

Why are cities so important?

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(transcription of interview)

Why are cities so important? I think cities are critical and we have to be focusing on cities much more than we are in the global mission world. Interesting that Jesus actually spends most of his time in rural environments, in non-urban settings, but soon after his death, we see that the global Christian movement becomes largely urban for the next few hundred years. It moves largely from city to city.

Paul actually has his greatest movements success, in major trade route cities in Ephesus. And it says that from the city “all of Asia heard the word of the Lord”. So cities are important, not just because of the city, but they become these key points to reach entire nations. So I think we should be really thinking about *how do we reach the cities of the world?* We live in an environment - I live in a city that right now is 14 million people. In the next couple of years it’s supposed to be the twelfth biggest city in the world. And from that city we’ve started launching teams that reach not just the city, but reach the nation - reach the urban, the rural environments and the surrounding nations.

So cities are these places that connect. Cities are global gateways that connect to one another, but they also connect to the rural environments. In our cities, people come in to work and then often go back home again, back to the rural environments, so they’re these gateways to nations.

What we see today, unfortunately, is that largely missions still has a mindset that we’re supposed to go to rural environments. When you think of missions, when you think about a missionary, you think about someone sitting in a grass hut or a mud hut out somewhere in the bush - and that’s a “real missionary”. And yet by the year 2050, 70% of the world will be living in cities. And so, if that’s our mindset, then by the year 2050 we will only be relevant to 30% of the world’s population. We will have lost the opportunity to reach 70% of the world’s population!

So it’s important, I think it’s critical, that we move from the mud hut to the coffee shop. I think it’s incredibly important that we begin to think about how do we design strategies that reach cities. What we learned as a team is that rural strategies are not always effective in reaching cities and many of our strategies that were designed for movements are rural-focused, and so when we move to the city, they break down, they don’t work.

What amazed us is when we were reaching cities, and we said *how do we design movements of the gospel that will reach cities?* we found that the strategies that reach cities are also relevant to the rural environments. They’re relevant to entire nations.

So, it’s critical that we figure out how to reach cities, because cities are the way we’re going to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

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