

## *Globalization and Culture: Urban Theology*

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(some specific stats may need updating but essentially the principles remain the same.)

In the history of the world to our time, there are more people alive on earth now than have ever lived before. 6.5 billion souls.

The earth is crowding.

The result of the earth crowding is people are moving into cities. The development of cities is a new phenomenon among humanity.

To date at least 50% of humanity lives in a city, possibly more. We must recognize the significance of this...This has never happened before in human history. It changes the way we relate to each other. Creates new dynamics and develops new problems.

Do we have a theology that works for this context?

One new dynamic is for the first time many nations can come to one place and live next to each other. Literally going down the street can be like going to a different country. The modern city is a Multi-Cultural entity.

We must figure out how to interact cross culturally. Even in a country like the Philippines that seems more monoethnic.

What are ethnic enclaves within Metro Manila? (Japanese, US, Indians, Chinese; subcultures: visayans, etc...)

### **A little quiz about our global knowledge:**

1. What are 2 of the 5 largest cities in the world? (Tokyo, Bombay (Mumbai), San Pablo, Mexico City, New York)
2. What is the most spoken language in the world? (Mandarin- China)
3. What is the poorest country in the world and/or richest country in the world? (Luxinburg- richest; East Timor- poor)
4. What country in the world has the most billionaires? (US 269 billionaires)
5. What country has won the most Miss World Pageants? (tie between Venezuela and India)
6. Nodding up/down is common for yes; shaking it means no. but where in Europe does the gesture of raising the head means no and dipping it means yes? (Greece)
7. What country was rated as the happiest country in the world? (Iceland- 1/3 of the time they won't show up to work; Puerto Ricans- more holidays than days in a year)
8. What is the worlds largest distributor of coconuts? (Philippines)
9. How many islands make up the Philippines? (7,100)

### **To understand our current context we must look to the biblical text.**

The Bible begins with the setting of creation in a garden. Paradise is a garden. Walking with God, knowing God, working for God is all connected with nature.

The bible ends with the city of God, the New Jerusalem. Eternal paradise is a city. Why not restore the garden?

In our sin we build. Tower of Babel story is about what we build becomes an idol.

God is a creator. Theologians call it 'Ex Nihilo'- "out of nothing" God creates. The first thing we learn about God outside of his power is that he is creative/artistic; rather than

logical or a law of physics. He is unrestrained by laws, free to be creative and do what he wants. Why did God create humans? Because he wanted to. That's it, that's the final answer.

**Humans are created in the image of God.** based on what we know from Genesis 1 what does it mean to be made in the image of God, what does it mean to be human? We can choose to build and create things. No other animals can do this. But we are sinful, so we build things that are evil or broken.

**God then does not destroy everything, he redeems them by allowing the new Jerusalem to define eternity.**

What do we know about this city? Rev 4,5 it is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual city. The worlds cities already are moving towards that eternal reality.

Cultures can be plotted on continuums.

Not hospitable

Hospitable

This can even vary within one country.

Who are Americans?

In an anonymous survey "what do you think about Americans?"

Aggressive/pushy

Not courteous children

Feeling superior/thinking highly of themselves

Willing to take risks

Arrogant

Opportunistic

Direct/to the point/upfront

Hardworking

Want to party

Strict/Dominating

Don't care about the "old"

Too straightforward/offensively candid

Too much liberty on children

Generous

**What defines Americans?**

Our history

Independence: people to survive had to be on their own, think for themselves, no one is your boss so you must self motivate. We also rebelled against England so we don't want anyone telling us what to do.

Puritan Work Ethic/Pioneer Spirit

What comes off as culture really reflects what it takes to survive the environment.

Pioneers had to go work independently totally alone in the land and consume very little to survive. So mentally those people define themselves by innovation and production from work. A whole nation of this creates great new thoughts, ideas, goals and products.

But it also creates a narcissistic society. We are wrapped up in our own problems, can't get past our own identity. The world revolves around our personal lives. We don't have a good idea of what family or friendship is about.

We have to learn community or we will die spiritually.

Heroes

The Rugged Individual: John Wayne, Rags-to-riches, Superman

This part of our history affects all other parts of our culture: family, religion, work, school, health care, time orientation.

This individuality creates a world that's very hard to live in.

**Every culture has different ways to operate that are neutral to God but we prefer as "better".**

Ex. Personal space: some cultures prefer 1 ft distance and others 2ft. neither is bad just different.

If someone begins to think a 1 ft distance of personal space is better it is called "ethnocentric". All of us have ethnocentric thoughts so to do ministry in our modern context we must identify and root out our pride.

Understanding who we are in relation to others is essential to crossing cultures

### **Fun World Facts**

Top 225 richest people (\$20-60 billion range per person) in the world are worth \$1 trillion

This is equal to the same income of 1/2 the worlds population.

The UN has a development report stating to provide: clean water, basic health care, food, education = \$40 billion

For Make-up Americans spend = \$8 billion year

For ice cream Europeans spend = \$11 billion year

For lawn care Americans spend = \$28 billion

For pet care Americans spend = \$40 billion (80% of American dogs are obese!)

80% of world's population consume 14% of world's resources

20% of world's population consume 86% of world's resources

The poorest 20% of the world consume 1.3%

If we had 100kg of rice and 10 people

86kg goes to richest 2 people

13.7kg goes to 6 people

1.3 kg goes to poorest 2 people

**Does this happen if we put these people in the same room?**

No. they will share. Rich people hoard primarily because they are isolated without knowledge of the reality or the world's conditions. Their excuses tend to revolve around the belief that poverty is produced by people's sins, mistakes, ignorance...

**This is a global epidemic of resource distribution!**

What do we do? Do we take an army and take the food? This is why relationships are key in the doing of Justice.

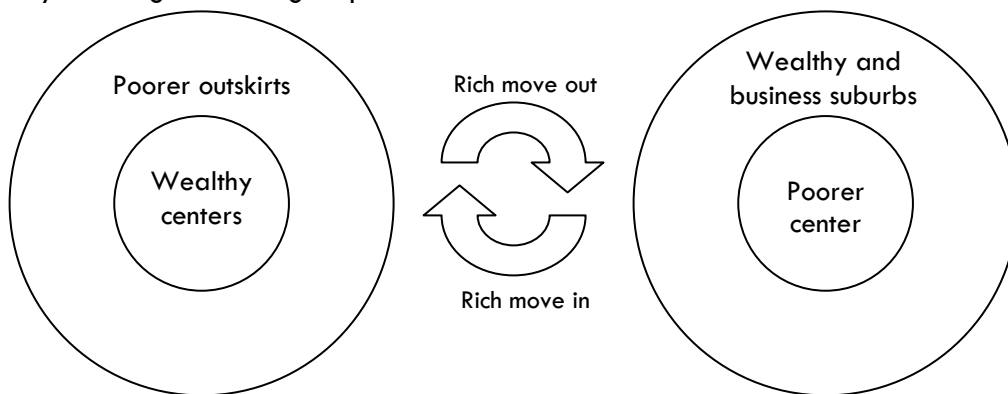
### What are the problems unique to a city?

Corruption  
Prostitution  
Drugs  
Gangs  
Residential space  
Traffic

Overpopulation  
Crimes  
Sanitation  
Pollution  
Health

### Many of these are new or have changed because of urban dynamics.

The poor are always transient by moving into the areas the rich abandon or being forced to move because the rich move into the area. So part of the problem for the poor is always moving and being displaced.



This cycle used to be isolated within a city. The businesses and rich would move within a city to find the most favorable conditions but now they consider the whole globe. If Detroit is not favorable for my factory I consider moving it to another city. This is where the sweat factories (abusive factories) come in and are developed due to global city competition where the wages are driven down and worker's rights are negated to create a favorable environment for the wealthy.

### History of the world

World is Colonized- 1/3 of the world ruled by England...most of the world was ruled by European powers through military force.

Revolutions- eventually indigenous people rise up and win their freedom. Freedom does not mean economic stability or viability and many fledgling countries are left weak but free. (ex. Haiti during their revolution killed every white French person and burned every French institution. No infrastructure or economic connections...the country has never recovered.)

World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF)- come to developing countries to offer loans so that these newly freed but struggling countries can develop. Once debt is in place the country is forced to accept compromising policies (or in many cases turning a blind eye to forced labor, child labor, environmental pollution) to allow TNC to operate. Neo-Colonial powers- TNC TransNational Corporations created by US as legal individuals. Corporations can own property, make transactions, be sued and sue others...and break laws but no one can be put in jail because there is no person only a legal individual. Corporations come to offer economic viability and opportunity to

desperate (often debt trapped) countries. TNC's now control countries through economic power.

Poorest 20 countries debt = \$5.5 billion (easy to pay off or forgive)

It would be easy for the World Bank or IMF to pay off/forgive but this debt plus interest locks these countries into a kind of prison so they will never get out.

Jonathan Nambo stated for every \$1 made the Philippines pays \$.4 towards the interest on debt.

### **What then is an Urban Theology?**

Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the Evil One.

Our gospel must have a connection to these new global problems...we need relevant meaningful answers.

**Theology is not just thoughts about God but the connection or bridge between thoughts about God and the mess of humanity.**

### **What are the major 4 problems in our areas?**

(Drugs, corruption, employment, education)

Break into small groups.

What does the gospel have to say about these problems?

What is the biblical ministry solutions of these problems?

Many of our solutions are interconnected. By our mere presence we influence our areas towards Jesus. Do they know we represent Jesus? We can bring the kingdom into these harsh problems by bringing the Gospel of the Kingdom: Salvation and Justice.

What do we bring and what we prophetically stand against. Saying "No! Not while I am here representing God's Kingdom." It is a war against evil as well as for the kingdom of God. Saving people from the city but redeeming the city itself.