult bedroom (137K)

Child bedroom (148K)

Senior bedroom (125K)

The images (without commentary):

Front Cover for Book..(102K .jpg)

Front Porch..(50K .jpg)

Living Room..(42K .jpg)

Living Room..(43K .jpg)

Kitchen..(45K .jpg)

Kitchen..(47K .jpg)

Kitchen..(34K .jpg)

Library..(53K .jpg)

Library..(75K .jpg)

Library..(36K .jpg)
In March, 1994, a friend of mine from Dallas, the president of a large corporation, wanted to make a difference in urban ministry in his city. He told me about a new project his company had just completed to identify the key corporate players in his field by mapping out all the ego-information patterns to show the connections between the various industries. He wondered if such a system could have any applications to urban ministry.

I worked with Lawton Higgs, whose twelve years as a Birmingham pastor had given him vast experience in urban ministry, and with computer expert, David Young, to create a ministries map of Birmingham.

Through the device of symbology (the use of geometric figures) we pictured judicatories/denominations, agencies, public/private partnered ministries, and grassroots movements, with a particular color code and geometric shape for each type of entity.

With a computer-generated design of inter-connecting lines between the various symbols, we were able to see the city in a completely new way. Further, the mapping of people, programs, processes, and projects, and the points of intersection of all these yielded for us immediate insights about where and to whom to turn for almost any kind of resource needed. Interestingly, the map also showed that most of Birmingham's public-partnered ministries were outgrowths of the civil rights movement.

Bill O'Brien, Samford University, Birmingham Alabama USA
The whole of the process from conception to the book you see was a delightful adventure in collaborative thinking and creative partnership. **Ralph Veerman** first suggested checking out the Carter Collaboration center managed by the Atlanta project. **Steve Ujvarosy** visited the site and developed the overall vision for the process. At a TAP training session, **Brett Boston** resonated with the vision and offered to partner with IUA to create the experience. **Dan Sweat** opened the doors to the Collaboration Center. The process design was an interactive effort between Brett and Steve. The facilitators list in the acknowledgments shows how many people actually participated. **Lisa Rivera** managed the preliminary and on-site logistics and **Helen Ujvarosy** led the editing team and took the raw text and shaped it into the book you see today and **Ken Bosma** did much of the final hardcopy layout work.

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