ABSTRACT

REACHING THE HEART OF THE CITY THE STREET-SMART WAY:
STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN MINISTRY

by

Dan Sandoval

The city is a unique and challenging environment in which to share the gospel in today’s twenty-first century. Around the world, city dwellers live in complex, urban societies and cultures. The ever-increasing population of cities presents a staggering multiplicity of social needs along with opportunities for the Church to reach people with the message of salvation.

The purpose of this study was to research three innovative and fruitful ministries in the city of Miami, Florida, to gather principles for an effective urban ministry. Understanding the context and the people of the city, I have coined these organizations “street-smart ministries.”
REACHING THE HEART OF THE CITY THE STREET-SMART WAY:
STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN MINISTRY

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Dan Sandoval
May 2004
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Overview of Dissertation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Formulation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question #1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question #2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Project</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Overview of the Literature</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the City as a Society and Culture</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City as a Society</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City as Culture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the City from the Macro and Micro Levels</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the City’s Population, Pollution, and Social Problems</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in the City</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy in the City</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Crowding in the City ...........................................................................................................20
Migrants and Immigrants in the City ...............................................................................22
Pollution in the City ...........................................................................................................24
Evangelistic Opportunities (A Personal Reflection) .........................................................29
Social Problems in the City ..............................................................................................31
Crime in the City ...............................................................................................................33
Poverty in the City ............................................................................................................35
Understanding the City through the Bible: Biblical Precedents .......................................38
Old Testament Models .....................................................................................................39
New Testament Models ....................................................................................................43
Understanding the Heart of God for the City: Theological Reflections on Urban Ministry .................................................................................................................................45
Understanding the Urban Ministry Context ........................................................................49
Understanding the City with the Right Mind-Set ................................................................52
Conclusion ..........................................................................................................................53
3. Design of the Study .........................................................................................................54
Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................54
Statement of Research Questions .......................................................................................55
  Research Question #1 .......................................................................................................56
  Research Question #2 .......................................................................................................56
Methodology .......................................................................................................................57
  Criteria for Selection of Ministries to be Studied ............................................................57
  Selection of Research Subjects .........................................................................................57
Subjects ...........................................................................................................................................58
Data Collection ..................................................................................................................................61
Data Anaylsis ........................................................................................................................................63
Field Research .....................................................................................................................................63
4. Findings of the Study ......................................................................................................................65
   Case Study #1: Trinity Church of Miami, Florida .................................................................66
   Case Study #2: New Hope Missionary Baptist Church of Miami .........................................75
   Case Study #3: Miami Rescue Mission ....................................................................................81
   Summary of Cross Analysis ......................................................................................................91
Evangelistic Strategies and Principles for Urban Ministry .........................................................91
   Research Question #1 ..............................................................................................................91
   Principle #1: A Street-Smart Ministry Approaches Ministry Holistically ...............92
   Principle #2: A Street-Smart Ministry Lives Out the Great Commission ..........93
   Principle #3: A Street-Smart Church Engages the Social Needs of the City ....97
   Principle #4: A Street-Smart Ministry Values Education ..............................................100
   Principle #5: A Street-Smart Ministry Enters the World of Politics .................101
   Principle #6: A Street-Smart Ministry Focuses on the Family ..............................105
Characteristics of Street-Smart Ministry People and Churches .............................................107
   Research Question #2 .........................................................................................................107
   Principle #7: A Street-Smart Ministry Is Led by Street-Smart People ..........107
   Principle #8: A Street-Smart Ministry Preaches and Teaches the Word ..........113
   Principle #9: A Street-Smart Ministry Is a Praying Church ...................................114
5. Summary and Conclusion ...........................................................................................................117
Conclusions..................................................................................................................118
Findings of Special Interest..........................................................................................120
Limitations of Study and Recommendations..............................................................122
Personal Implications of the Study .............................................................................123
Appendixes ....................................................................................................................126
   A. Letters of Permission............................................................................................126
   B. Interview Questions............................................................................................129
   C. Ministry Abbreviations.......................................................................................131
Works Cited ..................................................................................................................132
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude belongs, first of all, to God who has been my gracious, Heavenly Father and endowed me with the undeserved, bountiful blessing of this doctoral program. I am perplexed and humbled to know that He has chosen me to take His Good News to the world. For His countless, miraculous provisions and the gift of being one of the Beeson Pastors, I will be eternally grateful. Just as immense as the miracles I have experienced is the responsibility to be God’s servant, and I dedicate my life to fulfilling this call and duty.

No one in the world has given me more support than my lifetime partner and loving wife, Patricia. Thank you for believing in the impossible with me and not waveriing in our desire to fulfill the dreams of a lifetime and to reach for the best God has for His people. You are unbelievably strong and relentless in running this race with me and at times pushing me to cross the finish line. I will never forget the countless hours you sacrificed being a wonderful mother, persistent editor of this project, and constant cheerleader along the way. I made it this far because to give up in front of you constantly telling me, “You’re going to make it” was unthinkable.

To my awesome children and buddies, Sean and Lauren, I will never forget your fervent prayers at night, “God, please help Dad to finish his paper.” Unselfishly, you gave me time and blessed me with your child-like faith. Your excitement for ministry in this great adventure with God has been a wellspring of inspiration to me.

To Dr. Dale Galloway, you are a true example of a leader, and I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to sit under your leadership. You have profoundly impacted my
life as a teacher, mentor, and sincere friend. Thank you for showing me through your life what a true and a godly leader should be.

I am grateful to Dr. Robert Tuttle for mentoring me through this dissertation with contagious excitement, energetic support, and profound insights and guidance. What a blessing to see your zeal and passion for evangelism and soul winning.

To my awesome parents, brothers, and sisters, no one could ask for a better family. Ever since my first day of Bible College, you have been my greatest source of help, encouragement, and inspiration.

To Arlie and Fanny Rogers, thank you for investing in my life, ministry, and future.

To all of our friends and colleagues who are constantly calling, writing, and praying for us, thank you for the gift of true friendship.
DISSENTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
REACHING THE HEART OF THE CITY THE STREET-SMART WAY:
STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN MINISTRY

presented by
Dan Sandoval, Jr.

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

__________________________________________  May 20, 2004
Mentor

__________________________________________  May 20, 2004
Internal Reader

__________________________________________  May 20, 2004
Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program

__________________________________________  May 20, 2004
Vice President of Educational Development

Date
Date
Date
Date
CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATION

Background

Concisely defined by the Random House Dictionary of the English Language, the term “street-smart” is “shrewd awareness of how to survive or succeed in any situation, especially as a result of living or working in a difficult environment such as a city ghetto or neighborhood.” Acquiring street-smart knowledge is a process as described by Elijah Anderson:

One gains street wisdom through a long and sometimes arduous process that begins with a certain ‘uptightness’ about the urban environment, with decisions based on stereotypes and simple rules of public etiquette. Given time and experience, the nervousness and fear give way to a recognition that street life involves situations that require selective and individualized responses—in this complicated environment, applying broad stereotypes simply will not do. After much practice, a person may operate with a certain aplomb, easily maneuvering through what were once viewed as ‘tricky’ situations. The process is like learning to drive an automobile. The novice may hesitate and navigate uncertainly, but an experienced driver moves through complicated traffic patterns with little apparent thought. (6)

The designation street smart defines my upbringing and approach to urban ministry precisely. Growing up in the city, my life experiences have shaped me and taught me out of necessity to be a street-smart person.

I must confess that I love the city. I guess you can call me a “city boy.” The city is where I have lived most of my life. Among towering buildings, bustling crowds, and animated traffic, I feel right at home. Some would say sarcastically that the city is a jungle, but to me the city is a “magnificent jungle” in which to live. Having resided in three world-class cities, namely Manila, Los Angeles, and São Paulo, I have learned to adapt to this unique, urban way of life.
Beyond loving the city, the streets of these sprawling metropolises have taught me many things. Growing up in a city like Los Angeles taught me how to “map out” the city and know where people reside in relationship to race, economy, education, culture, fashion, and other distinctions. Such knowledge and experience has helped me to understand the city, feel at home in the city, move about the city with ease, and minister in the city.

Appreciation for the city is often dependent upon an individual’s background and perception. Once people look past the initial shock of the city’s culture and natural characteristics, they are more likely to have an enjoyable experience and appreciation for urban life.

Individuals like Kathleen Norris have discovered the beauty and wonder that many people have not come close enough to see:

It is all a matter of looking, and of seeing. Isaiah says: “Those who have not been told shall see, those who have not heard shall ponder it” (52:15). The first time I saw the Pulaski Skyway, on the outskirts of Manhattan, I felt as if I were passing holy ground and should take off my shoes. The simplest explanation is that I was dislocated, and in shock. Having just come from the bright green world of Hawaii, I had never imagined a landscape as stark and industrial as the one that lay before me. The highway of iron disappearing into the air seemed so strange and massive as to be a god. (6)

Staying committed to the city and prevailing with a positive attitude is required to transform world-class cities for God. Ray Bakke, who grew up in a rural community of Washington State, is today a leader within the movement of churches reaching world-class cities. During an interview with City Voices staff writer Curtis Sittenfeld, Bakke remarks on life in the city:

Cities today are famous for their violence. But what amazes me is that the
city wakes up in the morning, goes to bed at night, and is as quiet as it is. I’m amazed that the subways still run, that so many people still say “Hi” on the street—and that, at least in Chicago, living in the city can shape our children for the better. We get to introduce them to the cultures of the world. Living in the city is a great experience that offers tremendous advantages. We need to reflect on these advantages more often than we do. (qtd. in Sittenfeld 168)

**Problem Formulation**

In today’s twenty-first century, the city is a unique and challenging environment in which to share the gospel. Around the world, city dwellers live in complex, urban societies, cultures, and subcultures. The ever-increasing population of cities presents a staggering multiplicity of social needs and difficulties along with opportunities for the Church to reach people with the message of salvation. Churches throughout the years have responded to the call and mammoth task of reaching the heart of the city. History shows that while some have aggressively taken the task of the Great Commission to the cities of the world, many churches have given up and moved out of the city for lack of success.

Furthermore, the intimidating posture of life and conditions found in the city has turned the vision of some ministries away from its borders. Instead, churches have surfaced more in the rural and suburban communities. Certainly, the Church must reach out to all world societies, but jarring statistics prove that the city is an ever-increasing giant the Church needs to meet face-to-face. The body of Christ is called to reach the lost and unchurched, nourish believers, and become a transforming agent in the kingdom of God. Hope exists for the city: The bride of Christ can make a difference in the lives of urbanites across economic stratum. The Church can establish more effective ministries in urban settings. What approach and mind-set enhances the ability of the church to
implement successful social and evangelistic endeavors in the urban environment must be determined. The Church must accompany the constant change and challenges that cities face. Ministries must find strategies and solutions to contribute to the positive renewal of urban societies and reach the heart of the people with the true and lasting message of Jesus Christ.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of the city and its inhabitants from macro and micro perspectives. The macro level of this study interacted with the geographic, ecological, and economical aspects of the city structure that influence, shape, and affect the lives of its people holistically. The micro level of this study sought to understand and interpret the people from an anthropological standpoint using the method of ethnomethodological research. This study concludes that churches that are street-smart as defined in this paper are those who fully understand the city from both of these vital spectrums. Comprehending the city’s demographics and social structures paves the way to a successful street-smart ministry.

In the world-class city of Miami, Florida, three organizations in this area were selected for the study because of their innovative and successful street-smart ministries. From the principles derived as a result of examining these three ministry paradigms, strategies for urban ministry were developed. The conclusion of this paper demonstrates vital characteristics that form and contribute to the model for a street-smart ministry. The characteristics of a street-smart church researched in this study will serve as an evangelistic strategy for further use by the body of Christ, the Church.
Research Questions

Two research questions motivated and guided this study.

Research Question # 1

What common principles from these existing paradigms guide the formulation of evangelistic strategies to reach the cities for God effectively?

Research Question # 2

What kinds of people and churches can best reach the cities for God?

Description of the Project

This project was a descriptive study of three ministries in the city of Miami, Florida, that are successfully reaching the heart of the city for God the street-smart way. The study shows effectiveness in ministry by these organizations that have adopted macro and micro level approaches of understanding the urban context thus giving way to the creation of strategic models for urban ministry. The study brought to light a better understanding of the complexity and uniqueness of world-class cities like Miami, Florida, and provided insights on how to evangelize the city in the most effective way. Furthermore, the study project was structured around the time frame of five months (November 2003 through March 2004). During this period I acquainted myself with three key, leading pastors in Miami whom I consider street-smart leaders, in order to glean from their ministerial success in urban ministry. Their vision, philosophy, personal historical background, macro and micro knowledge of the city, and Spirit-led strategies for urban ministry were considered in developing this paper. Further, I visited ministry sights of each one of these to see, meet, and interview their ministry leaders, volunteers, and other workers to gather data valuable to the findings of what makes a street-smart
ministry. Interviews of and interactions with the people who have received ministry from the entities selected for this study were used in order to see the impact and effectiveness of ministry in the lives of the urban dwellers the churches are seeking to reach. Careful consideration in this study was given to economic and social conditions in addition to other differences in the people to whom they minister in order to see the effects of their given strategies and models of ministry across all economic and social boundaries. Ethnography of city dwellers revealed what life is like in the city and pointed out social needs unique to the city as well as revealing spiritual dimensions as windows for evangelism. This data gathering and analyses sought to understand principles of urban ministries from the perspective of actual ministries installed today in a mega city like Miami. A holistic approach to street-smart ministry is presented as a model and effective strategy for urban ministry.

This study does not intend to minimize the importance of the secular organizations that are also effectively contributing to the “good” of the people, for much success and credit must be attributed to them without contest, especially in regard to their social programs. Nevertheless, both social and spiritual considerations for ministry endeavors are weighed as integral parts to the evangelistic impetus of the Church to transform cities and city dwellers for God.

To examine the findings of this study and arrive at an understanding of the qualities and characteristics innate to every successful and street-smart church is indeed the impetus for this project.

**Definition of Terms**

For the convenience of this study and for a better understanding of the
presentations found in this document, defining some terms is necessary. Roger Greenway and Timothy Monsma identify cities as “concentrations of people living in close proximity and interacting with one another under some form of municipal incorporation and government. Towns are small cities; cities are large and important towns” (xiii). Furthermore, a megacity is a city with more than one million inhabitants (xiii). A world-class city is “international, multinational, transnational and has a million or more inhabitants” (Barrett 21). What happens in the economies of world-class cities has the potential to affect the economies of other cities. 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 (Ujvarosy 2). The adoption of urban lifestyles and urban values is a product of urbanization but is not necessarily related to living in a large city. Rural inhabitants viewing satellite broadcasts absorb the same cultural influences as city dwellers. This trend is known as urbanism (2).

Methodology

The research method used in this study encompasses both the macro and micro level approaches of understanding the city. The macro level procedure to this dissertation comes from a sociological stance that provided data concerning demographics and other ecological and economic facts about the city. Secular manuals and resources have been considered to compile consistent and precise findings to present macro knowledge of the city. On the other hand, an ethnographic approach to research was used and found necessary in focusing on another aspect of the paper that dealt with the subject matter of the people, the city dwellers, who live in the city of Miami. This latter, micro approach gave a closer look into the lifestyle, felt needs, struggles, difficulties, and other challenges
that were examined and highlighted in this paper in order to form and strategize an evangelistic model to be the “light of the world” in the heart of the city.

The research protocol included interviews of church leaders, members, workers, volunteers, and other participants of the ministry within and outside the local congregation. Direct field observations of the churches selected and their urban ministries were examined and studied carefully to draw vital information for the formulation of a strategic model of ministry for the city. Interviews were used in conjunction with an interview format that sought to the principles and characteristics of a successful urban church. The interviews were without specified limits to allow for the development and materialization of unexpected data. Foundation for the thesis of this paper evolved from the data as it was collected and analyzed. Three exemplary churches in the city of Miami were chosen for this study. The churches were selected without discrimination to their denominational affiliation. They are considered to be in locations appropriate for this study, which is the urban setting. These churches are not only situated in a city but in a world-class city. Miami is a city located at the southern tip of the state of Florida situated in the southeastern part of the United States. Repeating patterns and/or principles from the churches studied were identified and developed into a relevant approach to street-smart urban ministry.

**Overview of the Study**

In Chapter 2 of this study, I review the literature and present the theoretical and theological framework for the study. In Chapter 3, I detail the design of the study, state the purpose of the study, include the development of the research questions, present the research subjects, outline the methodology used and provide data collection information.
Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research study and analyzes the findings through cross analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the research.
CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understanding the City as a Society and Culture

The very first approach necessary to fulfill the task declared in this document involves full comprehension of the dynamics of the city. In this section I pursue bringing to light the understanding of the city as a society and culture. The city is a very complex place in which to live as well as to study. Any ministry that desires to reach the city must first begin by recognizing that the city is a society as well as a culture in itself.

City as Society

In general terms, cities are a type of society made up of units in social organization. Such units are people who are part of one social system and territory (Hiebert 22). According to Paul G. Hiebert, cities “are made up of many ethnic groups and lifestyle enclaves. They may be politically and territorially defined, but they shape and are shaped by their sociocultural contexts and by the world” (31). Hiebert adds that like any other society, five major dimensions characterize cities. First is the dimension of social relationships. By social he means that people are involved in relationships with one another. Within the formation of relationships, a natural division occurs between groups of institutions and even larger societal systems. Some relationships consist of people who see themselves as equal and others that are formed out of a hierarchical structure. Some are formal while others are informally shaped. Some are temporary while other relationships continue for a long time; nevertheless, Hiebert points out that these factors have to do with the social dimension of relationships and structures (32).

The second dimension of the city as a society encompasses its structure of
economics. People in the city exist within the system of using material resources as well as intangible assets. Individuals may be classified into those who are the owners of properties and commerce and those who are consumers of the goods. Resources become valuable assets for producing the cycle of buying and selling that fuels the economy for people’s physical survival (Hiebert 32).

Thirdly, politics involve people’s use of power. Power is a vital component of all human relationships (Hiebert 33). In essence, Hiebert defines the possession of political power in society:

> The ability to persuade or to influence through prestige or moral authority. It is economic power, or religious power such as the ability to curse or condemn to hell. It includes the power of the weak to ignore, disobey, boycott, and badger. Ultimately, it is physical coercion and the ability to destroy another or protection and the ability to care for the vulnerable. (33)

Law is the fourth dimension of human relationships in societies like the city. With law people are allowed to use power within sets of rules and boundaries. It authorizes and legitimizes certain persons to have and use power (Hiebert 35).

The final part of the social aspect of the city as a society focuses on “task.” People’s time and resources as well as the world of politics and economy intertwine, intersect, and culminate with task. By task, Hiebert means the interaction of people to bring a purpose into reality. It is the communication process of both dialogue and physical action to complete an individual or common goal. Performing a task involves the exchange of ideas, feelings, and judgments communicated by the symbol systems of the society, such as language, gestures, facial expressions, writing, and drawings. These exchanges are essential to organize social activities (34).
City as Culture

The urban society is a place where culture is distinct, unique, diverse, and is well defined to some extent. Heibert defines culture as “the more or less integrated systems of beliefs, feelings, values and worldview shared by a group of people and communicated by means of their systems of symbols” (37). Hoebel also defines culture as “the integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance” (6).

According to Charles Kraft, every individual in a given society is inextricably immersed in culture (46). He explains a person’s connection to the surrounding culture:

> [E]ach human individual is born into a particular socio-cultural context. From that point on persons are conditioned by the members of their society in countless, largely unconscious ways to accept as natural and follow rather uncritically the cultural patterns of that society. (47-48)

Culture governs and organizes people’s lives into social patterns of behaviors. They are the established norms around which people build their lives and are used as parameters in their communication and relationships. Even though a person might be unaware of their culture, it still exists and pervades every society. Culture continues to be the established guideline for all existing social relationships.

Examining the city as a society and culture, the intent of this study was to look closer into these two areas to understand its people and culture further. By understanding the people of the city, one can gain valuable insights into the keys to their susceptibility and potential to hear and accept the saving message of the gospel. Furthermore, understanding the society and culture of cities and their people can further advance the knowledge of the Church to reach them for God. The Church must become sensitive to
people’s felt needs and their sociopsychological makeup in order to customize the approach needed to win them to Christ.

**Understanding the City from the Macro and Micro Levels**

Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma suggest a macro and microanalysis to gain an understanding of the city (251). The macro study involves drawing conclusions based on information drawn from sociology, anthropology, urbanology, economic, religion, and a host of other cognate disciplines. Micro on the other hand deals with the “hermeneutic” of the reality of the people in the city. Hermeneutic does not mean the interpretation of the Scripture or the process of interpreting the signs of the times. Rather, this type of hermeneutic Van Engen and Tiersma define as a process that “involves rereading the context in terms of the symbols, meanings, and perspectives that were there all along but to which we may have been blind” (257). This approach to reality allows one to hear the cries, see the faces, understand the stories, and respond to the living needs and hopes of people (251). Therefore, the macro study of the city encompasses the “micro” structure. To know what happened on the macro level that affected the microstructure of the people encountered in the city is important.

Understanding the city then cannot be restrained to demographics and social organization. The mission to comprehend the world of urbanism includes the task of capturing the dynamics of urban life and the effects on its people. Hiebert explains that sociologists have taken one approach, which he calls a “helicopter view” of the city (260). This view looks at the city from above. “They map the physical, social, and cultural features to understand population densities, ethnic and class compositions, migration patterns, transportation and communication systems and so on” (261). This helicopter
view helps compile important statistics to show many demographic variables and is useful for seeing how cities change over time. Equally important in understanding the city is the need to become like an anthropologist who uses an ethnographic approach to studying the city. Such a method of study examines the city from the street level. “They live with people and hear their life stories. They participate in neighborhood activities and observe life in its everyday flow” (261). This approach to the city provides a deeper understanding of everyday life. Hiebert explains the benefit of using an ethnographic approach to the city:

We learn what it is like to be members of a street gang; single mothers trying to rear their children in high-rises; business tycoons lunching on the top floors of their skyscrapers; suburban families busing their children to schools, doctors, music lessons, and sports activities; immigrants trying to find a new life; and the thousands of other kinds of people who inhabit the city. (261)

In summary, the task of understanding the city must look at both the larger systems that structure the lives of ordinary people and make the city possible as well as the system of human life and behavior. “We need to use both micro and macro approaches—both helicopter and street-level views—to help us understand this great, complex, and confusing thing we call a city” (Hiebert 261). Engen’s approach to understanding the context of cities is further considered later in this study. The results from leaning on the perspectives of macro and micro levels in this study give valuable insights to the most general and to the important specific aspects of the city and its people. This approach is designed to lead the Church to have a better understanding of the “harvest field,” the city, and to become street-smart in its endeavors to reach today’s cities for God.
Understanding the characteristics of the city is vital to an understanding of how to penetrate them effectively with the gospel. Many helpful resources can be found in giving an inquirer a good statistical and cultural knowledge of significant and growing cities around the world. Establishments like the library, bookstore, seminaries, and other cultural schools offer multiple ways to acquaint people with cities. These external resources contribute to knowing about a city immensely. Together with the strengths drawn from external resources, internal resources were highly considered in breaking new ground for the understanding of cities and their people. Internal resources provided the “micro” understanding of the cities’ overall structures and characteristics and it offered more than just “tourist information.” These internal resources are gathered from individuals who have studied the cities in a close and personal way living there for a period of time as well as by gathering information from those who are native to the culture. Sociologists, missiologists, urbanologists, and anthropologists are people who have given massive efforts to the study of cities and their people. The micro level they emphasize served to give a “closer look” at the phenomena of life in urban settings. This ethnographic approach brings to focus the people, their lifestyle, culture, felt needs, beliefs, values, and conditions as normative to the residents of the city.

**Understanding the City’s Population, Pollution, and Social Problems**

For Alan S. Berger, the micro level approach to understanding the city is what he calls “locality-relevant functions” (9). He explains his term by pointing to the crucial aspects of the city:

> It points up the necessity for understanding the behavior, activities, and institutions that have been established to carry out the functions of the city and its constituent communities. It requires that we understand the ways
people live and interact both in their local communities and in the wider city society. The definition also focuses our attention on the ways in which the city coordinates the behavior, activities, and institutions that permit it to exist. Finally, it requires us to pay attention to the relationship between the city and the wider society. (9)

Population in the City

Urban centers around the world are currently experiencing tremendous growth as people migrate from the rural areas to seek employment and a better life for themselves and their offspring in the cities of the world. However, newcomers often find the city has new problems and challenges they must overcome.

According to the Executive Director of International Urban Associates, Ray Bakke, in 1900, 8 percent of the world’s population lived in cities. Today at least 50 percent of the world’s inhabitants make cities their home (“Loving an Urban World” 1). World demographers predicted that by the year 2000 sixty cities would have a population of more than five million people, twenty-five cities of more than ten million people, and five cities of more than twenty million people (Murphy 2-3).

Furthermore, population reports stated that the urban population of developing countries more than tripled between 1950 and 1980, increasing from 275 million to just fewer than one billion (Population Information 247). They also reported that by 1983 the world had become 42 percent urban, up from 25 percent urban in 1950 and 33 percent urban in 1960 (55). According to the United Nations report in 1998, cities will experience an explosive growth in the next thirty years (Kurian 29).

Moreover, George Kurian, found that in the year 2000 more people lived in the cities than in rural areas (343). His studies demonstrated that by the year 2025, over two-thirds of the world’s population will be urban dwellers compared with one-third as
recently as 1975. He remarks on the rapid population growth in cities:

Ninety percent of this growth will take place in the Southern World. At the beginning of the 19th century, there were only 11 cities worldwide with over 1 million inhabitants. Now there are over 300. By 2025, according to the U.N. Habitat II Conference, there will be 570. (343)

The top three most populous cities in the world today are Tokyo, Japan, Mexico City, and São Paulo, Brazil, totaling all together over 83 million in population. Cities of all sizes are generating growth explosion across the board, which indicates the surge of new city dwellers around the world today (Kurian 27).

The phenomenal growth rate of the cities around the world must catch the attention of churches today and prioritize it as one of the greatest harvest fields of souls that must be reaped. Surveys have shown that as late as 1989, 70 percent of the missionary force was deployed outside sizeable cities around the world (Bakke, “New Face” 1) Indeed the city is a vast harvest field of God. If the Church believes that the time of Christ’s appearing is at hand, then much work must be done in cities today. Church leaders and denominational movements must turn their attention to this great call of God to win the lost in the largest fields around the world that continue to house souls yet to be reaped.

**Economy in the City**

One of the major reasons for the growing population of cities around the world is due to the economic hardships that people have faced in the rural communities from which they have come. The city has become a place for new beginnings and diverse opportunities viewed by many as the source of hope to survive in life and even the chance to fulfill their personal dreams. Robert Linthicum notes that people are pulled into the city
for hopes of opportunities for education, advancement and work (Empowering the Poor 8). “Wages are higher and jobs seem more plentiful in the city. Living costs are higher too, but the possibility of paid work and of constantly remembering the village example who ‘made it big’ in the city is a powerful lure” (8).

Economically, the commercial city has been birthed out of the natural need to supply the demands of people who live and survive in the city. The market place has created a dynasty for the business entrepreneurs ranging from the open-air market to the skyscrapers that house corporate companies of the twenty-first century. The city has become the breeding ground for businesses to cater to the needs of people to live and make their living there.

John Kasarda confirms the fact that cities have become the industrial capitals of the world (38). The rise of the commercial industry in the city has developed a base for employment that attracted the waves of migrants and immigrants. Kasarda validates, “the rapidly expanding job base accompanying national economic growth in turn provided ladders of opportunity and social mobility for the migrants and immigrants” (38). The downside to this surge of employment opportunity is the consequences faced by immigrants who had to pull up deep community roots, permanently leave close friends and relatives behind, and adjust to a totally different way of life. Kasarda refers to Philip Hauser’s study revealing many immigrants were greeted with contempt and experienced discrimination upon arrival to the cities by others who had preceded them. Lacking adequate language skills and monetary resources, immigrants were frequently considered less respectable than others and ostracized to living in filthy, congested ghettos (39).
Kasarda explains the harsh reality of the economic life in the city for the immigrant:

A polluted, unsanitary physical environment contributed to high morbidity and mortality rates, as did the hazardous working conditions found in the factories. Political corruption and human exploitation were common, working hours were long, and there was no such thing as a minimum wage. By today’s dual labor market theory classification scheme, virtually all immigrants held “dead end” jobs.

Nonetheless, there was an abundance of these jobs for which the only requisites were a person’s willingness and physical ability to work. This surplus of low-skill jobs and overall economic growth provided the older industrial cities with a unique role in the nation’s history as developers of manpower and springboards for social mobility. (39)

On the other side of economic opportunities for employment is the reality of job deprivation in cities of third world countries. Unfortunately, in such a context, no surplus of jobs exists that would pay even the minimum wage. For example in São Paulo, Brazil, nearly one million people arrive in the bus terminal station called “Marginal Tieté.” Many of them venture to the city in search of employment. A large number of these individuals have come from rural areas and especially from the northern part of Brazil where an extreme drought and shortage of employment have devastated the economy. Daily, they arrive in droves searching for work at every site they can find in the city. For a fortunate few, they find decent jobs due mainly to the personal contacts of friends or relatives. For the majority, securing a job that will hopefully pay them more than the standard minimum wage could take months or even years to find.

Sadly, many of these unskilled newcomers to the city end up in the slums or shantytowns of the municipal where they are not required to pay rent. Just to survive, some resort to stealing, prostitution, and drug dealing to name a few alternatives to living and enduring misfortunes and even starvation.
A balanced approach to the view of employment in the city cannot be restricted and marginalized by the poor. Due to the rapid growth of technology, transportation, and communication, the job market has sparked a surge of blue-collar jobs in the cities. Major businesses, large corporations, financial powerhouses, and entrepreneurs have entered into the world of capitalism in the city and induced an appetite for employment among college graduates, self-starters, and other highly qualified and trained potential employees. These groups of people as well come to the city in search of survival, identity, and fulfillment of personal dreams and aspirations.

**Crowding in the City.**

One of the most visible characteristics of the city is its crowded streets and small living spaces. In many growing and major cities of the world, putting up with crowds, the pushing and the shoving, the long lines, and the heat are all an inseparable part of urban life (Fischer 51). Scores of people walk from sunrise to sunset like an army of ants converging on a dirt mound. Traffic is bumper to bumper, and anyone trying to arrive at work on time must be on the way before dawn or be congested in traffic for potentially hours at a time. Just one transit problem such as an engine failure on a major thoroughfare can delay miles of cars from reaching their destinations on time.

I remember my own experience in Manila as a young student in dealing with traffic on my way home from school in the afternoons. At times I would catch the bus at three o’clock in the afternoon and not reach home until seven o’clock in the evening due to extreme vehicle congestion. What would normally take me forty-five minutes of travel time in the mornings without traffic would take me into the late hours of the evening to return home from school. Lewis Mumford describes the impact of crowding on traffic in
New York City:

The multiplication of motor vehicles capable of high speeds has in fact resulted in the progressive retarding of transportation and the piling up of costs. Horse drawn vehicles in New York, according to a traffic study in 1907, moved at an average speed of 11.5 miles an hour; today automobiles crawl at the average daytime rate of some six miles an hour. (550)

The crowds in the streets and the constant traffic jams are not the only challenges people face in their everyday lives in the city. Crowded spaces at work and inside homes are also realities in urban life. The homes, for example, are very small, and normally an entire family of five to eight people can be found living and sharing an apartment home measuring forty feet by forty feet. Personally, I shared a room with my two brothers until I was seventeen years old. For many people who live in the city, living space is shared with the entire family as well as friends and visitors. With the exception of those who are financially wealthy, few can afford large homes in the city or even afford to rent or buy an entire apartment floor. Having personal space is a luxury in the city. I must also be fair in acknowledging that the measurement of personal space in the North American context differs as to those contexts found in locations such as third world countries. Crowding in the United States is less problematic than it is overseas (Fischer 52).

According to Louis Wirth, crowding can affect social relationships and character dynamics:

A large number involve a greater range of individual variation. Furthermore, the greater the number of individuals participating in a process of interaction, the greater is the potential differentiation between them. The personal traits, the occupations, the cultural life, and the ideas of the members of an urban community may, therefore, be expected to range between more widely separated poles than those in rural inhabitants. (21)

Such crowding can limit the possibility of each member of the community to
know others personally. Characteristically, Wirth describes that urbanites depend more on
groups than particular persons, thus creating a dependency more on the group dynamics
than primary contacts. Such relationships can be impersonal, superficial, transitory, and
segmental in nature. Wirth’s concluding remarks suggest “acquaintances tend to stand in
a relationship of utility to us in the sense that the role which each one plays in our life is
overwhelmingly regarded as a means for the achievement of our own ends” (23).

**Migrants and Immigrants in the City**

Immigrants are flocking to the cities and creating pockets of international
communities with stronger constituencies each year. Cities have become havens for
ethnic groups who have migrated for political and economic reasons. In the United States
of America, cities are growing at an unprecedented rate with the heavy influx of
immigrants deciding to reside there:

> The United States is a country of immigrants. During the nineteenth
century they poured in in waves to escape poverty, famine or
persecution…. The influx of immigrants still goes on. In the decade of the
1970s the number of immigrants to the USA equaled the 8.8 million of
1900-1910…Whereas previous migration was by sea from Europe, mainly
to New York, the ‘southern crescent’ is now the immigration zone. Miami
is de facto the capital of Latin America, and at least one million Hispanics
pour illegally over the 2,400-mile border between Mexico and the United
States every year. (Bakke, *Urban Christian* 33)

Roger Greenway, also a leading authority in the field of urban studies, comments
that in Philadelphia, the people say, “Walk our streets and you tour the world” (62).
Within North American borders, the newspapers are printed in more than forty-five
different languages, a fact that reveals the ethnic flavor of the cities. Los Angeles has
been called the Vietnamese capital of America. “It is also the second largest Hispanic city
in the Western Hemisphere, surpassed only by Mexico City” (Greenway and Monsma
62). In New York City, residents from the Dominican Republic grew from 125,000 in 1980 to 333,000 in 1990, to half a million in 1997. Estimates show that 700,000 Dominicans will make up 7 percent of New York City’s population and an estimated 10 percent of its school children (Dugger 1). Greenway further affirms the ethnic explosion of the city:

    By the middle of the next century, the Asian population could be as large as the Hispanic. The Chinese are presently the largest Asian ethnic group in the United States, accounting for 22 percent of all Asian Americans. Filipinos are expected to outnumber the Chinese soon. (85)

In addition, my own observation of ethnic pluralism in world-class cities comes from living there as a resident. In Los Angeles, California, my family would normally venture out to different international communities to dine at several of our favorite ethnic restaurants. When we had the appetite for Chinese food, we usually went to Chinatown. The Chinese people who have established their businesses and other community facilities occupy a large section of downtown Los Angeles. If we desire Filipino food, then we go toward East Los Angeles where many Filipinos have organized businesses and chosen to reside as well. Furthermore, most of the Samoans can be found living in the district of Carson.

In São Paulo, Brazil, a geographic portion of downtown is called “Liberdade,” an area known as the Japanese town with more than one million Japanese said to be living in that city (Bakke, “Loving an Urban World” 1). The Japanese citizens and immigrants in São Paulo make up the largest Japanese community outside of Japan. The same could also be said of the Italian population, having the largest constituency found living outside of Italy. Also some eighty million Chinese live outside of China. Bakke submits, “While
we have been focused all these years on how to get the Christian mission into China, these millions of Chinese people have been scattered by the Lord of history into cities all over the world” (1-2).

Another example of an international location in a city is the famous place for shopping in Los Angeles known as the “Alley.” It is located downtown in what is referred to as the fashion district of the city. Clothing factories in this area offer employment for the many immigrants who live in L. A. The Alley is literally a passage between buildings that merchants have converted into an open-air shopping mall. Shoppers flock here to find good bargains on clothing, jewelry, luggage, toys, etc. Chinese, Koreans, Senegalese, Mexicans, and Indians are but a few of the people with whom I often deal when I go there to make purchases. It is truly a representative of the international flavor that can be found in cities.

The internationalization of the city has great implications for the mission of the Church. Today’s cities have brought the mission field to our doorstep:

As we move away from a world of nations to a world of interconnected multinational cities, it’s clear that the frontier of missions has shifted. The majority of the world’s non-Christians will not be geographically distant peoples, but culturally distant people who often reside together within the shadows of urban spires in the metro areas of every continent… Mission is no longer about crossing the oceans, jungles and deserts, but about crossing the streets of the world’s cities. (Bakke,“World Class” 1)

**Pollution in the City**

Residents of the city understand well that the use of human senses is engaged and challenged in great extremities and excessive exposure. A very visible and even tangible characteristic of the city is its pollution. Anyone who has been to the city knows the experience of confronting smog in the air from major factories and the thousands of
vehicles that pack the city’s highways and streets. Pollution has played an unavoidable role in life in the city. People have learned to cope with the problems and have adapted to such an extreme environment. Pollution has also caused health problems to many that reside there. Due to extreme conditions, people in the city are pushed to the edge of their physical endurance and emotional well-being. This problematic characteristic of the city makes the people in it unique individuals who have become true survivors. Life spans of people living in the city can be considerably shorter in comparison to those who reside in rural or even suburban areas. The city’s extreme conditions are real factors that affect the lifestyles and dynamics of living situations for all who reside there. The following observations serve as descriptive types of pollution that can be found presiding in the city.

**Audio pollution.** The city can be a very noisy place. In São Paulo where we first lived, a supermarket called “Candia” was located beside our home. It opened every morning at seven o’clock with a loud announcement. From speakers positioned in their parking lot, “Good Morning Candia!” could be heard daily before this business opened its doors to the public. In addition, they began this rather ceremonious procedure with the countdown, “Ten, nine, eight, seven,” and so forth, as people were waiting in line to secure the first batch of fresh fruit and vegetables. These were the ritual phrases my family heard everyday. In the beginning, this experience was quite comical to us, and along with our children, we would repeat these slogans many times. If I desired to sleep a little longer after arriving late from a ministry appointment, my efforts were useless. I had to awaken with Candia’s free wake-up call.

Noise can be heard from every place in the city. Such a noisy environment can cause physical and emotional distress to individuals. Fisher points out a study by the U. S.
Environmental Protection Agency that loss in hearing sensitivity and psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and nervousness are results that have surfaced attributed to noisy places (Fischer 54). Another study reveals that “school children living in a high-rise building near a busy highway indicated the closer the children were to the road, the more their hearing was weakened and the lower their reading ability” (Cohen, Glass, and Singer 407) Julia Vitullo-Martin reveals even more alarming effects of an unwanted sound that makes a loud noise:

[It can] provoke the body’s reflexes to prepare for an emergency. In most people sound levels over 70 decibels constrict blood flow to the extremities while increasing it to the brain. The adrenal and pituitary glands rush hormones into the blood stream. The liver releases glucose for energy. The fear persists after the noise stops, fading only gradually as the body waits for a recurrence.

Not only is loud noise a trauma; it can do permanent physical damage as well. Hearing loss, often caused by noise is the country’s most common physical disability, affecting one in eight Americans, according to the Council on the Environment. (404)

**Air pollution.** Another problematic pollution found in cities is atmospheric in nature. Air pollution is an overhanging dilemma for residents of the city. The fumes hurling from car engines and large factories have been some of the contributors to air pollution in the city. Thousands of cars everyday in traffic pump out smoke from their exhaust pipes. This daily event precipitates problems with smog in the city. A current example of problems in air pollution in the city is the “Yellow Sand” of China:

The sand tempest that blew east from the Gobi Desert swept as far as Japan and South Korea, where the thick yellow gloom slowed traffic and forced airports and schools to close. People in the city were forced to wear gauze masks and plastic bags over their faces, and pedestrians braved the gritty winds. A doctor in Beijing’s No.2 hospital reported that, “In two days, we saw as many people with allergies worsened by the dust and breathing difficulties as we usually see in a month. (Bezlova 1)
Life in the city can be altered drastically by the prevailing problems caused by air pollution. In 1972 a study reported “air pollution was 15 times greater in large cities than in rural areas” (Fischer 56). Research indicates that air pollution is costly both financially and physically for city dwellers:

The effects of air pollution are costly in terms of cleaning bills, corroded materials, and employee illnesses—estimated at over six billion dollars a year for residents of large US cities. There is some debate over whether air pollution accounts for the higher rates of cancer among urban Americans as compared to nonurban ones; by itself it seems not to. But lead poisoning, bronchitis, emphysema, and other respiratory diseases have been attributed to smog, especially diseases among people living near highways. (Fischer 56-57)

**Visual pollution.** Cities are visibly colorful. Their colors come from the advertisements of thousands of billboards posted in almost every corner of the city. Throughout the day, one views a myriad of images such as advertisements, announcements, publications, digital communication, posters, and more printed materials. The sights in the city also include occurrences happening simultaneously such as crimes, car accidents, police chases, people walking to and from every direction, children crying, prostitutes posing, political candidates campaigning, and many more events that are eye catching and visually engaging. Unfortunately, these visual experiences create an overload to the optical sensors of the brain and can clutter the attention span of any individual.

**Crowd pollution.** Cities are places where persons continually bump into each other. For example, waiting to catch a bus during rush hour can be an exhausting experience. People flag a bus to stop, and the fastest and smartest one who gets positioned in front of the pack is more likely to squeeze into an already crowded bus. If
fortunate enough to get inside a bus, people must be prepared to spend a long time
standing or being cramped in a seat the entire trip. Time spent in a crowded bus is a
“bumping” experience with people pushing their way in and others squeezing their way
out. Three people sharing a seat designed to accommodate only two is a common
occurrence. Personally, I have stood on my feet in a bus for hours while being pressed in
upon from the front, back and on both sides. Such an experience is like being packed in a
sardine can.

Crowds are everywhere. Because of the millions of people converging during the
day to “get things done,” at banks, hospitals, post offices, police stations, restrooms,
restaurants, subways, supermarkets, and other public locations, the city is always
crowded.

**Chemical and water pollution.** Chemical and water pollution are concerns of
most American tourists traveling abroad. While journeying overseas, tourists
immediately ask for purified water and locate the stores where they can purchase safe
drinking water for fear of ingesting contaminated water drawn directly from faucets.
Some tourists resort to extreme measures such as bringing their own bottled water supply
from home with them. To an extent, this phobia against the water supply is consistent and
indicative with the problems found in the city. Many homes that are fortunate enough to
buy water purifiers and bottled water can feel safe from the hazards of drinking
unsanitary water. Lamentably, the disenfranchised people of the city cannot afford such a
luxury. Many of them boil their own water supply, that is if they have a conventional
stove. Still millions in cities must drink water directly from the tap or a nearby stream or
river. Those who live in slums and shantytowns of the cities suffer greatly due to the lack
of potable water needed for daily health and sanitation.

Sigurd Grava conducted a study out of the Institute of Urban Environment at Columbia University and affirms the problem of water pollution in developing cities:

Most serious problems in environmental pollution at the present time can be found in almost all the developing countries, particularly in their cities which are receiving staggering amounts of immigrants but are not able to provide all the required public services, notable sewers and other sanitary utilities. (6)

Cities are facing the challenge to minimize chemical and water pollution by creating ways to dispose of liquid and solid waste materials. In some foreign countries, cities are littered with waste and garbage from residents, businesses, and visitors. Water and chemical pollution is a reality with which people in the city must continually cope and around which they must work.

**Evangelistic Opportunities (A Personal Reflection)**

Loud noises can be heard from trains passing through the city. In an urban environment, angry motorists blare their horns while street vendors loudly announce their wares, and door-to-door salespeople constantly knock at doors. I remember my sense of smell at work especially when passing the “Rio Tiete,” a polluted river that runs for at least forty miles in the middle of the main freeway that traverses the heart of São Paulo (some one hundred tons of garbage are dumped into this river every day). I would arrive home with watery eyes resulting from the air pollution and visual stimulation of the hundreds of billboards I passed during my commute. On the bus or subway, I constantly checked to see if my wallet was still in my back pocket, especially after someone had bumped into me. In addition, I had to be very selective in regard to the ingestion of food and water to avoid dysentery and parasites. These are but a few of the many facets of
challenges city dwellers confront daily. If people want to inherit the treasures found in the city, they must accept such challenges as a fact of life.

As I pause to think of such challenges, I discern a unique opportunity for evangelism in the midst of such extreme conditions. For although people have learned to adjust to the conditions, many are aware of the hazards they present for their health and emotional well-being. Many of them attempt to escape such extreme conditions by retreating outside of the city to nearby beaches, farms, or other tourist spots in rural areas. These city dwellers, especially those that can afford at least the gas money to travel, visit locations where they are free from all types of pollutants.

After a while people in the city are looking for an escape from such harsh conditions. The church, I believe, can work to provide such alternatives. For example, investing in retreats for families and individuals can be a door for new families to join church families with whom they are acquainted and be a part of the church family for a period of time. Churches in the city can be constructed where sound proofing it from the noises of the streets can create a quiet change for many that seek such an escape. Purifying systems for water can be provided by the churches for the communities to use in order to provide clean water for drinking and washing their food.

These are simply some ideas that have come to mind. In principle, those who seek to reach the city must not only weather the conditions therein, but they must address the needs of city dwellers and seek to provide a place of “refuge” for people's weary bodies and afflicted souls. The churches in world-class cities must become safe havens for the community and provide wholesome alternatives to the environment in which they are forced to live. Pollution in the big city is a tremendous hazard and annoyance that results
in sources of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual difficulties. Nevertheless, for the church they are indicators of the concerns of the people and doors to minister to some of the populace’s deepest needs.

**Social Problems in the City**

Apart from its social problems, the city cannot be adequately understood. Problems in the city point to the needs of the people and through the understanding of these challenges, a doorway is opened to comprehend their humanity better. People’s needs pave the way for the building of social structures in the city. Consequently, when needs are not adequately met and addressed, social problems brood and surface as challenges with which to be dealt. Social problems affect social relationships as well as altering people’s lifestyles, values, beliefs, and daily practices. Problems in the city are unavoidable and they demand attention. Social problems in urban societies must be addressed in order to provide the structure for building healthy and productive lives.

For the Church, social problems become a part of the call to win the city for God. They are part of a reality that must be faced and a work to be accomplished. The city calls for rescuers, renovators, social and spiritual pioneers. Godly leadership is needed to address not only the social needs of the people in the city but ultimately, the spiritual well-being of every individual. Social problems can become avenues through which the Church can understand people as humans and be catalysts for renewal through social reforms that accompany godly values.

The growing nature of the city creates a force that recruits and attracts people from all walks of life. Migrants, immigrants, and those who are native to the cities are part of the complexity that creates the social problems in every city. I continue to examine
urban life and its social problems, the need to formulate a plan of action, oriented in
theology, social strategies for enhancing the life of people in the city, and further research
will guide and enhance the knowledge of the Church to reach the heart of the city
effectively.

The nature of this study focused on the city through an ethnographic eye. Urban
life was examined as it relates to the social challenges prevalent in cities around the
world.

Social problems are revealed in the everyday life of the people and are manifested
clearly throughout the social structures of the city. The city’s streets communicate well
the prevalent social problems, and they become the nesting ground for the many enduring
social issues found therein. Statistics clearly indicate the growing social problems that
permeate the streets of every city in the world. The list of problems can be arranged in the
categories of crime, poverty, homelessness, prostitution, corruption, and discrimination.
Many of these problems are overwhelming and difficult for the government to solve
alone. To those who call the city home, the challenge to live and cope in such an
environment appears insurmountable at times. For some churches, social problems have
been their reason for leaving the urban metropolises or caused the lack of desire to move
in and become a part of the solution. While being interviewed by Richard Kauffman for
Christianity Today, Ray Bakke discussed how John Calvin’s theology influences his
understanding of the church’s role in the community:

[John Calvin believes] that the Christ over us is Lord of the system, and
the Christ within us is our personal Lord. As I understand Colossians,
Christ triumphed over principalities and powers; we have to respect them,
but we shouldn’t be cowering and running away to the suburbs. We can
take on the principalities and powers. For Calvin, a city wall is a gift of
common grace, a wall to protect all of us, not just the believers. A healthy school, hospital, and police department are gifts of common grace for the believer and the unbeliever.

I really believe in the parish concept, the church being part of its primary community. Pastors have two roles: pastor of the church and chaplain to the community—which means being a chaplain to every other pastor. This perspective comes from Calvin’s Institutes, Book Four, where he asked his deacons to monitor the public health hospital at Geneva to make sure it was caring for the poor. For Calvin, your tithe money and your tax money both belong to God; the one funds saving-grace institutions, and the other funds common-grace institutions, which are for all the people. The tithe and tax are both God’s money. They’re both important. (3)

The Church must not run away from the social problems of the city. The social challenges that cities pose must be embraced with courage and faith.

**Crime in the City**

The city is known for its crime. Statistics show that crime in the city is rising for many places in the world today. Richard Wade of the University of Chicago studied violence in cities and points out that cities in the United States of America indeed have been the scenes of sporadic violence, of rioting and disorder, and occasionally of virtual rebellion against established authority (7). For example the city of New York. Even with the national devastation of 11 September 2001, New York authorities reported 617 homicides during the entire year of 2001 (Johnson 1).

Killings dramatically increased in American cities with Boston in the lead having a 67 percent increase. The city of Phoenix comes in second in the nation for homicides with a 60 percent increase since the turn of the millennium. In the city of Chicago, gang violence has increased dramatically. Tom Locke’s study, in the book *A Heart for the City*, reveals that in the metropolitan Chicago area, an estimated 100,000 young people are involved in gangs. He estimated that there are about 120 different gangs in the Chicago
area that contribute to the criminal activities of the city (Locke 436). Because of an intense distrust of the police’s ability or willingness to protect them, some inner-city residents feel justified in taking their safety into their own hands. A crude “code” of the streets has emerged that is built upon the power of “respect.” Loosely defined this type of respect revolves around possessing physical prowess so that others on the street will fear confrontation with the respected one. Being disrespected is a serious offense that communicates the desire for aggression and implies the probability of physical violence. According to Amy Sherman, most disagreements on the streets are resolved by means of violence. Gang members believe that if they are part of a “crew” then their level of respect is elevated and they have a deterrent to would-be aggressors (37-39).

International cities as well have their share of crime problems in society. Robert Young Pelton, author of The World’s Most Dangerous Places, lists countries that have high criminal activities as compared with other countries of the world. For example in the country of Brazil, the city of São Paulo reported 4,500 murders in 1996, “and that was a year in the city that was, in John Lennon’s words, ‘giving peace a chance’” (389). In 1998, 2,130 were murdered in São Paulo, making about twenty-five homicides a day. In March 1998 alone, 771 murders occurred, and 10,700 cars were stolen. Each day in the city of São Paulo, approximately 340 violent robberies are reported to authorities (389).

In Mexico City, with its population of seventeen million, an average of 443 criminal suspects are arrested each day. According to Pelton’s findings, more than seven hundred crimes are reported each day in the capital. Mexico City police admit an average of 182 violent crimes each day. “Murder has become one of the 10 leading causes of death in Mexico” (670).
My personal experience in São Paulo gave me a firsthand look at crime in the city. Living in the middle-class section of São Bernardo located in the southern part of the city, we lived in the midst of a crime-infested area. To hear of people in our neighborhood being robbed at gunpoint or someone holding up a person for their car while waiting for the traffic light was a normal occurrence. Often we heard gunshots being fired nearby. Sirens and police cars were all part of the sights and sounds our city had to offer. Crime scenes with dead people on the ground covered with a blanket are part of what children see on their way to school. Fortunately, as my family and I served as missionaries in São Paulo, a stolen car was all that city’s crime claimed from our personal lives. Nevertheless, the Church is not exempt from the reality of criminal activity in the city. Greenway and Monsma write about violence in the city and cited an incident in the state of Kaduna, Nigeria:

In 1987 rioters managed to destroy 151 churches (11 of them in the city of Zaria), 155 houses, 169 hotels and restaurants, and 95 vehicles. Two Christians were killed. A pastor was knifed to death, while a deacon was doused with gasoline and, with a tire around his neck, burned to ashes inside his church. (257)

In summary, crime can be sparked by gang rivalry, religious and racial prejudice, personal economic depression, substance abuse, or just plain foul play; therefore, crime is a real component of life in the city. Anyone who would venture to live or minister in the city must take into account that crime is a reality that continues to pervade the social structure of urban life.

P**overty in the City**

In the words of the former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, poverty is “life at the edge of existence” (Oyen, Miller, and Samad vii). Poverty in the
city is a predicament shared by the population of every continent in the world. “Poverty is still the gravest insult to human dignity, it is the scar on humanity’s face” (vii). Social scientist Oscar Lewis coined a concept called, “The Culture of Poverty” (Lewis xlii). Through his research, he discovered that in capitalistic countries the poor often feel alienated from the dominant culture. They see no hope of ever reaching the success of the dominant society and unconsciously create a subculture that reinforces values and traits that keep them disenfranchised. In this subculture, the poor’s low esteem of themselves and their abilities robs them of the confidence needed to achieve success in the life. Moreover, the values and way of life that have been perpetuated from one generation to another in this subculture are detrimental to meeting the work ethic and relationship skills required to be functional in society. Simply providing equal opportunities for jobs and trying to eliminate racial or ethnic prejudice in society will not transform the lives of the poor. To achieve success in the dominant society, the poor must be resocialized to cogitate and work with the ethics of the middle class (Campolo 147-48).

Despite decades of national and international efforts to exterminate it through education and social programs, the travesty of poverty continues in the cities of the world. City streets reveal clearly the poverty line within the boundaries of their geographic structure. Poverty throughout the sections of the city is displayed by the reality of life in the slums and shantytowns. Street children, beggars, prostitutes, and other social outcasts continue to prove the economic, emotional, physical, and spiritual hardships they each face in life (Eames and Goode 256). Else Oyen, S. M. Miller, and Syed Abdus Samad’s research on poverty showed that urban poor are exposed to a whole set of risks stemming from the majority of society (13). “Health risks arise from the spatial juxtaposition of
industrial pollution, high traffic density, lack of sanitary installations, and a generally fragile infrastructure in the areas where the poor live and work” (Wratten 26). John Palen, who wrote *The Urban World*, also confirms that “health problems are exacerbated by the crowding, by the lack of proper disposal for sewage and refuse, and by the fact that the settlements are frequently built on the least desirable terrain, such as city dumps, marshlands, or hillsides” (343).

According to the findings of Greenway and Monsma, approximately 35 million people in the United States are poor (170). Another twenty to thirty million people have incomes that place them above the official poverty line but are insufficient to raise them to a level where they cannot reasonably be called needy. They boldly proclaim, “The fact that a nation as rich as the United States has so many poor people is a social and moral scandal that cannot be ignored” (171).

Linthicum affirms the social problem of poverty in the world today from his book entitled *Empowering the Poor*. He points out that by the close of the twentieth century, more than 20 percent of all the people on the face of the earth will be the urban poor. One out of every five human beings will live in cities and be extremely poor (6). The number of people in the depraved condition of the urban poor in both first and third worlds is shocking and alarming and greatly impacts the present and future of the children. In São Paulo, parents have abandoned some 700,000 children to live and roam on that vast city’s streets. Fifteen thousand of Manila’s street children survive through prostitution. Forty thousand children are prostitutes in Bangkok, Thailand.

According to Pelton, the number of homeless children currently living on the streets of Mexico City has doubled over the past three years to more than thirteen
thousand. Over 75 percent of the street kids are boys, and nearly two-thirds of all the street kids have criminal records (671). Cities like Rio de Janeiro are known for their problems with street children. Little boys and girls with worn-out clothes and dirty faces extend their hands in front of the windows of cars to beg for money. Many of these children are not necessarily orphans. Most of them have parents who themselves have no solution for their poverty; consequently, they encourage their children to beg. Some of these street children have parents who are so young, they are unfit to be parents. They allow their children to roam the streets and congregate with other street children.

In Detroit, 72 percent of all the young, employable adults in that city’s poorest census tract cannot find work (Linthicum, Empowering the Poor 6). Linthicum adds to his distressing statistics on poverty by reporting that fifty thousand homeless people reside on New York streets and another 27,000 live in temporary shelters (6).

Further studies on homeless people by Ray Bakke show that the fastest growing group in the homeless population is families with children:

[Homelessness] is a “devastating experience for parents and children alike. A recent survey of 30 U.S. cities found that families with children account for 39% of the homeless population. The same study found that children alone account for just over one-fourth of the homeless. In addition, 75% of cities surveyed are particularly lacking in shelters and other needed services for families with children. (“New Face” 1)

Tourist guides may direct visitors to avoid areas of the city where poverty is obvious, but those who live and know the city understand well that poverty is part of the structure of any major city.

Understanding the City through the Bible: Biblical Precedents

“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” (Ujvarosy et al. 1). Bakke, in his study of cities in the Bible, found more than twenty-five different kinds of urban ministries in the historical books of the Old Testament alone (Urban Christian 69).

In the New Testament, the gospel clearly 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 (Ujvarosy et al. 1).

The Bible is filled with examples that demonstrate the history of God’s active involvement in bringing salvation to the people who live in the city. The following are some scriptural models that highlight people and passages dealing with the subject of the city.

**Old Testament Models**

**Ezekiel 16.** In an interview with Richard Kauffman for Christianity Today, Ray Bakke comments on two verses of Scripture in Ezekiel 16, which depict the city as a family system that is both urban and ethnically diverse. “Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem:… ‘Your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite…. Your elder sister is Samaria,… and your younger sister … is Sodom’” (Ezek. 16:3, 46, RSV). Jerusalem’s sister city in the north is Samaria and in the south Sodom. Bakke’s explanation of the cities as family systems is seen in relation to cities like Milwaukee and Chicago. These two cities share a common water system:

When Milwaukee was polluting it, Chicago took Milwaukee to court. And
they shared a sewer system with downstate cities that promptly took Chicago to court when we polluted it. Ezekiel 16 requires me to think of Milwaukee and Saint Louis as sister cities to Chicago; and Jackson, Mississippi, as a father to Chicago, because a million and a half black people from Mississippi came here; and Poland is our mother because 840,000 Poles came to Chicago--100,000 more Poles than San Francisco has people. To have a theology as big as this city, you have to take into account these “migrant theological tributaries.” (Kauffman 2-3)

**Esther.** Esther was used mightily by the Lord to help change an unjust law in her city and country. She was able to become closely connected with the political power structure of her day without being corrupted, and in doing so, she was able to use her influence to save not only her life but also the lives of her people. Esther teaches us that to be agents of justice in the city, we must do more than repent for corporate sins committed. We must be righteous agents to help transform an unjust system by working to change the laws. (Bakke, *Theology* 107-08).

**Nehemiah.** Nehemiah is a biblical example of one who knew how to work together with those in government to meet the needs of the city and the city dwellers. Reconstructing the city of his forefathers was his vision and passion, and he laid his desires before the Lord in prayer. At the appropriate time, he sought the favor of his employer, the king, to grant him the supplies needed and time required to return to Jerusalem and complete this mammoth project. God granted Nehemiah this favor, and he mobilized volunteers to transform the city of Jerusalem in fifty-two days. In today’s terms, Nehemiah secured funding from a “government grant” for the urban renewal of his city and enlisted community volunteers to complete the project. God gave him tremendous favor with the “unrighteous” to acquire not only the permission needed to rebuild (building permits) but also the funding to accomplish this massive construction
project for the city dwellers in record time (Ujvarosy et al. 2).

After Nehemiah completed the construction of the wall and his urban renewal project, he realized that in order for the city to prosper he needed individuals and families to inhabit Jerusalem. Traveling to the “suburbs,” Nehemiah challenged the people to choose to dwell in the city—at least one person in ten. Nehemiah 11:2 says, “And the people blessed all those who were willing to live in Jerusalem.” Following Nehemiah, the prophet Ezra came and rebuilt the temple with his friend Zerubbabel. People were beginning to put down roots and “own” the city (Kauffman 5).

Bakke says that churches should release a portion of their congregation to move into the city and put down roots:

I tell pastors, “You have not preached tithing until you have preached the tithing of your people, of 10 percent going into urban neighborhoods where the church is.” If you have more than that, you’ll intimidate the natives and gentrify the neighborhood. Tithe your people, and use your assets to buy property next to every playground and grammar school in your community so you can stash your people there to create positive webs of influence in the community. (qtd. in Kauffman 5)

**Joseph.** Joseph overcame incredible obstacles to become a powerful urban government official. Not only did he come from a dysfunctional family consisting of ten half-brothers and various stepmothers, but Joseph was also an ex-convict. Betrayed and merchandised into slavery in Egypt, God gifted him with the ability to interpret dreams, which won him the favor of the chief official of the land and secured him the position of Secretary of Agriculture for the most powerful city-state of his day. Overcoming years of injustice and forced solitude, Joseph models the values of perseverance and of using his influence and position to aid his city, country, and even other nations (Ujvarosy et al. 3).

**Moses.** Moses is an Old Testament figure who models for us the preparation and
courage needed to lead a movement. 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” (Ujvarosy et al. 2). Moses was trained both formally and informally. Raised in the Pharaoh of Egypt’s home, Moses was afforded the best formal education of his day. Later he spent forty years of his life in the desert raising sheep being prepared by God to lead a nation. Early in life, Moses made the difficult decision to reject the privilege and wealth of his childhood to identify with the suffering and poverty of his own people in slavery. He knew that he must be an agent of change. God had prepared him for this mission (2).

**Isaiah.** Isaiah 58: 9-12 records the Lord’s desire to restore the people of Israel and rebuild her cities:

> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
> You will cry, and He will say, “Here I am.”  
> If you remove the yoke from your midst,  
> The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,  
> And if you give yourself to the hungry,  
> And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
> Then your light will rise in darkness,  
> And your gloom will become like midday.  
> And the LORD will continually guide you,  
> And satisfy your desire in scorched places,  
> And give strength to your bones;  
> And you will be like a watered garden,  
> And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.  
> And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins. (NIV)

God’s plan to save the city includes his desire to meet the physical and emotional needs of the people who are hungry, thirsty, sick, afflicted, or weary. God calls the Church to show compassion to those who are in spiritual “darkness” by not only preaching to them but also showing them God’s love in tangible ways (Ujvarosy et al. 3).
**Jonah.** God calls Jonah to be concerned for every lost person in the city of Nineveh (Jon. 4:11). He cares for the unholy inhabitants of wicked cities. Demonstrating his great compassion for the city of Nineveh, God did not let Jonah “off the hook” and resist the call of God to preach salvation to its people. Like the Church today, Jonah was to be God’s instrument of grace and his witness to even the most violent of cities. God willingly offers the people of any metropolis a chance to receive his loving grace and be set free from sin and bondage (Greenway, 24-25).

**New Testament Models**

In addition to revealing his heart for the city in the Old Testament, God discloses his love for the urbanites of the world throughout the New Testament as well.

**Jesus’ ministry in the city.** In ministering to the city, Jesus is both the message and the example. Not only did he minister on the grassy knolls of the countryside, Jesus also ministered in the city of Jerusalem and other towns of his day. Seeing the needs of the city, Jesus wept for the brokenness of Jerusalem. He had great compassion on the poor and powerless that now abound principally in cities around the world. Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a stately horse, Jesus incarnated servanthood and ministered to the people’s physical and spiritual needs. After his resurrection Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21, NIV). Today God is still calling the Church to take the good news of the gospel into the cities of the world using an incarnational paradigm. Urban theologian Bakke speaks out on ministering in the city:

“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. (qtd. in Ujvarosy 1).

**Apostle Paul.** As a bicultural, bilingual, educated city dweller, Paul took the gospel to some of the most influential centers of his day. As a relentless enemy of the Christian church, Saul, as he was known before his conversion, persecuted heavily those who professed to be followers of Christ before his conversion. Nevertheless, after he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul became a proclaimer of the gospel. He returned back to the city, only this time to build Jesus’ Church. Paul became the apostle to the cities of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Jerusalem, and Rome (largest urban area of the known world), winning people to Christ, planting new churches, and performing great miracles. His determination to spread the gospel to the nation made him a missionary to the cities (Bakke, *Urban Christian* 80-81).

**Revelation.** The book of Revelation spares no expense in displaying the city as the host place for the Second Coming of Christ and the fulfilling of God’s final plan for this world. In dealing with the “parousia,” John the Revelator is given the blueprint through a vision of what is yet to come. Messages to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea show God’s redemptive plan for his people who live in the city. God’s rebuke to a number of these churches proves their disloyalty to the call of being the true “light of the world.” At the same time, God praises the ones who have embraced the city and its people with the love of Jesus Christ.

The city is important for God in playing its role as the setting of the return of the
Bridegroom. In the city of David, Jerusalem, God’s plan for humanity will culminate, and his kingdom will forever reign in the New Earth and the New Heaven. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, will come down from heaven, and God will reign forever with his people.

**Understanding the Heart of God for the City:**

**Theological Reflections of Urban Ministry**

In this new millennium, with all of its advancements and challenges, the Church is rising to the task of rediscovering and understanding the heart of God for the city. Through population explosion and globalization, the masses and the nations are thronging to the cities of the world, and the Church is seeking to be relevant and biblical in fulfilling its mission to the city. To build solid urban strategies and mission procedures, the Church must build upon sound theological foundations (Greenway and Monsma 1). According to Bakke, the primary obstacles of the Church in meeting the challenges of the city are not financial, demographic, cultural, or ecclesiastical but theological. The Lord of the universe cannot be viewed only through “rural lenses.” God must be comprehended as one who reaches beyond the personal needs of the individual to engage the problems of the city (Theology 14).

Though proclaimed to the people of God exiled in Babylon thousands of years ago, the words of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah still ring true to the Church of the twenty-first century seeking to articulate an urban theology and reach the cities with God’s love. He announced, “And seek the Peace [Shalom] of the city … and pray to the Lord for it; for in its Peace [Shalom] you will have Peace [Shalom]” (29:7) (Villafane 1). The peace or Shalom to which Jeremiah referred is not simply the absence of violence or
unrest. Used more than 350 times in the Old Testament, shalom is a word abounding with meanings that the English translation peace cannot exhaustively convey (Greenway 34-45). Villafane elaborates on the meaning of shalom:

It is in the Old Testament root meaning of shalom that we find its richness and the significant meaning of “completeness,” “wholeness,” “soundness,” and “welfare.” It speaks of harmony and concord—it is a wholistic term—responding to the needs of the whole person. (53)

Jeremiah’s model and message can be further understood from a “theology of context, a theology of mission, and a theology of spirituality” (Villafane 2). In Jeremiah 29:5-6, the prophet taught the children of Israel from a theology of context. The context of the children of Israel was one of being exiled in Babylon. Jacques Ellul points out that Babylon in not just a city but is “the city”:

Babylon, the great city, or Babylon the Great. The biggest in the world. No one can rival her, not even Rome. Not because of her historical greatness, but because of what she represents mythically. All the cities of the world are brought together in her; she is the synthesis of them all. (20)

Jeremiah admonished them to put down roots in the city. They were to marry, build a family, construct houses, plant gardens, and enjoy the fruits of their labors. To escape or revolt was not an option offered by Jeremiah. He called for “critical engagement” or presence. Through their presence, the children of God were instructed to impact their city for good.

In ancient Greece, the church, or ekklesia as it was known, represented the congregation of “the called out ones” to deliberate over the condition of the city (polis) (Villafane 2). They were called to come together to worship, celebrate, and be equipped to impact the kingdom of God. The Church was never called out for the purpose of self-
aggrandizement. Corporately and individually, the people of God are still called to respond to the spiritual, physical, financial, and social needs in the urban centers. Shining brightly, the Church is to be a light evident in the interactions of the city (Villafane 2-3).

Jesus said to his disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14, NIV). The minority in the city, the Church, must help the majority both singly and corporately awaken to their need for God. Through the light that they see and experience in the fellowship and mission of the community of believers, those still living independently of God come to the reality that their lives will never be whole apart from a personal relationship with their creator (Hinson 38). In his sermon, theologian John Wesley admonishes Christians regarding their presence in the world:

Ye Christians are “the light of the world,” with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men; and while ye are among them, it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness, and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action, when ye exercise yourselves in the labor of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian; yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon a hill, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man. (Wesley 222-24)

In addition to a theology of context, Jeremiah’s paradigm originates from a theology of mission. In Jeremiah 29:7, the mission of the people of God was to pray for and seek the peace or *shalom* of the city in which they dwelt (Villafane 3). The essence of that *shalom* is to be carried out via three main avenues. First is the *kerygma* or proclamation of the gospel (53). The preaching brings about wholeness through vertical and horizontal reconciliations. Humankind is reconciled in its relationship with God and
with one another through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Through the *shalom* of the gospel, men and women of differing races and cultures are also reconciled to dwell in wholeness and harmony with one another. Greenway recognizes the incarnation of shalom in the personhood of Jesus Christ. He acknowledges, “All the New Testament teachings about reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness, adoption, and justification are built upon and included in the concept of shalom. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is the source and mediator of shalom” (38).

Secondly, the mission of the church to bring *shalom* to the city is carried out through the *koinonia* of the body of Christ —the Church (Villafane 53). *Koinonia* is a word that “can mean fellowship or communion with, or participation in something, as well as collaboration, sharing, giving, distribution, and partnership. It speaks to us of solidarity and community. In biblical Christianity, *koinonia* is a mark of maturity —of true spirituality” (Villafane et al. 197-98). When true community exists, people believe they have value, purpose, and meaning to their lives and perform an important role in society (Greenway 35).

Thirdly, *shalom* is brought to the city through a mission of *diaconia* service of the gospel. Through compassion and care for the physical and material needs of city dwellers, the gospel embraces another realm of the needs of humanity (Villafane 53). Greenway warns that the “horizontal dimension” of life in the city—poverty, affliction, injustice cannot be ignored if the church is to be an instrument of seeking the shalom of the city (Greenway 36).

Lastly, Jeremiah’s paradigm speaks to the Church from a *theology of spirituality*. Jeremiah instructed the Jewish exiles in Babylon to pray for the city. “Also seek the peace
and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers you too will prosper” (Jer. 29:7, NIV). A valid urban spirituality must embrace the necessity and the power of prayer. To live in the city is to encounter spiritual battles on both individual and corporate levels. One must be equipped with the entire armor of the Lord Almighty to stand against the principalities of darkness (Villafane 2-3). In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul teaches, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (NIV).

Strategic-level intercession requires knowing the past and present of the city to understand how to pray specifically for the spiritual needs of the city. Urban ministries must understand the spiritual forces at work behind cannot be perceived with the natural eyes (Beckett 35-37). Prayer is an indispensable opportunity the Lord has given the Church to partner with him in bringing his shalom to the cities of the world.

In conclusion, a theology that encompasses the people and needs of the city is wholistic in that it addresses the shalom necessities of both the individual and the society.

**Understanding the Urban Ministry Context**

In developing a theology for urban ministry, the Scripture must be given a special consideration called “contextualization.” Anthropologist Darrell Whiteman adds insight to the meaning of contextualization:

Contextualization is concerned with how the Gospel and culture relate to one another across geographic space and down through time. It captures in method and perspective the challenge of relating the Gospel to culture. Furthermore, contextualization is part of an evolving stream of thought that relates the Gospel and church to a local context.

Contextualization is making sense of the message by removing "oneself" out of the way
for people to see the God one desires to communicate. Contextualization is more than just
learning customs, language, and cultures; it is the art of communicating on the level of
being understood correctly and, in so doing, address the deepest needs of the people.

As the Church attempts to discover God’s plans and agenda in the city, four areas
of contextualizing the Scriptures must be carefully considered. A collaborative writing
effort by a team of twenty-five urban ministry scholars and practitioners produced the
following four areas of contextualization they considered vital to ministry. First is the
“original context” of Scripture:

[We] need to understand the original context before we can apply
Scripture to the present. 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. (Ujvarosy
et al., 3)

Secondly, the “personal context” must be considered as well. The environment in
which people are reared and the life experiences they have are an important component
(even if unconscious) in their understanding and interpretation of Scripture (Ujvarosy 3).

For example, individuals raised in the city may have difficulty connecting with the
parables in the gospels centered on farming or shepherding. Likewise, someone reared in
the twentieth century may not readily understand the context of Paul’s experiences in the
cities of the ancient world. Whatever the historical context, people must be aware of how
it shapes their worldview and perform the difficult task of educating themselves to
discover in greater depth the context of the Scriptures and the world in which they live
The third consideration has to do with “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” (Ujarvrosy 3). By studying passages of Scripture together, ministry groups can gain from the collective insights of others in the group. Each one brings their personal contexts into the understanding of any passage, and together they can glean the grains of wisdom and insight that result from group participation.

The last area of Scripture contextualization is within the “community context:”

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. (Ujarvrosy 4).

By living in community, individuals become acquainted with the issues and challenges, histories and dreams, resources and trends that affects the people with whom and to whom they minister. When believers understand the original context of Scripture, their own personal frame of reference, and dialogue with others in their ministry context, then they can engage the community with a more accurate perception of their reality and how to minister to them.

An ancient Chinese poem illustrates how to contextualize and understand the felt needs of the community:

- Go to the people
- Live among them
- Learn from them
- Love them
- Start with what you know
Build on what they have:
But of the best leaders
When their task is done
The people will remark
“We have done it ourselves. (Perkins 35)

Contextualization as a discipline can greatly assist anyone coming from any environment to interact with the Word of God in a way that will increase his or her ability to minister effectively in an urban setting (Uvjarosy et al. 4).

**Understanding the City with the Right Mind-Set**

The mind-set of people working in the city is vital to their success in ministry. The interpretation of the Scripture and the attempt to contextualize its meaning for the city will highly depend upon the biases people attach to their work. Ministers, as missionaries to the city, must be convinced that God loves the city. They must be consumed with the same vision the God of the Bible displays as he works through his prophets, ecclesiastical leaders, and the Church as a whole.

The Church must have a vision for the city that is rooted in *agape* love. The love that people in the city must see is one that gives and not one that takes. A mind-set of servanthood that makes the Church willing to extend its hands and arms to those who are in need in the cities of the world must permeate the life of every believer. The Church must understand the heart of God for the city throughout time. Stephen Ujvarosy et al. wholeheartedly believes in God’s redemptive purpose for the city:

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...[C]ities as they exist today are already beginning to reflect the holy city in Revelation where many nations will be gathered and praising God together. (4)
Conclusion

To minister in the megacities of the world is to embrace a call that is beyond one’s human strength to fulfill. The problems and needs are far beyond any one organization’s ability to satisfy. Likewise, the opportunities for touching lives surpass the hours available in the day. What a comfort to know that the Church is not expected to complete this mission alone. Even Jesus was not expected to complete his mission unaided. John 5:19 says, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” (NIV)

The same holds true for those ministering in the urban centers of the world. Ministries are called to partner with God and participate in what he is already doing. Van Engen and Tiersma discern the mission of a ministry to the city:

We do not bring God’s reign into the city. God is already there. He invites us to join him in his activity. In humility we must realize that we will never have all the answers. We cannot meet all the needs. We are not the answer. The ministry belongs to God, not to us. (15)

As incarnational Christians in the city, the temptation exists to see human beings as the saviors of the city. The Church must depend on God, trust God, and work for God, while remembering that only one Messiah exists (Van Engen and Tiersma 15). He is all knowing, all powerful, and present in every home, school, office, and alley of the city: He will work through the Church mightily to draw the heart of the city to him and send his shalom to them.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The problems addressed in this study fall within the need to formulate an effective and strategic model for urban ministry in today’s twenty-first century. The complexity of the society and cultures found in world-class cities today poses a tremendous challenge before every church to consider carefully a holistic approach to ministry including the macro and micro levels of understanding the urban context. In order to take steps towards a successful urban ministry, the “helicopter” view of the city (macro) is necessary to give insights into the geographical, ecological, and economical aspects of the city structure. The micro level approach to understanding the city, on the other hand, is an ethnographic task that gives knowledge regarding the urban dwellers’ way of life. Both the macro and micro approaches to studying the city are coherently related and vital to the development of a competent and effective urban ministry. The philosophical conviction held by this study declares that before any ministry is formed and can be found efficient, both an anthropological and social knowledge of the people is expedient. This preliminary stage of research for the elaboration of urban ministry clarifies the “keys” that open doors to the idea of how people in the city best hear and embrace the message of the Church.

Accompanied by the macro and micro level approaches to studying the city of Miami, three churches were selected by this study that are successfully ministering to people within their local geographical boundaries. Their strategies and principles for urban ministry were carefully measured and gathered. From the principles derived as a result of examining the city of Miami from macro and micro approaches along with the
study of three city churches, paradigms for urban ministry were developed. The
conclusion of this paper demonstrates vital characteristics that form and contribute to the
model for a street-smart ministry. The characteristics of a street-smart church researched
in this study serve as an evangelistic strategy for churches that endeavor to reach the heart
of the city for God.

Scriptures clearly provide examples of God’s plan unfolding in the city on behalf
of the people. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, God was involved in the
affairs of people who live in urban settings. Yahweh has used both men and women as
instruments of his saving grace, seeking to transform lives and renew social conditions of
the city. Monumental events recorded in the Scriptures have been handed down
throughout history pointing to the city as host and center for God’s activities.

Today’s cities obviously have changed much ecologically, but not much has
changed in the lives of people regarding social and spiritual problems. People in the city
continue to search for ways to survive within their own limitations and struggles. Such
hardship becomes an opportune occasion for the Church to interpret and capitalize on
doors for evangelism. Churches like the ones chosen for this study give insight to
innovative, Spirit-led, intentional, urban ministries that are effective in fulfilling their
roles as the saving agents of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Statement of Research Questions

This study focused on two research questions that served as the framework to the
stated purpose, which was to develop evangelistic strategies for an effective, street smart,
urban ministry. Furthermore, this study seeks to find the principles behind the strategies
implemented by the three selected subjects. These research questions probed into the
ethnographic method of study as guiding protocol. Further, the questions presented in this research raised the inquiry of strategies both intentional and unintentional on the part of the selected churches in order to fulfill this study’s purpose statement.

**Research Question # 1**

What common principles from these existing paradigms guide the formulation of evangelistic strategies to reach the cities for God effectively?

**Operational question 1.** How are churches incorporating the social needs of the people in the city within their evangelistic efforts?

**Operational question 2.** What are the significant strategies that are highly effective in urban settings that might not be as effective when compared outside of the urban context?

**Operational question 3.** How are churches reaching people from different economic strata?

**Operational question 4.** What evangelistic ministries prove to be effective in dealing with the social problems of the urban setting?

**Operational question 5.** What innovative ideas are implemented in the ministry of congregations within the city that are considered to be nontraditional and “outside the box” thinking?

**Research Question # 2**

What kinds of leaders and churches can best reach cities for God?

**Operational question 1.** What style of leadership leads a successful urban ministry?

**Operational question 2.** What knowledge or background must leaders have to
develop an effective ministry in the city?

**Operational question 3.** What significant traits do congregations possess in reaching the people of the urban world?

**Operational question 4.** What are the vital characteristics of a street-smart church?

**Methodology**

This study was limited to five months of research. A research protocol was developed to guide the procedure in the duration of this study. The protocol used in this research included the literature review of the city (macro and micro level), subject selection, description of subject’s data collection, data analysis, field research, gathering of data, findings of the study, hypothesis generation, and conclusions.

**Criteria for Selection of Ministries to Be Studied.**

Ministries selected for this study met the following criteria:

Each ministry was evangelical in theological persuasion;

Each ministry had a different denominational affiliation or origin;

The number of years in existence varied among the three ministries;

Each ministry was successful in reaching a sector of the city of Miami with the gospel; and, each organization ministered to a culturally diverse population.

**Selection of Research Subjects**

Selection of the churches for this study depended upon a surveying method conducted among ecclesiastical leaders within the city of Miami who answered questionnaires inquiring of the most successful and effective churches they know that fit the criteria stated above. I contacted various denominational leaders in the city of Miami
to gather recommendations for their choices of successful urban churches in the city.

Subjects

Three evangelical ministries were selected in the city of Miami, Florida, and the study was conducted of their existing urban ministries. These churches were varied in denominational affiliation and origin in order not to attribute success to one denomination. Churches were also modified across different years of establishment for the purpose of isolating successful ministry strategies rather than strictly attributing success to years of experience in the field of urban ministry. Even though time plays an important role in learning to minister well in a society, this study does not regard time alone as a prerequisite to the success of any urban ministry.

Furthermore, pastors, departmental leaders, operational leaders, and ministry volunteers were drawn from the congregations to give insights to the principles behind a street-smart ministry. Recipients of the ministries’ services were also interviewed to determine the impacts upon their lives. Also, people within the community of each of the selected ministries were interviewed to gather their views of the organizations as ministering bodies within the community. Location sights of the ministries were visited in order to record operational procedures and personal impact in the lives of those receiving the ministries.

Furthermore, the three selected subjects above have been well established in Miami, a world-class city. All three of them have been in existence in the inner city for at least thirty years. Significant growth in the number of members and followers as well as effectiveness of ministry programs has been experienced dramatically within the last five years. A proven track record of effectiveness has marked these ministries as choice
strategic models for urban ministry. The focus of my research and the benefit of the chosen research method are to highlight common practices among all three subjects that serve as paradigms for others to emulate, adopt, and utilize toward urban evangelism.

During the course of five months, from November 2003 through March 2004, I designated days to conduct interviews of and on-site visits to the three selected ministries presented in this project. The kind and generous leaders, staff, volunteers, members and participating individuals of these organizations made the visits pleasant experiences to conduct my studies. Initial phone calls were made to speak directly to the senior leaders of these ministries to request a block of time in their busy schedules to hold semi-structured interviews. Without much difficulty the requests were granted and research for the case studies began.

The three urban ministries selected were the Trinity Church with Rich Wilkerson as the senior pastor, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church with Randall Holts as the presiding head bishop and the Miami Rescue Mission under the leadership of Dr. Frank Jacobs who holds the titles of president and CEO. The first two of these ministries are local inner-city churches, and the third is considered to be a parachurch organization.

Initial contact with the ministries above marked the beginning of an acquaintance with their perspective leadership teams. I was respectfully introduced to key people in their organizations that also led to the opening of other open doors to explore further insights. Announcements were made publicly at the two local churches during their scheduled weekly meetings regarding my research project, and they welcomed others to participate in the study as needed. Other coincidental interviews were established as the result of an interviewee making a referral for further research.
The age of the people interviewed ranged from a seven year old child to people in their seventies. Locations of the interviews were conducted in a variety of places such as restaurants, offices, constructions job sites, parking lots, a gymnasium, classrooms, a cafeteria, church sanctuary, and reception hall. The interview style I followed was low-key and nonintimidating so that participants felt free discussing their feelings with me as much as possible.

A total of thirty people were interviewed from the three ministries. The interviewees were diverse in nationality and gender. Relationships of the interviewees to the establishment ranged from being an employee, both part-time and full-time, to attendees, volunteers, regular and new members. Ministries selected were also varied in denominational affiliation. Trinity Church belongs to the Assemblies of God having its headquarters in Springfield, Missouri. New Hope Missionary Baptist Church has its roots with the Baptist Convention, and the Miami Rescue Mission is an independent, nondenominational evangelical group with employees from many different denominational backgrounds.

Interviewees were major contributors to the research study of the three ministry subjects selected. Within the Trinity Church of Miami, Florida interviews were conducted with (1) Rich Wilkerson, Senior Pastor, (2) Danny Thomas, Executive Pastor, (3) Linda Freeman, Director of the Esther Project, (4) Members and participants of ministry programs: Yvette Imerell, Latasha Queen, and Oyebude Oyepji.

At the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, I interviewed the following people: (1) Radall Holts, Senior Pastor, (2) Pam Wilkerson, Director of Ministries, (3) Ruby Laughlin, Gregory Manning, Elvis Heart, and Gail Jackson as parishioners.
Other interviewees belonged to the Miami Rescue Mission namely: (1) Dr. Frank Jacobs, President of Miami Rescue Mission, (2) Jim Bender, Vice-President, (3) Russell Barber, Director of Men’s Program, (3) Joseph Leyva, Director of After Care Program, (4) Ken Plansky, Supervisor of the Education Center, (5) Members/Clients of the education program were Don Cotton, Craig Parsley, Brian Robbins, and Paul James (6) Participants of the After Care Program were Antwonne Gator, Ivon, Justin, Jethro, Bernard Darling, and Joshua Press, (7) Members/Clients of Men’s Center were Terrence Witherspoon, Tracy Lamar Kemp, and Rick Lee Young.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected from several different sources: personal interviews, on-site visits, demographic information, and congregational statistical analysis.

Personal interviews were conducted through field research. I visited the ministries and interviewed the leaders of the local organizations and asked questions pertaining to their urban ministries. Research and operational questions were brought into the interviews, and responses to the questions were gathered for analysis.

Interviews included departmental leaders who oversee the operation of the ministries designed to evangelize the people in the city. Furthermore, the people who participated as volunteers and recipients of the ministries were interviewed to measure the impact and factors that brought them to be a part of that local organization.

Demographics were also considered in the macro approach to learning the city as the context of ministry. Street-smart churches should know the importance of understanding the context in which they minister; therefore, demographical materials were consulted to explore the city of Miami. Individual interviews also provided
information regarding the micro level of knowledge about the people within the
community of each selected ministry.

Personal interviews of church leaders, staff, members, and volunteers of the
organizations actively involved in the ministries were asked the same formulated
questions. Follow up questions were also used to produce an ongoing dialogue that may
lead to undiscovered information to the effects of their ministry. I adopted the suggestion
posed by Lyle Schaller, in his book The InterVentionist. He says that “how is it”
questions should be followed by “why is it that way” questions (26). The questions that
were asked of the research subjects are in Appendix B.

Three main sources of information produced the data for case study. The first
source, public documents and records, consisted of articles, newsletters, pamphlets, and
Internet generated material concerning the ministry and organization. The second source,
interviews, yielded direct information from senior leaders, administrative and pastoral
assistants, staff workers, volunteers, members, and other participants. The third source, a
journal of on-site observations, focused on the ministry performance on hand and the
physical surroundings and environment of the organization’s facilities. The presence of
these three components for case study was utilized in order to triangulate the data and
provide information for the research project.

Data taken from the interviews was recorded by the use of a voice recorder as well
as handwritten notes that highlighted assumed vital information. Transcriptions of data
were done with the assistance of a machine transcriber. Careful notation was also
gathered out of field observation drawn from the surrounding events, places, people, and
the overall, street-smart organizations.
Data Analysis

According to Wiersma, “Analysis in research consists of synthesizing the information from the observation, interviews, and other data sources” (265). Hypotheses were carefully examined and interfaced with the concluding remarks to develop a paradigm for urban ministry that is considered street-smart. The observations of each church studied are described in a narrative and interpretive description in Chapter 4. Common threads within the ministry of churches that are highly effective served as denominators for assuming a winning urban ministry. Furthermore, analysis of the findings of this study broadens the horizon for the church to adapt and adjust to the principles found in what is considered in this paper a street-smart ministry.

Data collected from the three ministries was analyzed for common patterns relating to the research questions. Furthermore, data was compressed into workable units to develop significant and relevant principles for urban evangelism that is presented later in this paper. Vital components of ministry served as guiding tools to formulate significant findings in the research. Data was organized according to the frequency of the component and listed under the appropriate heading that later gave rise to acceptable and valid principles.

Field Research

The research study conducted a total of five visits to the church congregations and three visitations outside the facilities to the location sights where ministries were being held. The guidelines found in William Wiersma’s Research Methods in Education was the framework in the ethnographic parts of this research. The data gathered from the interviews were written, tape recorded, and transcribed onto a computer disk. Following
the data collection, analysis and conclusions were compiled according to common prevailing issues.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of three case studies of model churches and a parachurch ministry in order to discover the characteristics of what this paper has coined “street-smart” ministry. The subjects of this research reveal key principles that serve as a strategic model for urban ministry. The qualitative research design included a careful examination of public documents, formulating semi-structured interviews and observations from on-site visits.

The research technique of “triangulation” was selected to show prevalent patterns that surface from three specific urban ministries. Robert K. Yin states, “A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (91). The process of triangulation provides multiple measures of same “phenomenon.” He adds that case study methods found that those case studies using multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied only on a single source of information (92).

The presentation of findings on all three ministries unfolded many of the components analyzed in this study. After the three individual case study reports, a summary of major findings is provided along with an evaluation of the findings and theological reflections on the subject. In addition, implications of the finding for revising the existing body of knowledge are considered, while findings give way to relating results to previously published studies. Limitations of the study are highlighted as well as unexpected findings that I encountered. Conclusions are drawn out of the findings for application to ministry and tools to encourage further studies as suggested.
Case Study #1: Trinity Church of Miami, Florida

Trinity Church has a widespread ministry effect in the inner city of Miami, Florida. From its humble beginnings and early struggles, Trinity has come a long way in becoming one of the premier churches among the inner-city churches found in the United States of America today. It is strategically located within two blocks, both on the east and west sides, of the principal interstate highway that is the main vein for traffic flowing north and south to Florida’s major cities.

Trinity was founded in 1960 primarily serving as a jump point for many of the Assemblies of God missionaries going to the Caribbean Islands and Central and South America. A constant flow of missionaries waited at this little community church for their boat to arrive and take them to their mission field. South Florida then was not as internationally and interracial integrated as it is today. Little did they know that Miami would soon become one of the major locations for evangelism in America.

Between the years of 1975 and 1995, the surrounding community of Trinity church experienced “white plight” three times. In brief, white plight occurs when Caucasians or “whites” leave the inner city as racial minorities begin moving into their neighborhoods. This demographic transition affected the kind of people that Trinity attracted into their ministry. According to the executive pastor, Danny Thomas, “Each time Trinity would attract not people of wealth but individuals in the lower to middle class.” Furthermore, he explains that by the mid-90s “[I]t was in spiritual wreck.” Somehow the church had lost its focus of ministry and did not know how to reach the people in the heart of the city effectively for God. Today, even more than almost fifteen years ago, the city of Miami is full of needs and infested with social crises. Facing the
conditions was so discouraging; the former pastor resigned and left the ministry for another profession.

Since its inception, the church had been in the same location for forty years meeting in a small building beside a business that sold boats. The former pastor contacted Rich Wilkerson, who at the time was a busy traveling evangelist, to ask him if he would take the church forward. Wilkerson accepted the offer to pastor the church and moved his family to Miami. Since he arrived in 1998 until now, Trinity Church has gained a phenomenal momentum of growth and ministry success as they reach the city of Miami for God the street-smart way.

Today, Trinity Church has a following of 3,100 members. Some 1,500 attendees pack their dome-shaped sanctuary every Sunday. Their multiple services during the weekends as well as their weekday ministries, activities, and social programs add to the traffic of an already congested neighborhood. On Easter Sunday of 2004, Trinity Church launched its new and expanded facility to accommodate the growth of membership and enlarge its ministry to the city of Miami. Through a great miracle from God, Trinity has purchased a two-story commercial office building with approximately 122,000 square feet, constructed on a 9.5-acre commercial site with over 750 parking spaces. This new facility will become the new worship center and administrative offices for Trinity Church. Trinity is a “busy and happening” place. Its multifaceted ministry and social programs reach a wide scope of people and effectively meet the prevalent needs of their community.

Trinity Church is a well-structured ministry that provides community services with professionalism and relevancy. The mission of the church is threefold: “To win the
lost, to help the poor, and to teach abundant living.” Pastor Rich is the first one to admit they are “passionate about seeing people saved.” His heart and those who work with him beat for the spiritually lost in their city. During the interview with the senior pastor, he was emotionally moved by the urgency of winning the unsaved for God as he tearfully remarked, “If you don’t have babies being born, then you are not alive.”

Evangelistically, Trinity intentionally and regularly casts the spiritual “fishing net” out to the lost people of Miami. Through the powerful and relevant preaching of Pastor Rich Wilkerson, many have come to know Christ and have joined the church. Weekly television ministry airs on cable network and is reaching homes across South Florida. A heavy emphasis on preaching and teaching the Word of God exists and is intertwined throughout the scheduled activities and events of the church. People in the community are evangelized and discipled within and without the church’s facilities. For example, Kids Time Ministries, a ministry to children, holds the following mission statement:

[T]o see all those we come in contact with saved, sound, and serving. We want to see everybody saved in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We want all to be sound in the teaching of God through His Word, the Bible. And, we desire all to mature in their faith and begin serving God and the church.

Children are taught early about the values they need for life in the light of God’s Word.

Youth and adults in the community are given the same opportunity to grow spiritually at Trinity. Through an array of ministries for all ages and varieties of groups in which to be involved, Trinity is discipling people for God. Members like Yvette Emerill commented that she was attracted to come to Trinity because of the emphasis on the Word of God. I interviewed Yvette while she was working one Saturday morning with a team of volunteers clearing out debris on their new facility currently under renovation.
She said proudly, “I’m involved with a little bit of everything.”

One of the keys to the spiritual breakthroughs Trinity is experiencing in its ministry is an emphasis on prayer. Each year during the month of January, a forty-day fast is held. Hundreds of members join together as they “put God first in their new year and receive a spiritual renewal in life“ (“God has More” 2). This emphasis in prayer has been the catalyst for the church’s great advancement in its efforts to reach the city of Miami. Rich Wilkerson stated, “Every time there was a change [breakthrough] in my life and ministry, there was always a fast involved.” Through prayer Trinity has seen the favor of God upon its ministry. On a personal note, Rich Wilkerson warned me:

You can come to a place in your life where if you are not careful, you can do it without the help of God because you know how to do it. When that happens to a minister, he should go get a job, because he is moving in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

Helping the poor is what keeps Trinity Church visible in the community as they evangelize the city of Miami. They reach the city by extending their hands to give to people in need. Ministry has been designed according to the social needs of their community. It is a church of compassion. Impressively, in 2003, Trinity Church was the only church in the state of Florida chosen by President George Bush to receive the “Compassion Award” grant. Trinity’s mission statement to help the poor reads as follows:

Trinity church is committed to heal those who are poor, neglected, abused and disenfranchised. We endeavor to provide holistic services to level the playing field for those who are voiceless, helpless and powerless. We have a divine commission to empower those who have been forgotten and pushed to the outward fringes of life.

Trinity is truly modeling this theory in its praxis.
A major investment in helping the poor is materialized through the establishment of the Peacemaker Family Center (PFC). A 40,000 square foot building currently provides social services to more than seven hundred people per week. It serves the community five days a week. Its ultimate goal is to “achieve economic self-sufficiency for its clients” (Trinity Church, Magic Johnson Inventor Center Proposal 1). Their vision statement discloses that “when a person in need enters our office we will immediately hear the person’s need and respond with appropriate resources” (Peacemakers Strategic Plan Summary 2). PFC has distributed seventeen thousand bags of groceries from its Food Bank, an equivalent of three hundred thousand meals annually. They have also launched the Urban Mercy Clinic, a medical care facility that sees an average of three thousand patients a year free of charge. Volunteer professional doctors invest their time to help low-income clients who may not have health and medical insurance to receive proper care.

In July 2003, Trinity Church also launched an ambitious social service program in cooperation with Barry University funded by the Catholic Charities through the government established, nonprofit organization referred to as South Florida Workforce. This social service program called “Esther Project” is a faith-based partnership ministry of Trinity Church. The goal of this project is to assist former welfare recipients in retaining meaningful employment that promotes self-sufficiency, job growth, and advancement. Though the participants have numerous barriers to employment, trained social workers and job developers work with them to obtain employment and create a career ladder that can move them out of poverty. It targets “at-risk” teen moms and adult women with children who have exhausted their public assistance cash benefits. The at-
risk teen moms and adult women receive job readiness training, a personal life coach, a part-time job with a local business, and classes to attain their high school diplomas. This comprehensive program combines the resources available through Trinity Church and other organizations.

Director of Peacemaker Family Center Linda Freeman explains why she called this social program Esther Project:

The story of Esther is one that rings a bell in a lot of women who live in the city. Queen Esther [biblical character] is someone who came from a bad situation and still did well. There are principles in her life that teach us how to handle life’s challenges. All the things in her life are applicable to life today.

Volunteers of Esther Project use a biblical example of life without “beating the Bible over their heads.” It is a nonthreatening approach to evangelism that is helping women in the city overcome their crises. Freeman calls this method “backdoor evangelism.” With this effective tool of education and evangelism, Trinity saw sixty-three women successfully graduate high school in July 2003. Esther Project works with women to achieve a career in the areas of administration, clerical management, hospitality, facilities management, security, social services, or elder care services. Nearly two hundred women have gone through the Esther Project to date. This program even includes free breakfasts and lunches during the course of the project and offers day care and after-school care for the children of participants (“Esther Project” 5). Needless to say, Esther Project is generating success among women in Miami.

Trinity Church recognizes that in order to impact a community it must concentrate its efforts on building healthy family units. Healthy families produce healthy communities. The urban societies of America are some of the most difficult places to
raise a family. In fact the study given by Claude S. Fischer points out “divorce and
desertion rates tend to be greater in larger communities. In America today, urbanism is
related to family dissolution” (161). In short, he is persuaded that “there is a typical, albeit
not universal, relation between urbanism and nonfamilism [nonfamilism]” (162). Trinity
has not given up the fight to keep families together and living healthy, productive lives in
the urban context. An all-out offensive strategy to gain solid ground for healthy and
growing family units is in place at Trinity. A whole line of family-oriented programs is
offered to the community.

Beginning with the youngest of the family unit, Trinity has invested in building
the Trinity Christian Academy (TCA). It is a seventy-two slot day-care center operated
and licensed under the Florida Department of Children and Families. TCA currently is
full of children ranging from infancy through age four. More than 90 percent of the
children at TCA today are low-income, government-voucher recipients. In response to
higher demand, TCA expects to increase its day care slots to 150 in the year 2004 and
expand its hours of operation to accommodate “second-shift” workers by adopting a 6:00
a.m. to 12:00 midnight day care schedule, five days a week. Kid Care America is also
gearied to help families stay intact. This after-school and student vocational program
serves children ranging from preschool to thirteen years old Monday through Friday
beginning from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Children receive tutoring, homework assistance
and instruction in computer literacy, sports, outdoor activities, Bible theme learning
activities, and fine arts enrichment. Snacks are offered as well.

Other family-oriented ministry at Trinity includes the weekly Family Fun Nights.
It is a family-centered social gathering designed to engage community families in
conversation and bonding around refreshments, a movie, and/or kid-friendly games. Family Counseling Services/Crisis Counseling Center is an appointment-based counseling program for bereavement, marriage problems, depression, anxiety, conflict mediation, and premarital skill building and is provided on a free basis to PFC clients. Currently, church pastoral staff administers counseling.

Peacemaker Youth Ministry is a high-impact, relevant, contemporary discipleship ministry to junior and senior high school students. Social and spiritually driven activities are designed to provide a Christ-centered environment in which young people can grow and mature. During my visit to the church’s Christmas Eve Candle Light Service, I was annoyed by the behavior of three restless and talkative young teenagers who sat beside my family. Honestly, I did not have the courage to confront and correct their disrespectful behavior for it was my first visit to Trinity. Reflecting on that night with my wife, Tricia, she helped me realize that those youths were at church on Christmas Eve unaccompanied by their parents. In all probability, those youths may have come from disenfranchised homes, and thankfully they were at least in church surrounded by the possibilities to grow into maturity and a relationship with the Lord.

Lastly, the Miami Singles Ministry is an educational outreach program designed by Trinity Church to give singles life-preparation skills. One of the focuses of the curriculum taught at the church campus is developing healthy relationship skills.

Education-based programs run throughout the ministry at Trinity. Emerging as a prioritized component within their core values is the call to educate people within their community. Education opens doors in life for a greater chance to secure employment. Linda Freeman believes that “through education you can reap benefits for your life. If you
can barely read and write, then how are you going to make it in this community. Let them see a solution that will fix their problems on a long-term basis. You have to have an education to make it in the city.”

Programs like Esther Project and the establishment of Trinity Christian Academy are some of the effective tools being used by Trinity Church to boost the quality of life through education in their community.

Another pertinent need in the field of education that concerns the future of families in this urban city of Miami is the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The state of Florida has instituted this test to enhance the quality of teaching in the classroom and improve the learning skills of students in the public schools. Ultimately, its goal is to ensure that students have acquired the necessary skills to advance to the next grade level. In the state of Florida, an alarming number of students failed the reading assessment portion of the FCAT in 2004. Some forty-five thousand third graders failed the reading section of FCAT endangering their potential to progress to the next grade level the following school year. Unless they can prove through other means that they can read as well as their classmates, these students will have to repeat their present grade level (Malernee and Hirschman 12A). To assist children in succeeding at doing well on the FCAT, Trinity Church has partnered with the United Teachers of Dade’s Christian Caucus to implement their FCAT “Conquerors” curriculum. This program offers tutoring and mentoring to children and youths struggling in conquering FCAT requirements.

The activities numerated in this first case study depict similar practices to the second case study to be presented. Although similar ministry concerns and components
exist among these case study subjects, the approach in implementing their vision into practical ministries can differ. These programs serve as a “toolbox” of examples for adaptation and application in actual ministry.

**Case Study #2: New Hope Missionary Baptist Church of Miami**

The New Hope Missionary Baptist Church (NHMBC) was planted in 1924 in the heart of the city of Miami. It is a local, neighborhood church founded in a section of Miami that was predominantly inhabited by African Americans. From the inception of this inner-city church, it has prioritized the message of the “Great Commission,” the pulse behind its reason for existence. The congregants believed that they were called to the mission field of Miami to win lost souls to Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20). This mission field to which NHMBC has been called has dramatically and consistently changed since its inauguration eighty years ago. In the words of Senior Pastor Randall Holts, “Our demographics have changed: The community has transitioned into a ‘melting pot.’” Walking into the beautiful sanctuary of the church, the dozens of different flags of the world are clearly displayed for a purpose. Pastor Holts believes the church is a place for people of all nationalities and races:

> We are a “Kingdom Church.” Here you can see that we are not just a black church. We are globally minded when it comes to ministry. We are here to meet the needs of God’s people regardless of race, creed or color. The Word of God transcends racial barriers.

Although the physical structure of the city has changed and its demographics have taken leaps of major transitions, the mission of the church continues to be strong. The mission statement of NHMBC contains a threefold understanding of the Great Commission, (1) equipping saints for ministry (2) providing Christian education, and (3) winning souls to
Christ through fulfilling the Great Commission.

Today, the NHMBC is an army of 2,500 members who are marching in the city of Miami armed with street-smart strategies used to see the city of Miami and its people transformed for the kingdom of God. In order to fulfill the Great Commission, NHMBC understands the importance of equipping their army of people for ministry. With regard to ministry, Randall Holts believes in the priesthood of all believers. He understands that the Bible teaches a theology of ministry that is inclusive, meaning every professing believer is gifted by God to do the work of ministry. Ministry is a gift given by God to the body of Christ to function for the edification of others. Every believer “working together, all needing each other, and all having an office ‘function’ in the work of God” (Horton 191). NHMBC is unselfish and unbiased about sharing the ministry to everyone called by God regardless of their gender or race. During the interview with the senior pastor, he referred frequently to the “fivefold” ministry in the body of Christ, the church. He has invested time in explaining the gifts of the Spirit and their role in the mission of NHMBC. Namely, the apostle Paul numerates five categories of ministry functions given to the church to practice. In Paul’s teaching he states that, “[I]t was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). The lists of practical expressions of these gifts are found throughout the teaching of the epistles written by Paul.

Equipping the saints for street-smart ministry takes on many forms at NHMBC. The teaching and preaching of the Word of God takes precedence in their weekly programs. In addition to the Sunday morning worship services at NHMBC, excited members and visitors turn out on Wednesdays to hear the Word of God preached and
taught. Upon my visit, I observed the style of preaching to be dynamically inspiring and uplifting and the content of the teaching was expository with an emphasis on biblical explanations and support. Attendees were confirming the pastor’s words by constant shouts and whispers of “Amen,” “Praise the Lord,” “Yes,” and “Uh-Hum.” Frequently Pastor Holts intertwined the texts of his message with an application and contextualization. This Baptist church has a very charismatic feel to the way the people express worship, preach, teach and to the overall church service. On the “lighter” side of my interview, the pastor referred to himself as a “Bapticostal” leader. In addition, four church members were interviewed as to what attracted them to be a part of the church. Exuberantly, each one of them cited the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God as one of the main reasons for coming to NHMBC. During his interview, member Greg Manning commented regarding the preaching and teaching of the Bible, “I’m growing spiritually: He takes us to the next dimension. He helps me study the Word for myself. He makes it so clear. I have grown and I have only been here since last year.”

At NHMBC, equipping the saints means to educate the people not only through the means of biblical education but also through their social programs. Lives of people in the city of Miami are being transformed as a result of this dual emphasis. On 8 December 1997, NHMBC launched the New Hope Development Center, Inc., designed to “foster self-sufficiency of families through human services and economic and personal development to improve the quality of life” (“Vision for New Hope” 2). Many families have joined free workshops, hands-on computer training, and other job skills training. NHMBC is specific, intentional, and practical in its approach to education. For example, their job-training curriculum includes developing resume’s practicing interviews, and
role-playing appropriate workplace etiquette.

Another component to NHMBC’s social education program is their endeavor to help the family unit lead productive lives in society. Parents and their dependent children are the target of ministry in this well-structured program. Some of the programs instated today at NHMBC include Teen Pregnancy Prevention workshops that discuss challenges teens face in today’s society. Strong emphasis is placed on abstinence from premarital sexual activity and making good choices. The NHDCI has adopted the project called L.E.A.P. (Let’s Enhance Adolescent Pride) with a goal of implementing comprehensive school and community-based abstinence education programs. Workshops provide information and awareness of the potential dangers of unprotected sex. These programs strive to reduce the incidents of teen pregnancy, lower the number of sexually transmitted disease cases, raise male role participation, enhance parental and community collaboration, and increase financial and moral support for abstinence campaigns.

NHDCI Youth After School Program is a safe, fun-filled, educational environment for children and youths ranging form kindergarten through twelfth grade. This program provides students with daily homework assistance by certified Miami-Dade teachers. Special activities ranging from computer training to remedial reading and math tutorial for FCAT are available. “These activities are designed to affect the attitudes, develop leadership potential, and constructively channel idle time and energies into positive behavior” (“NHDCI Youth After School Program” 1). According to Pam Wilkerson, Executive Director of NHDCI, after-school programs are a necessary component in helping change their community since statistic shows that children and youth normally “get into trouble” after school hours from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Young Men of Valor is a program that reaches out to at-risk youth in order to enhance their self-esteem and mentoring them to look positively about life. This hands-on program includes unique experiences for some of the youths who have not had the opportunity to be exposed to rich culture and arts. Activities are varied ranging from taking the participants out to eat in fine-dining restaurants, and visiting libraries, theme parks, universities in major cities like Atlanta, as well as taking excursions to the nation’s capital—Washington, DC, and much more. “We take them to places that they would normally not go to. They get to see ‘another side’ of life than they are used to seeing in the inner city” declared Pastor Holts. A similar program is provided for young girls called Predestinated Daughters.

Teen Parents Infant Care, Anger Management/Domestic Violence, and No Smoking programs are additional ways NHDCI is reaching out to the community. Teen Parents Infant Care assists teenage parents in properly caring for their infants and toddlers by educating them to understand their child’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development. Anger Management/Domestic Violence workshops provide training in handling anger and defining and examining the history of domestic violence and its potential reality today. The No Smoking program has been awarded grant funds in conjunction with Florida’s “No Smoke, Not Now, Not Ever” anti-tobacco campaign. NHDCI and Turner Tech High School’s media department have partnered together to produce, direct, and star in a series of commercials showcasing local popular talent to spread the message of the adverse results of using cigarettes or tobacco. The videos have been circulated among youth organizations and public schools in order to influence the younger generation to choose abstaining from the use of tobacco.
Breakthrough Parenting helps parents and their dependent children deal with issues pertaining to family communication. This workshop is designed to facilitate children’s emotional development and growth through the teaching of proper communication skills. By providing insights and guidelines for parents to mentor and nurture their children effectively, healthy relationships can result within the home and, consequently, the community.

Due to the significant role finances play in influencing lives in the community for better or for worse, NHDCI has designed Money Management workshops to provide information detailing how to create and maintain a personal budget, causes of financial problems, and guidelines for credit card usage.

Marriage relationships are nurtured at NHMBC by providing regular meetings and intentional, structured events to enhance conjugal relationships. Marriage enrichment events are especially open to the community. NHMBC has taken the initiative to prioritize relationships between husbands and wives. They understand the growing and alarming statistics of broken marriages and the need to address the issue and create programs that can help in building resilient marriages. Another program called, Intimate Moments seeks to “build strong healthy families in the 21st century, strengthen the marital bond, reconcile broken relationships, renew and restore the love affair between husband and wife, re-ignite the ‘pilot light’ flame of passion in the relationship, develop techniques for enhancing communication and learn strategies to keep the Devil out of relationships” (“What are the Goals for Marriage Retreat 2004” 1).

In the year 2004, NHMBC has chosen to live out the theme, “Building Strong Families for the 21st Century.” The pastor stated during the interview that “if we have
strong families in the community, then we can have a strong church; and if we have a strong church, then we can have a strong community.” Furthermore, he said firmly, “we believe that the cure for society rest within the families and the Church. We must display positive and healthy role models within our community for those who live here and play here to see.”

Other ministry activities and social programs exceed what has been presented in this section. Many of the remaining fruitful ministries and programs that are offered at NHMBC have not been mentioned here for the purpose of highlighting significant findings that many not have yet been presented.

**Case Study #3: Miami Rescue Mission**

Located at the heart of downtown Miami, the Miami Rescue Mission (MRM) stands together with 260 other ministries in the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions across the nation proclaiming their mission to “reach out to the least, the last and the lost of our community, to inspire hope with human compassion and the love of God” (Miami Rescue Mission, *Agency Profile 2*). For eighty years MRM has been caring for and supporting the community through innovative programs to offer the needy of the city of Miami opportunities for new beginnings in life through a solid commitment to equip them with the necessary tools to reenter mainstream society. The MRM is among the oldest providers of human services in South Florida.

MRM was founded in the first twenty-five years of the city of Miami’s incorporation. In 1922 a Christian husband and wife team, John and Zada Schleucher, set out to help the poor people of the community by providing them with food and clothing. With a growing reputation in helping the poor, the Miami Rescue Mission has been called
“the new center of much of Miami’s welfare work” (Jones 29). Nevertheless, this local mission work was more than just handing out a bowl of soup and a piece of bread. Evening church services were incorporated to minister spiritually to the poor who had converged in their building for hot meals and clothing. The MRM was not only a “physical enterprise but more importantly a spiritual enterprise” (29).

Today, the MRM has hundreds of “clients” who receive from the multifaceted programs that benefit people of all ages ranging from infant/children-oriented programs to the oldest homeless person found on the streets. The innovative approach to ministry keeps on raising the credibility level of this truly street-smart organization. Under the leadership of Dr. Frank Jacobs as President and CEO, the mission has experienced impressive growth and expansion.

The MRM is known in the city for being the shelter for the homeless in society. MRM has been referred to as the “Shelter of Hope.” A study delivered on 30 June 2003 by the Florida Department of Children and Families to the Governor of Florida revealed significant findings:

Based upon the estimates of the number of homeless from Florida’s local homeless coalitions, 71,770 people are reported in fiscal year 2002 as being homeless on any given day. This estimate represents a 5.6 percent increase over the prior year’s estimate of 67,981. Over the last three years, Florida has seen its homeless population grow by over 23%. (1)

With the number of homeless people rising within the state of Florida, the homeless coalition cannot offer the amount of help the need demands. “These facilities, with a combined bed space of 20,398 beds, still are only able to serve three out of every ten people homeless in Florida” (Florida Department of Children and Families 1). Furthermore, an alarming transition in the demographic profile of the homeless in
America is on the rise. More specifically, families and children continue to be a growing segment. Families now make up 35 percent of all homeless persons. Children under eighteen years of age now comprise over 35 percent of all homeless persons. Homelessness is a problem with various root causes and the solutions must also be varied:

The CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS remain rooted in poverty and the lack of affordable housing. Complicating the situation for many individuals and families are related problems of mental health, substance abuse, low education levels, decrease or loss of public assistance benefits, institutional release without employment, housing or a viable means of support, and the breakup of family units. While the causes of homelessness are varied and unique to each person and family, so too must be the strategies employed to help each person and family overcome their problems to attain a level of self-sufficiency needed to re-enter the housing market as well as mainstream society. (1)

The MRM is doing its part to contribute to the restoration of the homeless who come to Miami and seek help from them. In 2002 alone, in-house records show that 142,511 bed nights were given. Close to half a million meals were served, some sixty thousand pieces of clothing were distributed, and 160,000 showers were provided. Out of all of the homeless people who came to the program, 799 of them became students of their educational program to attain a school diploma or learn to read. Moreover, some 174 people were assisted in finding new jobs. Another 32,000 hours were given by volunteers to offer help and close to eighteen thousand hours of counseling were administered (“2002 in Review” 3).

The MRM is a caring place for the homeless. It can become the new home that helps individuals find compassionate people who are qualified to help them on their feet and once again become productive citizens in society. As a place that cares, the MRM
gives special attention to the homeless around major holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The entire block where the main building of MRM is located hosts hundreds of people who are their clients, families within the community, or people who have no place to go to celebrate the holiday. These celebrations have become popular events and attendance has increased yearly due to the investment they make in preparing delicious free food and a lineup of quality guests to entertain the participants. City officials, popular singers, and sports athletes have graced the event and shared encouraging words to all the homeless and disenfranchised individuals. “Not only do we provide a hearty meal, but we also reach out with God’s love to many who are left alone during the holidays,” exclaimed Dr. Jacobs (“MRM and Broward Outreach Centers Update” 2).

Another significant ministry designed to help restore the homeless in Miami is the Tew Education Center, named after a generous donor. This department of the MRM is a state-of-the-art, computer-enhanced, self-instructional, adult-based and mastery-based education. Once a client of the MRM has gone through an in-take process, he or she is given residence within the Center for Men or the Center for Women buildings. The education center then allows the individual to be trained for the competitive job market. Director of the education center, Ken Polansky, explains during our interview that “they can go as fast as they want or as slow as they need to go. Answers are provided through the help of volunteer tutors. It is noncompetitive. They are helped not to fear; it’s them and the computer.”

An average of twelve new students joins the education center program each week. In August 2003, 136 clients attended the classes at the Tew Education Center. According
to Polansky many of the students who have graduated from the program are now filling meaningful positions in the market place. He gave an example of one who is now a radio host disc jockey and another who is today a part of the South Florida Symphonic Band. Alvin Artis, who has graduated from the program, now lives in New York City and works with an international bank as a Technical Services Analyst. This one is a story of a person who has gone “from the streets of Miami to Wall Street” (“From the Streets of Miami to Wall Street” 2). Polansky asserts the role of the MRM is to prepare men and women to re-enter society:

They are clean and sober when they leave here, and they are ready to leave into the job market. They are directed and motivated to succeed. We want them to pursue the dream that they had when they were a little kid. We give them tools in their hands to make their own future.

Upon graduation students receive a certificate of completion. Scores of inspiring reports and testimonies can be found circulated monthly through their in-house newsletter.

The Center for Men and its program offered to the homeless reveals an intricate process that combines social assistance, education, and spiritual transformation used as an effective tool in seeing lives changed in the urban world. After the intake process, clients (as they are called) are assigned caseworkers to give them the support they need to graduate from what is called, “Regeneration Program.” MRM rejects the idea of rehabilitation, considering it a concept that is short-lived. Dr. Jacobs comments that regeneration is a word that conveys the idea of transformation and restoration that bring a lasting and eternal change. The client is also assigned to attend one or two processing groups that serve as accountability partners to begin to “unfold their backpacks” of history in life. During two to three months, the client has to memorize verses of Scripture
and principles for living that later he will recite to the caseworker. This initial step of
discipline and structured lifestyle is designed to recondition the mind of the individual to
think productively. An average of eight visits with the caseworker is required during a ten
to twelve month period to evaluate progress in life.

A major component to the psychological and spiritual renewal of clients at MRM
is implemented during the Regeneration program. The use of the Alpha course has
produced success stories for the MRM. It is a curriculum designed to utilize the Bible as
its main text to reveal the deadly world of addiction and its adverse effects on individuals.
Clients go through self-evaluation and examine the choices they have made in life.
Through the study of the Word of God, clients receive biblical counseling on overcoming
the addiction that ensnared them to “lose everything they had” and become a victim of
homelessness. Alpha is a seventeen-week course that includes two hours a day of Bible
study. It is practical in content and precisely applicable to the clients. Paul James, an
MRC client, cited that Alpha helped him learn to discipline his life to accept
responsibilities and fulfill them, which was a task that “I kept bumping my head on all the
time.”

Job training is offered to all clients who have completed the Alpha course.
Practical instructions on how to seek out and secure employment opportunities are
offered in addition to tips on interviewing successfully.

“Grad Phase” and “Transition” are two higher learning programs made available
at the Center for Men. Grad Phase takes the clients through higher education after they
have acquired their diplomas in their perspective levels of education. Most of the clients
at this phase of Regeneration move on to obtain a college-level education. Transition on
the other hand is a program requiring clients to begin accepting more personal responsibilities in their lives such as paying rent and utilities, setting up bank accounts, and handling budgets. Financial accountability is part of this process of transitioning the client from dependent living to one of independence.

Finally, for clients who have completed the required length of time and program involvement, graduation becomes a time of great “celebration and rejoicing”. They are given caps and gowns, diplomas are handed out, and friends and families are invited to witness a once defeated life become one of victory and transformation. Many of the clients still going through the program see the potential they have as others testify of their own success stories and become even more encouraged to finish the program themselves. In 2002 almost 180 students graduated from the program and acquired job placement.

A similar concept is offered to women who find themselves homeless and part of the Center for Women and Children at the MRM. This forty-bed facility offers a comprehensive residential program for homeless women with children. The Center also provides emergency overnight shelter for single women of all ages. The program includes classes on parenting, nutrition, budgeting, computers, Bible study, and GED preparation. Group sessions address interpersonal skills dealing with issues of homelessness and empowering clients with an understanding to aid in preventing future episodes.

Homeless women with children have come to MRM for help. For this reason, special consideration is given to the family situation in the design of what is also called, Regeneration Program. Observation and further inquiry were somewhat difficult for the lack of accessibility to the Director of the Program and entrance into the building facility. Three times I attempted to meet with her but to no avail; therefore, the examination of
this area of MRM’s ministry to women was limited to secondhand information and testimonials acquired from public documents.

Furthermore, Dr. Jacobs reports on the involvement of the mission in Miami:

In our eighty-year-old trajectory, we have been instrumental in the development and implementation of large-scale programs to help alleviate the overwhelming needs of the poorest of the poor. In doing so, our extensive experience with community involvement has helped us develop sophisticated skills and systems to deal with the social problems we are being presented in today’s society. As we provide quality services to the poor and the homeless, we have been involved with entire families that are in need of many social and spiritual services. (Miami Rescue Mission 2)

The MRM is strategically located in the heart of Miami’s impoverished areas known as Overtown and Wynwood. To restore a sense of pride and belonging to the residents of the area through the delivery of meaningful services, and true care and concern for the community’s future is the vision of the mission. The targeted community of Overtown has a low 24 percent high school graduate population and a mere 2.7 percent college graduate constituency. Most parents are either unemployed or under-employed resulting in frequent and unfavorable consequences at home. The welfare and needs of children are impacted by the economic status of their parents. This is reflected in the increase of arrest, sex offenses and homicides in this area. For the children and youth of the communities of Overtown and Wynwood, a great need to provide educational and skills development is present. The growing need to rescue youth and children from destructive behaviors, habits, and influences requires intervention by way of after-school programs that provide a safe, drug-free facility to combat the struggles confronted in a drug-infested neighborhood:

This reality has forced us to create and become heavily involved with preventive efforts to help minimize the likelihood of potential
homelessness. The most apparent way to do this is by working very closely with “at-risk” youth. The MRM has made a commitment to this community not to ignore and look the other way, when it comes to working with our youth. (Miami Rescue Mission 20)

On December 2001 MRM inaugurated a 2 ½ million dollar, state-of-the art facility designated the Miami Rescue Mission Community Youth Activity Center (CYAC). The Center provides activities intended to attract youth, children, and their families. Daily after-school programs bring children from all over the community to receive tutoring, mentoring, and assistance with their homework to improve their academic achievements. Training for parents at the Center addresses behavior and relational conflicts that lead to high crime, drug abuse, poor academic performance, and gang activity.

The CYAC creates an environment that is safe and free of drugs, crime, and violence. The focus on education takes on various forms to achieve academic excellence, making learning fun and interactive with a supportive methodology applied by mentors and youth leaders of different backgrounds. In addition, the teaching incorporated in the entire program encompasses four main values: respect, responsibility, honesty, and caring. MRM staff who works at the CYAC intentionally models these values before the participants.

One of the highlights for the children and youth who participate in the program is the sports program called “S.L.A.M.” (Saving Lives Athletic Ministry). Participants enjoy playing basketball on a full court, state-of-the-art gymnasium. This sports program is also intentionally constructed to provide opportunities to develop healthy social skills, learn team concepts, and improve physical fitness.
Moreover, frequent field trips are scheduled throughout the year to allow the young people in the program to broaden their spheres of experience in the areas of art and culture. They are also exposed to people and places that serve as positive reinforcements and role models. Encouraging students to believe in themselves and their dreams is also a goal of the youth program.

When asked about the spiritual aspect of the program and how the participants are evangelized and discipled, Joseph Leyva, CYAC’s program director, related that the first step is recruiting people to work who are “in the faith” and will model their Christian walk before the children:

The way they live and conduct their lives before the children and youth will communicate truths about God. During group activities such as a field trip, staff workers offer prayers before traveling to once again plant seeds into the hearts of the young children about spiritual matters. We speak of God constantly around here.

CYAC reports that illiteracy is one of the biggest barriers to the gospel for the youth. “It’s hard to tell that child that God loves them, and that he will take care of them especially when they try to open a book and a teacher tells him to read something. He thinks very low of himself. It’s a constant struggle with the enemy.” The difficulty that illiteracy presents confirms even more the need to continue their reading enhancement program through tutoring, but also an aggressive recruiting effort is underway to provide more volunteers for the system.

Miami Rescue Mission has enlarged its territory to provide a wider “net” to catch individuals and families with dire needs. Innovative social programs coupled with a spiritual emphasis have helped put lives back together in this complex urban community. Although the MRM is involved in other ministry activities, the programs presented in this
section were chosen because of their significance for the formulation of principles for a street-smart ministry.

**Summary of Cross Analysis**

Through the process of triangulation, I have identified nine principles that formulate distinct, purposeful, and effective evangelistic strategies for urban ministry. These ministries I have deemed “street-smart” are (1) holistic, (2) Great Commission-Centered, (3) engage the social needs of the city, (4) value education, (5) enter the world of politics, (6) focus on the family, (7) led by street-smart people, (8) preach and teach the Word of God and, (9) are a praying church.

The ministries of the Trinity Church, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, and the Miami Rescue Mission lived out these nine principles and used them not only as parameters but also as catalysts in shaping actual ministry activities. Having been cross analyzed through triangulation, these ministry practices had matching and developing patterns that give rise to effective evangelistic strategies, principles for urban ministry and characteristics of people and churches that can best reach the cities for God.

**Evangelistic Strategies and Principles for Urban Ministry**

**Research Question 1**

What common principles from these existing paradigms guide the formulation of evangelistic strategies to reach the cities for God effectively?

Evangelistic strategies for urban ministry are birth out of the desire to meet the needs of the people in the community honestly, consciously and intentionally. Human needs encompass a wide range of areas including the physical, social, spiritual, mental, emotional, material and financial. The three ministries named in this study have
developed strategies for effective urban evangelism. The common strategies found within the research subjects are founded upon the principles that each one of them distinctively practices. The method of triangulation used in this research brings to surface at least nine principles for a street-smart ministry.

**Principle #1: A Street-Smart Ministry Approaches Ministry Holistically**

The three ministries selected for study were found to be holistic in the structuring of their ministries. Any urban ministry that seeks to reach the heart of the city for God must understand the critical importance of embracing the needs of the whole person. A holistic approach to ministry goes beyond the traditional practices of some in providing spiritual nurturing alone. For these ministries, any effort exerted to reach individuals for God must be ready and equipped to address their physical, emotional, mental, sociological, and financial needs as well. The three models in this paper are fruitful ministries today in the city of Miami because of their intentional holistic emphasis.

For example, at the Miami Rescue Mission, the usual process of ministry begins by meeting the physical needs of their clients first. “Churches at times are quick to give people the Bible without giving them bread for their stomach,” said Dr. Frank Jacobs. People who are lost and hungry are more apt to listen to the gospel message after they have been fed and are free of their hunger pains. Jacobs commented, “People who come to the MRM know that their physical needs are going to be met.” The message of hope at the MRM begins by giving the needy hot meals and a place to stay. The homeless people who come there find a place that preaches the love of Jesus Christ through their actions and not merely with words. Holts said, “We take care of the spiritual man, but we want to make sure that the physical man is also taken care of.” At these ministries, they insure
that no one who comes to them for help is turned back out on the streets without addressing their needs. Initially, individuals and families come with great physical needs for which the staff must be prepared. Then the process of discipleship comes into focus in making them people who will be able to return to society as “whole.”

In conjunction with their belief of addressing the physical needs of the person, these three organizations are also convinced their mission is more than just handing out soup and bread but assisting people in developing into productive and fruitful citizens. This mission is clearly expressed in their vision statement for the inner city.

**Principle #2: A Street-Smart Ministry Lives Out the Great Commission**

To see the spiritually lost saved and become fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ is the goal of these organizations (Matt. 28:18). Street-smart ministries are soul-winning ministries. The Holy Spirit, through the Word and the witness of believers, draws individuals to Christ, convicts them of sin, and regenerates them into a child of God. Evangelism is really big for these ministries. Weekly evangelistic meetings, events, and programs are held inside their campuses and around the community.

Not only are these organizations soul-winning ministries, but they are disciple making as well. Ministry programs are designed to disciple the new convert and deepen the walk of the mature believer. These street-smart ministries see their work of evangelism incomplete without an effort to disciple individuals into deeper relationships with God and active service in his kingdom.

In order to reach people in the city, ministries demonstrate compassion, love, and understanding for lost people (Hunter, *Church* 31). One of the ways these churches reach people is to look proactively for needs they can meet in their community. They love
people by attending to their needs. They allow Jesus to be seen through them as they show compassion and network individuals with resources to meet their needs. They depend heavily on God to change their community as they seek his direction for ministry.

Their perspective of ministering to people in the city is one of giving value and much respect to everyone. They win their hearts by believing in them even when no one else does. These ministries not only engage the people in their community through structured programs but through one-on-one relationships. To allow people to “belong before they believe” is a strategy employed. Once meaningful relationships and mutual trust are established, the presentation of the gospel is received without threat or manipulation. Group meetings on and off campus nurture healthy relationships designed to mature the individuals in their bonds with God and others around them. Russell Barber remarks that street-smart ministries hold on to the philosophy that people need to “belong to someone who will walk the journey with them.” Strategic support groups are implemented to expose the individuals to a positive and Christian environment regardless of their age, race, or background.

Often church involvement by clients in the need-based ministries is a natural consequence. Trinity Church Ministries Director Pam Wilkerson believes that by helping participants obtain jobs through programs like Esther Project, individuals begin attending church out of their own will. A street-smart ministry (SMM) seeks to involve people in their local church ministries to influence them to live the “abundant life” God wants for them purports Pastor Rich Wilkerson. As for the youth of the community, “we try to get them planted in our church to keep them out of trouble” details Pam Wilkerson. Another reason for involvement is to produce accountability in their lives. Holding people
accountable with one another lessens the potential for individuals to struggle in life alone and fall victim to the “evils” found in the urban world. The key is building relationships with the lost. The soul winner must be reminded that “relational evangelism does not mean that we need not be intentional…. [I]n order to evangelize effectively, we establish relationship. But then, we offer Jesus. Anything less than Jesus as the answer is a rope of sand” (Tuttle 85).

SMM understands that discipleship takes on the process of assimilating people into the body of Christ for service. Jacobs observes that their goal is to create a disciple that will “contribute back to society.” They must become contributors and not just recipients. The goal of every SSM must cover at least four principles as described by Robert D. Carle and Louis A. DeCaro:

[L]iberation from personal sin and from oppressive social structures; healing, exemplified in the suffering servant image of Isaiah 53;… an authentic experience of Christian community (koinonia) that issues in service (diakonia); and personal and structural transformation, which represents a call to perpetual growth. (112)

SMM understands that hindrances to evangelizing people in the city are present. One of them is derived from an underlying knowledge that, “people in the city can detect a ‘phony’ from a mile away” declares Barber of MRM. Genuiness of character are integral in leading people to Christ. Soul-winners and disciplers must empty themselves and pour love into the lives of others. Evangelism must not be self-serving. Soul-winning is about the other person.

Another hindrance to the task of evangelism is the presence of hopelessness among those who suffer in the city. The church is called to show hope in a world of lost hopes and dreams. SMM designs ministries to help people who have failed in life to try
again with God’s help. Even those who have failed numerous times and faced much rejection can succeed through Jesus Christ. They need people who will accept them even when they fail. According to Dr. Jacobs, “The number one greatest challenge is breaking through years and years of failure and disappointment and the mentality that there is no hope.” SMM must help them to believe and hope. They must see possibilities for renewal and new beginnings. “We never kick anyone out of the program,” said Pam Wilkerson. “People who come for help have been rejected so many times before. The thing that makes them stick to the road of healing is to see the unconditional love of people who would not give up on them.”

Furthermore, these three organizations indicated that need-based ministry is an effective strategy among the urbanites. Urban ministries grow out of meeting real needs of people within the community. Going where the needs are is a biblically sound ministry concept. Dr. Jacobs believes that a ministry program must match the present and real needs of the community. “Don’t put a rescue mission in an affluent area,” recommends Jacobs. For example, the Dream Center is located appropriately in Los Angeles among the poor in the community. An organization must know where they belong in the work of God. Not every ministry works in every location; it must meet the felt needs of the community.

Another barrier to the evangelistic mission of urban ministries is isolation and close-mindedness. Some churches in the city have become no more than the immovable sign hanging on their faintly painted building. Other churches have become mere social clubs, a place to gather that has no lasting and meaningful benefit to the community. SMM have individuals who are able to know the people in the community in a personal
way and be known by them as friends who belong to their community. Russell Barber, Director of the Center for Men at the MRM discusses his strategy in knowing and becoming known in the community:

I walk the blocks and look and visit people. I had to know the people when I came here. It is just like fishing. You must ‘chum’ the water first. You got to chum the community. People who need to eat will come, and then you can minister. Whatever it takes for them to come, you do it.

SMM persons make contact with their eyes and their hands. Unconditional love is about shaking the hands and hugging the necks of people who need to find hope in their lives again.

Lastly, evangelism is understood by SMM as one of process. Danny Thomas of Trinity comments, “Process takes time, and time is my life.” Urban ministry knows that it takes time to see transformation in the lives of people and its city. Pam Wilkerson concurs that the transformation process does not happen in a single church service:

Many times they are expected to go to the altar and get rid of all their problems right then and there. It’s not that easy. The reality is different. There are those who are in an abusive relationship and they have to work through it. They go home and still their problems are there. They can’t just easily kick the person out of their lives that is the source of their financial survival. At times it is not easy for them to unload these things in the church in a one-hour service.

The process of evangelism at times is the tilling of the soil—the dirty job of seeing no fruit at all but just preparing the soil of the heart for the seed of hope and change to be planted. Process evangelism calls for someone to love, listen, and “do life” together with people where they are in their lives. “God will do the work” remarks Jacobs.

**Principle #3: A Street-Smart Church Engages the Social Needs of the City**

If ministries are going to make an impact in the city, they must face the social
challenges of this complex urban society. To simplify its definition of social ministry, Dr. Frank Jacobs said, “We need to clean it up. Don’t even call it social ministry. Call it a ‘ministry of compassion.’ It is just as spiritual to give somebody a cup of water as it is to tell them about John 3:16.”

The social services provided by these model organizations are making a big impact in the city of Miami. SMM structures a program of “giving.” Russell Barber believes that at times ministry means giving first before getting a response. According to Rich Wilkerson, “The commission of the church is to go to the poor. This is what the King told us to do.” The list of social ministries offered by these organizations presented a line of efforts to engage the social diseases found in the city. Effective social programs are designed to meet both short and long-term solutions. The need for food is addressed immediately and remedied for a short time. People can become dependant on receiving help from social programs and become paralyzed from living on their own; therefore, street-smart ministries social programs seek to remedy a need with a solution that has a long-term benefit for individuals.

The manner in which social services are conducted at each one of these ministries offers valuable insights. First, all who come for help are shown great respect. Staff and volunteer workers show participants that they are valuable. Linda Freeman explains “When they come through our doors, we tell them that God has a solution for their problems. If we can not find it, we will look for it.”

Almost all of the social programs offered by these three models receive government funding. Without such funding much of the help being given would not be possible. One of the insights provided by Linda Freeman, Director of the Social Service
Program at Trinity Church, is to start something that will produce results in helping the people of the community:

You can’t just say to the government that you love people. They have to see what you are already doing. Once they see a direct benefit to what you are doing, then they will give you what you need. It is not just because you are a nice person. They will always ask what have you done and what are the results of your work. Try, even if it is small. Do something, then go to them and say here is our mission and it seems to match your mission.

The need for more organizations to be birthed and help the urban needy is solicited by the governing body of the city. Freeman asserts, “They want to get people off of welfare and get them to fill jobs. They have run out of ideas. So if they can see that you are doing what they need, then they will be able to partner with you even more.”

To those endeavoring to institute a social service program, Executive Pastor Danny Thomas warned to promise only what you can fulfill:

Only do what you can. Don’t make promises you can’t keep, or you will lose their trust. People in the city can see right through you. They know what fakes look like. Follow up on your word. They want to trust you. Don’t exaggerate. Be a church people can be proud of talking about. Be honest about what your resources are. Don’t say that you will do something and don’t. Don’t promise what you can’t give. Don’t overstate your resources. Overstate your expense understate your income and you will balance your budget every time. Don’t tell them that you got what you don’t have. If you are there for them honestly, then they will be there for you for your program. State what you have clearly then PERFORM [emphasis mine]. The church has a way of under performing. We overstate what we can do. We cannot fall into this fallacy. For example, we cannot say ‘Come to Jesus and you will get rid of all your problems.’ You cannot get people to be frustrated at you because they will influence people away from you or to you based on your performance.

Each of the model ministries has experienced growth with the people of their community. As an example, the Trinity Church today is bringing in an average of 1,500 people every Sunday for morning service. Five years ago the church had 250 people.
Currently, they have about six thousand families in the database of the church and four thousand of those families are in their social service database. Social service now has fourteen thousand clients.

SMM establishes social services for their community as a response to the hurting people in their pews. “Our pews are made up of our community. Whatever issue they are dealing with, that is the focus of ministry that we want to provide,” asserts Holts.

**Principle #4: A Street-Smart Ministry Values Education**

The social structure of the city is closely tied to the quality of education its people possess. SMM understands that the survival of urban communities relies heavily upon its educated people. SMM engages the urban society as a contributing vehicle to provide opportunities for people to acquire higher learning. “It’s time for the church to rediscover its own serious educational task” (White 17).

Education is a “tool-giving” ministry. SSM empowers people through education. Their approach to education is to encourage people to seek not only employment but to pursue careers. Death to one’s education is death to one’s future. The poor quality and lack of education contribute to social decline and is also the reason for the growing population of homelessness in the nation. The president of the Miami Rescue Mission identifies education as key to “stopping the revolving door syndrome” among the men and women of its surrounding community. Furthermore, he said, “We must set them up for life, end irresponsibility, and live out the old Indian saying, ‘Give him a fish and he’ll eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime.’” Good education allows people to break out of stagnant cycles of failure to enter vibrant lives of engaging personal growth. During his meetings with his clients, Russell Barber instructs, “Men,
don’t leave home without your own set of keys.” Education gives people keys for life.

Education within these selected organizations goes beyond academic learning. They are educating the people in their community through programs in life skills, job skills, communication skills, and spiritual discipline. Ultimately, their goal is to teach people to be winners, not quitters. Referring to men at the MRM, Russell Barber comments, “These men have not completed a lot of stuff. After they have been here for thirty days, then we give them the ‘soldier of the cross’ award. We make them feel like they can complete something. When they finish a booklet they get a star.” To get the feel for success in life, they always receive a reward for completing a task.

Within each of the organizations, education is carefully adapted to the population they are serving. It deals with each person where they are in life. In the city, some grow up with low self-esteem and lack the confidence necessary to believe they can succeed. Through the education programs of these ministries, clients are taught the “can-do attitude.” Education is key to equipping men, women, and children to dream big and possess the necessary skills to fulfill those goals. Street-smart ministry is a learning environment.

**Principle #5: A Street-Smart Ministry Enters the World of Politics**

Street-smart ministry is politically savvy. Differing from the traditional view of church and state, the ministries in this study have not separated their missions from the governing structure of the city and state, rather, they have joined forces to meet the countless needs of the communities around them. Compromising one’s faith is not an option, but we must network when possible with those who have the resources to partner with the mission God has given the Church. The reality is urban ministry requires a huge
financial budget. Street-smart ministries have discovered that in many instances
government funding is available and given to faith-based organizations. This surge of
increased popularity to receive grants through the government and private sectors has
afforded churches resources to implement their visions and impact the urban frontier.
This resource is being explored more and more by evangelical groups who are on the
frontlines of the inner city.

Relationships with government leaders and city officials are essential today within
the urban borders. Such relationships can be instrumental in accomplishing much for the
Lord and the community, especially so when both organizations have a shared interest.
Politicians can help in awarding monetary grants churches need to implement ministries
in the city. Each one of the model ministries observed has received sizeable financial
grants that are enabling them to impact their communities even more. “Our largest givers
have come from outside the church and non-Christian organizations,” said Danny
Thomas of Trinity Church.

SSM leaders know how to partner with politicians and acquire assistance from
private donors. Jim Bender of MRM affirms that when financially favorable relationships
begin to develop, they must be nurtured:

Bring them to see what you are doing. Take them out for a tour. Let them
see the lives that have been changed. Let them see the ministry in action.
Get them to see as many civic activities as you can. Be interested with
what they are doing. Use the people to tell their own stories. Allow people
to see what God has done. Show success stories. People want to be
associated with winners and successful people.

Other beneficial habits to form and strategies to implement in the city are given
by the three senior leaders of the ministries interviewed and are as follows:
Network with city officials and government heads by building good friendships. Identify the key players in the city. Venture out in the market place and knock on doors. ‘Remember,’ Danny Thomas said, ‘every door was opened by someone else. One contact can always lead to another person.’ Know how to work with the system. There is a way of getting ministry done despite apparent opposition. Get into the place where you find favor.

Street-smart leaders and organizations are not afraid to rub shoulders with the political authorities in the city. They nurture relationships with government leaders by showing up at what is important to them. Danny Thomas offers additional insight into this matter: “If you want them to be important to you, then you show importance to what they are doing. Just show up. Don’t say a thing. Go to the town hall meetings and political rallies; you may not support them but just show up.” Open the door for government leaders to come to you in confidence. When a political leader approaches a street-smart ministry, the leader needs to know how to maintain confidentiality. He adds, “The political leaders in our city have a spiritual side to them no matter if you believe it or not. They need to be comfortable around us.”

Street-smart ministries understand the importance of partnership within the political arena, the private sectors of the corporate world, and individual public donors. They are not shy about requesting help from other churches, local establishments, and individuals in the community. Inner-city leaders know they cannot do the work alone. They need the help of everyone they can recruit. They build alliances with organizations and private donors both large and small. “Network yourself in the city. There is money out there. There is only a lack of ideas. Find it and use it for the kingdom work” observes Jim Bender.

SSM knows the importance of building a donor-based (acquisition) program.
The Miami Rescue Mission spent nearly one million dollars in 2003 to acquire new partners. Assisted by a constant flow of information through the use of media and visual documents, they are able to sell their vision more effectively. Bender advises, “Spend money to get money. Public relations is important; do a good job at it.” Nevertheless, SSM understands that government dollars are only good to a certain extent (Miami Rescue Mission 158). It must be a short-term solution. If called upon to compromise Christian convictions for dollars, the offer should always be rejected. “We must be able to keep doing what God has called us to do without purging our message. Allow the Body of Christ to support our ministries,” purports Bender.

Dynamics of partnership in urban ministry take on many forms as it networks people who have been touched to give. Through the countless hours that volunteers give to the community and the work of God, selfless giving is displayed daily. SMM recognize that volunteers in their programs are the driving force behind a successful ministry.

Partnering human resources and volunteerism is a team concept of ministry vital to effectiveness in the city. The task is too large for one person, one organization, and one group to tackle. SSM are quick to recognize the team of people making ministry “happen” in the city. Linthicum contends that four leaders present in every community make things happen. To be effective in any community ministry, evangelistic endeavor or outreach, the church must enlist at least the surface approval of these four leaders. He identifies them as follows: gatekeepers, caretakers, flak catchers, and brokers (Linthicum, “Authentic Strategies” 113). The gatekeepers wield power determining who is accepted in the community, and they are very influential in directing people to others in the neighborhood who can help them resolve minor problems. The caretakers create an
environment that fosters warm-hearted relationships among the neighborhood. They model community spirit in caring for the needs of one another. According to Linthicum, the gatekeepers and caretakers are the most influential leadership power in any community. Without their support, mission outreach efforts will be largely unsuccessful in their neighborhoods.

Two other leaders in the community with which networking are important are the flak catchers and the brokers. The flak catchers are aware of what is happening in the lives of people in the neighborhood, and they have the network to disseminate information quickly. Lastly are the brokers. These are the politicians or individuals who have connections with influential people outside of the community. They have the power to use their external contacts to resolve issues within the community (Linthicum, “Authentic Strategies” 113-14). Networking with these leaders in a community is essential for urban ministry leaders desiring to impact their areas of the city.

**Principle #6: A Street-Smart Ministry Focuses on the Family**

People in communities build societies, and communities are made up of individuals that belong to family units. The conditions of urban communities today are the reflection of the families that are its residents. The social dynamics found in the city also contribute as factors to enhancing life for its people or creating decline in its moral, educational, financial, physical and spiritual well-being. Family units are made up of individuals who vary in their ages and, consequently, their needs. Unfortunately, the well-being of many families found in the inner cities like Miami are dismantled and dysfunctional. SSM seeks to assist the biological family by way of: support, education, confrontation, leisure activities, and liberty to be oneself (Shelley 283).
Russell Barber sees the need to rebuild bridges among urban families. The task of reliving the past in order to create a change for the future is not a quick fix. As Director of the Community Youth Activities of the MRM, Joseph Leyva understands the long journey to which he, his staff, and volunteers must commit in walking together with the families who amble into their facilities.

The MRM, along with the other two churches, has clearly made a difference in the lives of the families in the city of Miami. All of them have a youth program that is designed to create a positive Christian environment, improve social skills, provide fun-filled activities, and make available assistance in educational needs. Although many of these activities offer valuable services, one important benefit they provide is simply to “keep kids out of trouble” says, Leyva.

All three ministries recognize the mammoth climb they must take to see their vision of decreasing illiteracy in the city. Weekly, children, men and women are engaging in literacy programs that will improve their chances to succeed in life. Family care is such an intricate part of what these ministries strive to do for the community. Recognizing that many who come to them are suffering a blow to their family structures for reasons ranging from drugs to a financial crisis, the ministries work hard to extend to people a chance to find a place they can call home. With the help of God, many find their way to living healthy and productive lives in society.

In order to reach the families in the city effectively, Linda Freeman recognizes that this task must be embraced corporately. The church body and its staff must decide “what type of church they want to be.” She warns, “They will have to allow people to come in to church that they will not be comfortable to be around. Economic and racial
divides can arise and shun them away. At times they want to escape, relax, worship the
Lord, pray, sing, and say ‘I don’t want to hear any problems.’” Congregations and their
leadership must have hearts to help hurting families. Many times helping is a messy job.
Full ownership of an urban family ministry that incorporates an emphasis on restoring
lives and educating them for a better future is a must for the urban church to succeed in
reaching and discipling the city dweller.

**Characteristics of Street-Smart People and Churches**

**Research Question 2**

What kinds of people and churches can best reach the cities for God?

Fueling every successful ministry in the urban context are the people and churches
that formulate and implement effective evangelistic strategies. Out of this study, three
essential characteristics were found in people and churches that are reaching the cities for
God. The profile found among the leaders herein and the churches and organizations they
lead, three essential principles highlighted in this study.

**Principle #7: A Street-Smart Ministry Is Led by Street-Smart People**

Every successful urban ministry is comprised of a group of people who
understand the people and culture in the city. The creation and implementation of
effective urban strategies must begin with the leader. John Maxwell purports, “Everything
rises and falls on leadership (xi). Effective ministry begins with the leadership.

The leaders of the highlighted ministries possess leadership qualities that are
proven effective in the urban setting. All of these three senior leaders can attest to a
genuine and divine call of God upon their lives. In addition, they possess a crystal-clear
vision of the ministry to which they were called. Church leadership authority Dale
Galloway observes that leaders must see the vision first:

Vision is faith with a picture attached. The visionary leader sees what others do not see, sees before others, sees what may not even exist, and sees the results of following a vision. Authentic visionary leaders communicate a picture of a preferred future that people can see, believe, and support. (11)

During their interviews, these leaders eloquently articulated the call, the vision, and the plans God placed in their hearts. They have a vision for their community that reaches beyond the traditional, conventional approaches to ministry. In answer to the challenges that have halted the growth of the churches in their communities, they have a vision for overcoming the impossibilities through creative and innovative methods.

All three have formulated a concise mission statement rooted deeply in the Bible and owned personally. Clearly they perceive their main calling is to serve. Of all the places they could have chosen to live free of the many challenges attributed to the urban context, they obeyed the call to serve the needs of the people in the city. In this regard, Tuttle affirms the need for believers to accept the responsibility to serve as a means of evangelism in hopes of winning people to God (Tuttle 85).

Without doubt, these leaders know that the call to serve the needy of the inner city is greater than the resources these ministries possess, but their faith propels each one of them to dream with God. “There is a great need, but we serve a great God,” expounds Jacobs. These leaders have witnessed divine miracles take place in their lives and ministry. They also expect that more miracles will happen as they seek the face of God and are obedient to his calling.

In light of the examples in the lives of these leaders, an urban ministry leader must be full of compassion for people. Contrary to a sense of pity toward the city and its
residents, these leaders possess integrity and genuine compassion attained through their personal walk with the Lord. As mentioned earlier, Pastor Rich Wilkerson began to shed tears during the moment in the interview where he referred to the lost souls of Miami.

Leaders know that their integrity and character must be above reproach. They all three agree that “people in the city can detect a ‘phony’ a mile away.” Urban leaders must be trustworthy. They must be above reproach and living exemplary lives both privately and publicly.

Street-smart leaders have developed a deep and consistent prayer life. Prayer is essential for personal growth in their relationship to God and of crucial importance to the success of their ministry. Pastor Randall Holts counsels, “Pray that God opens the right door. God will present the right opportunity and you will need to know when to walk in.”

Though they possess great faith, leaders in the city are also realistic. They do not look for a grandiose ministry to happen instantaneously. Dr. Jacobs remarked, “Jesus started with twelve, do not over set your goals. Grow through discipleship. Remember that things don’t just start big.”

Urban leaders must lead through example; they are willing to do what they ask others to do for them and the community. Each of them expressed accounts in their lives of sacrificing something valuable to them in place of the higher calling to serve the inner city. They are steady and stick to their promises.

Leaders know how and when to be assertive. They are able to see and grasp opportunities as they appear. Street-smart leaders who have been exposed to the city for a long time develop a sense of discernment. Russell Barber interviews homeless individuals right off the streets, and people who come in contact with him know that Mr. Barber does
not play games. They try their street moves, and he sees right through them. Individuals such as Jim Bender (Assistant Director of MRM) who do not consider themselves street-smart compensate by surrounding themselves with street-smart people.

Leaders are “outside the box” thinkers. Obstacles that seem to be in their way do not limit them. They find a way around their challenges. They do not attempt everything on their own, but they recruit well and train properly to run excellent organizations. They understand that street-smart ministry must be coupled with competent people who can manage each area of ministry such as administration, networking, fundraising, etc.

In addition, leaders are not perfectionist, but they require excellence in ministry. “Don’t be content with ‘halfway’ jobs. Do your best, and give your best,” continues Bender. They are not locked in the office; rather, they spend time with people, always investing in building relationships with the people in the community. As much as possible, leaders need to know the people as much as possible and be known by them as a people person.

Although staff leaders are diverse in ministry gifts and talents, they recruit people who are of like passion, namely to fulfill the Great Commission. They are “on the go” to build a successful ministry. As they go, they take others with them to train, equip, and set free for ministry. Referring to her pastor, Linda Freeman remarks, “He has allowed me to try new things and is willing to give me the chance to try.”

Danny Thomas shares that leaders in the city must become influencers. Leaders never see a dead end road. They are always looking for solutions and answers to needs through networking and partnership with other people. They have an attitude that says, “There is a way; with God it is possible.”
Street-smart leaders are dreamers. They dream to take the city for God with an attitude of Joshua taking the city of Jericho bellowing, “Shout for the Lord has given you the city” (Josh. 6:8 NIV). Making it in the city takes a dream.

One other characteristic of a street-smart leader is his ability to “exegete” the city and its people. Their practice of exegeting the city includes a frequent walk in the neighborhood, listening to what is being said in houses and buildings. They do prayer walks and observe the city to discern its people, their needs, and what God is saying to them concerning his plans.

Inner-city leaders are committed people. They do not retreat from the battles and struggles before them. “They must have the guts to pursue the dreams of God,” said Pastor Randall Holts. They pursue God’s vision in order to create a model of success. They set the standards of excellence, credibility, and determination.

Lastly, street-smart leaders are missional taking the approach of ministry with the mind-set of a missionary to the city. Their evangelistic efforts are Christ-centered. Always pointing people to God in everything they do as the source of hope and true joy, street-smart ministries understand that to be missional is to be incarnated not in the sense of the physical, psychological, and personal, but to be one with them in their need, pain, and suffering. In addition, street-smart leaders live life with people and become one of them. They are touched by the real needs of the community and are willing to get close to people. With leaders they know and can trust, people will celebrate their joys, as well as share their struggles and pain. Relationship building is crucial to the discipleship process.

Street-smart leaders also know how to be friendly and develop a friendly atmosphere. Pastor Rich Wilkerson advises ministers to have a really good smile when
they get up on the stage. In this way leaders can begin communicating the love of God to the heart of the city.

Missional leaders take the step of being willing to go out in the market place and be with the people they are trying to reach. They “rub shoulders” with people where they are in a nonthreatening way. They exegete the context of the city from within rather than from the outside as an observer. To influence the city means to engage them on their own “turf” in real-life situations that often have their highs and lows.

Jesus using illustrations from everyday, common events or objects taught observation lessons. For example, Jesus pointed out to his disciples an important lesson regarding faith from a fruitless fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22). Jesus also noticed little children and used the occasion to teach his disciples about being like them in order to enter God’s kingdom (Luke 18:15, 16).

Observation is an important tool in learning lessons about the city. Just merely observing what goes on in the streets can provide information concerning many aspects of city life. For instance, the graffiti signs on the street walls normally reveal a message from the young people of a neighborhood. Beggars and prostitutes roaming the street corners are symbols that exhibit people’s deep needs. In my opinion, everything in the city means something, and that something can teach us much about how to reach urban people for God.

Being missional means to be present for the people in their time of crisis. It is becoming authentic. They want to see real people who are able to see God in them away from the context of church grounds and activities.
Principle #8: A Street-Smart Ministry Preaches and Teaches the Word of God

The Word of God takes precedence at these selected sites of ministry. Through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word, these ministries have witnessed countless lives transformed and growing into mature believers. Regular structured Bible study and pulpit messages are helping shape lives and causing a positive effect in the community. For example, at the Miami Rescue Mission, men memorize the Scriptures relating to their crisis situation that help them heal from their past. Pastor Randall Holts of NHBC teaches and preaches for the edification of new believers with an emphasis on speaking to men who are the social leaders of the family unit. Lastly, Pastor Rich Wilkerson’s teaching and preaching draw a large following of people who confirm its being the reason for their weekly attendance and choosing to become a member of the church. Every person interviewed and asked the question pertaining to their reason for choosing to become a part of the organization cited the preaching of the Word. The street-smart church clearly understands that being a Word-centered church is vital to fulfilling the Great Commission. In To Spread the Power, George Hunter discerns three invaluable lessons English revivalist John Wesley utilized in preaching the gospel to the crowds of his day that are extremely relevant today:

1. If an approach or method ought to achieve your apostolic objectives, but does not, scuttle it—even if you like it!
2. If your employment of a method or approach is effective, use it to the hilt—even if you do not like it!
3. There is no perfect method, which like magic, will do the job for us. Rather, Christians evangelize, preceded and empowered by the Spirit, through culturally appropriate methods. (44)

In addition, early twentieth century Methodist Bishop Frederick Leethe reminds ministers to the city to take time to calm their souls and hear the “still small voice” of
God daily amid the hustle and bustle of the urban pace. If not, their effectiveness will be limited (66). Moreover, he encourages pulpits to present the gospel message in such a way that the message is the focus of the sermon. He admonishes that too much “art or eccentricity” may consume both the message and the messenger (67).

**Principle #9: A Street-Smart Ministry Is a Praying Church**

The leaders of the organizations here take the ministry of prayer seriously. They are convinced that prayer is the channel for the transformation of the city and its people. The great needs of the people drive them to their knees to seek the face of God. “Jesus taught us that he is the burden-bearer. It is our duty and privilege to pray and to discuss these overwhelming responsibilities with him” (Wagner et al. 9).

Lives of people are at stake in the heart of the city. Leaders and staff of these organizations understand that strongholds must be broken to free people. Through engaging power structures “lost men and women will be liberated from the dark oppression of the enemy and drawn by the Holy Spirit to the glorious light of the gospel of Christ” (Wagner 24). Dr. Frank Jacobs testifies, “There is always a divine intervention that we can expect in the work of God when we pray.” Pastor Rich Wilkerson recognizes “[that] ministry is not a human endeavor to do. Have a band of prayer warriors willing to pray for you.” “Systemic change takes place when we pray,” said Pastor Randall Holts. Through much prayer doors are opening for us to expand. Opportunities are there and people that are prepared can seize the opportunities.”

The foundation of every effective ministry must be that of prayer. God moves on behalf of his Church when fervent and sincere prayer occurs. Jesus says in Matthew 10:30, “Pray to the Lord of the Harvest” Churches and individuals must seek God to
transform their cities and bring renewal to both the social and spiritual conditions of the city and its people.

Daniel was a man in the Bible who prayed earnestly for the social and spiritual reformation of his city. An ungodly ruler who did not fear God led the people of Babylon. Still, Daniel’s prayers proved powerful to change the heart of the king as well as to put to justice those who wickedly opposed his devotion to God. Because Daniel prayed, God moved on his behalf. In the most impossible situation, he was delivered by God and became a mighty witness to the people of his land. God performed miracles through Daniel’s life, and because of his prayers he saw God change his nation and its people. The king’s heart was radically changed, and through it he led his people to turn to the true God, the God of Daniel. Daniel 6: 25-28 records the king’s decree:

King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language through out the land: “May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living god and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.” So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. (NIV)

Prayer will move the mountains of impossibilities, and it will change the hearts and minds of those who reject God. Through prayer men’s eyes are opened, hearts are converted, and cities are transformed as in Daniel’s life. Certainly prayer is one component to the effectiveness of reaching the urban city that no ministry can afford to ignore.

Scriptural references for spiritual warfare are noted throughout the Bible both in the Old and the New Testaments. Clearly, forces in the “heavenly realms” are at work in
geographical areas of cities and influence the lives of people (Eph. 6:10-20). Through the
work of Christ, the Church continues to expel the powers of darkness that have
dominated the lives of individuals. Jesus said that he came to destroy the work of the evil
one (John). Jesus and his disciples set free those who were possessed by demons. In one
case, Jesus explained to his disciples that prayer and fasting were necessary to expel the
power of the devil in the life of a young boy (Mark 9:14-29). Today the fight for lives
continues for the Church that would seek to reach the cities for God. The devil is
presently at work in the world destroying the lives of individuals and families; however,
the Church must prevail and continue to pursue the call to the harvest fields of the city.
Christ has invested in every believer the power and authority to be His witnesses (Luke
10:19; Acts 1:8). Moreover, the Church is called to exercise the very same power that was
present in Jesus’ ministry and in the lives of his disciples to set the captives free (Luke
4:18-19).
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The task of evangelizing the urban city is challenging and complex. The challenges are ingrained within the complexities of the social structures and the spiritual matrix found among its inhabitants. This call to the mission field of the cities is not for the fainthearted. Those attempting to accept the responsibility to see the city transformed for God will have to face a grueling reality that the task is bigger than any person, similar to David’s challenge of Goliath. He was outsized and outnumbered. Humanly speaking, David did not stand a chance. In the most inspiring and divine moment, David was driven to face an impossible task. He chose to believe God and put his faith, physical abilities, resources—his life on the line. As a result of David’s courage and relentless pursuit of seeking Jehovah’s will to be fulfilled in the lives of his chosen people, God gave David the victory he desired.

Just like David, three exceptional, courageous, and anointed ministries have accepted the call of God to the inner city of Miami. Coupled with their faith, a street-smart approach to the challenge of evangelizing the city has remarkably impacted the social needs and spiritual conditions of the people. This study attempted to bring to light strategic principles of urban church ministries that serve as a model for evangelism. Three case studies taken from the inner city of Miami have shown considerable success and fruitful results from creative strategic ministries meeting both the social and spiritual needs of the people. The actual ministries that are carried out every day of the week are purposely structured and intentionally designed to hit their target right on the bulls-eye. Through a careful analysis of these ministries, nine common principles essential for urban
ministry were revealed.

Conclusions

The nine strategic principles for street-smart ministries involved in urban evangelism begin with the understanding that urban ministries must be holistic. People in the city are complex and so are their needs. Their needs are more than just the necessity to be in church. Effective churches design ministries in the city that embrace the whole person. These ministries are concerned with the spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, and financial well-being of individuals. Holistic ministry revolves around the need of the person to be whole.

Secondly, urban ministries are evangelistic. They seek to fulfill the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18). Their passion is to continue to seek and to see saved those who are lost. “Jesus Christ saves” is their message, and he is at the center of every ministry from the person on the pew all the way to the homeless one lying on a street corner.

Thirdly, the purpose of the city church is to engage the social needs of the city. They cannot simply be ignored. Many people present in the city need to be fed, clothed, cleaned, educated, and restored back into mainstream society. They need to hear not only about Jesus but also see him through the individuals who are preaching his message. Jesus becomes alive through the social ministries of the church. The message of Christ is a love in action and a love that keeps on giving.

Fourthly, effective urban ministry believes that education transforms lives by capacititating individuals to achieve higher goals. Education opens doors for a brighter future. It gives tools for people to attain employment and contribute to the good of
society. To educate is to empower. Street-smart churches give people the power to shape a positive future for themselves and their families and to discover the abundant life that God intends for them (John 10:10).

Fifthly, street-smart churches understand that the urban world is intertwined and influenced by its political system. The governmental structures of the city present a need for church ministries to build important relationships with the key leaders and influencers in public office. Street-smart churches are involved with shaping their cities alongside the those who hold the political offices. The ministries in this study have greatly benefited from government-funded initiative programs. Knowing how to maneuver through the complex sociopolitical maze of the city, they have accomplished much for the kingdom of God and have acquired beneficial relationships with key leaders of their society to fulfill their mission.

Sixthly, to thrive in the city, urban ministries must prioritize their efforts toward the family unit. The families in the city are threatened by the social diseases that drugs, violence, corruption, poverty, and other destructive habits and lifestyles bring to their communities. These social dilemmas devour the very core of morale and hope necessary for a healthy community. Street-smart ministries build communities by building families with the foundation set in God’s Word. They build and nourish healthy relationships within the family unit, which is the basis of society.

The seventh principle of street-smart ministries is rooted in the role of leadership. Every effective urban leader constantly seeks to understand the world in which he or she is living in order to construct a suitable approach to evangelism. Urban leaders possess God-given characteristics and talents that enable them to exercise the street-smarts
needed not only to survive in the city but to thrive there as well.

Principle number eight reveals the unprecedented role of the church to be the proclaimers of the gospel. The Great Commission is to go and preach the good news. Churches and leaders interviewed in this study are true heralds of the gospel. They are effective communicators from the pulpit to skid row. Whether through a sermon or by serving hot meals to needy persons, they preach the Word. The Word of God is medicine for the sick; it gives life to malnourished souls and bodies. Street-smart churches are propelled by the Word to do ministry. They are equipped by the Word to minister to the needy and empowered to build society.

Lastly, the ninth principle is the lifeline of all ministries, especially those found in the city. The ministry of prayer is key to anything good that can happen to the people in the city. Street-smart churches are wise enough to know that without prayer, their efforts will bear little fruit and their chances of survival with any important result is slim to none. Street-smart congregations and their leaders are praying people.

**Findings of Special Interest**

This research study brought about interests that must be explored by the body of Christ, the Church, who has been called to reach the heart of the city for God. The first issue is the separation of Church and state that has traditionally been viewed as necessary in order not to compromise one’s mission and witness. This separation of entities has created a wedge limiting the potential of “good” by the Church for the state and vice versa. The three ministries researched in this study have discovered a wealth of resources and are continuing to explore opportunities to fund the many ministries they offer the city.
The sanction of faith-based programs by the government is a rich source of funding for church ministries today. Grants and special funding are allotted to organizations proven to have a legitimate program for helping communities and individuals in society. Today many avenues exist through which the Church can receive substantial funding to accomplish its vision for God. Existing churches in the city and those desiring to plant urban ministries should explore the government agencies associated with faith-based ministry initiatives and seek to build the relationships and partnerships that could propel them forward in their mission.

The second point of interest for further research is the reality of the racial tension that can be experienced by church ministries within the city. The New Hope Missionary Baptist Church was the only one out of the three ministry organizations interviewed in this study to have voiced a major concern regarding the reality of racial discrimination in their context of ministry. The racial divide, according to Pastor Randall Holts, is still alive and well in the city of Miami. The impact a church can have is affected by the tension resulting from those who would discriminate against both its people and ministries. Therefore, the question of a strategy of evangelism in a community prone to racial favoritism is a point of interest for the body of Christ to explore, combat, and design ministries to bring racial harmony to the community.

Furthermore, forms of discrimination are experienced in the city that exceeds the racial issue, such as the economic divide, issues of ethnicity, and gender. Questions to be researched are: “Does discrimination exist within these social structures? If so how do they manifest in society? What ministries today are being developed to bridge the gap that separates one race, ethnic people or gender from another?”
Limitations of Study and Recommendations

Principles derived from this research study implicate an applicable strategy usable in other major cities in the nation. Study is limited to a specific area, namely the city of Miami. The subjects in this research were highlighted to serve as models for making inferences and hypotheses for urban ministry strategies. Given the fact that other world-class cities can differ in demographics and culture, specific variables may surface from city to city that could produce differing results when applying the principles presented here. Nevertheless, I am confident that most of the principles that have surfaced in this study will be effective across the board and found applicable to the majority of urban settings.

Another limitation of this study stems from the parameters within which the research was conducted concerning the effectiveness of ministry activities drawn from each organization. One source of information for this study came from the success stories of each individual organization. These stories validated the fruitfulness of their strategies for evangelism. Out of these strategies, principles for urban evangelism were formed. Individual persons that were interviewed along with analyzed printed documents and field observations highlighted the positive results that were experienced. No further studies were given to the precise impact of ministry activities quantitatively to reveal both successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses, gains and losses. Most of the individuals interviewed were positively in favor of the ministry, and no other efforts were made to seek information from individuals who have participated in the programs and found them to be ineffective. Limited access and time to converse with people who did not benefit from the programs of these ministries is a limitation of this study. Tabulations
of people served in the ministries were a more visible finding. A consistent flow of praise reports and testimonies showcased each ministry’s effectiveness. I recommend that a quantitative approach to this kind of study be made in order collectively to acquire the precise percentile of people benefiting and not benefiting from offered programs. Consequently, findings of reasons for ineffectiveness among participants of the ministries can provide a more balanced view of its effectiveness. Therefore, a quantitative approach to research study can further fine-tune the design of ministries among the urban evangelical organizations who are striving to reach their cities for God effectively.

Furthermore, the limitation posed by the use of triangulation as a methodology of research restricted the study to the dynamics of pattern matching as the key tool in determining the principles presented. Variations of components in ministry that were highly effective with one of the study subjects did not qualify in the list of principles for urban evangelism due to a lack of emphasis with the other two ministries selected. I am under the impression that restriction given on the number of subjects selected (three) is not sufficient to disregard an effective component as invalid. Though such action was never considered in this project, it certainly limited the merit that a highly effective component deserved. In light of this limitation, different results may be given if similar studies were administered using new, qualified, ministry organizations as subjects for the study. Other principles are assumed to surface and stand alone. These important findings can contribute to a wider scope of models for urban ministry.

**Personal Implications of the Study**

Since 1991, my wife and I have been involved in full-time urban ministry. Together with our children, we invested ten years in reaching the heart of the people in
the cities of São Paulo and Goiania, Brazil. As young, seminary graduates with a newborn baby, we went as missionaries to the third largest city in the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Having spent most of my life living in four major cities of the world like Manila, Philippines, Los Angeles, California, São Paulo, Brazil, and Miami, Florida, I have discovered that ministry in the city also demands one to be street-smart. Ministering in the urban context is more far challenging than just living there; it is complex and demanding. In the early years of our ministry, we made mistakes, but we saw the hand of God move on our behalf and transform the lives of people. Seeing a city transformed begins with loving one person at a time along in conjunction with others who have been called to do the same. Together with a team of believers our calling can be accomplished.

Executing this research study allowed me the opportunity to learn from leaders who are making great strides in urban ministry. I have a greater appreciation for people who are called to the frontier missions of the city. They are great examples of courage and commitment. In addition to being lovers of God and his people, they are also great thinkers and strategists in the work of the Lord. Through their testimonies and the stories of those who have been changed by their ministries, I have become even more hopeful and inspired with the calling of God on my life to reach the heart of the city.

Through this research, I have attained an understanding that will serve as an invaluable tool for ministry in my life. I sensed a greater knowledge and courage after personally observing these ministries, sitting in front of real heroes of the faith, and learning the street-smart way of urban ministry.

Upon graduating from Asbury Seminary, my family and I will be relocating to Los
Angeles, California, where I grew up during my teen years, to plant a new church in the west district of that city. We are excited about this call of God on our lives. I admit that the thought of confronting this giant is breathtaking, but the reality of who God is and what he has done and is doing in the city through street-smart ministries gives me boldness and confidence. Like Joshua, I too will shout for I believe that God has given me the city.
May 14, 2004

Dan Sandoval, Jr,
9591 Belaire Drive
Miramar, Florida  33025

Dear Dan,

You are hereby granted permission by the Trinity Church to use the information gathered from your interviews with our staff and members. May God bless your endeavors.

Grace and Peace,

Rich Wilkerson
Senior Pastor
January 19, 2004

Dan Sandoval, Jr.
9591 Belaire Drive
Miramar, Florida  33025

Dear Dan,

The purpose of this correspondence is to grant you, Dan Sandoval, Jr., the authority to quote the staff and clients of the Miami Rescue Mission who were interviewed by you for your doctoral thesis.

Sincerely,

James W. Bender
Executive Vice President
Miami Rescue Mission
January 27, 2004

Dan Sandoval, Jr,
9591 Belaire Drive
Miramar, Florida 33025

Re: Newsletters

Dear Pastor Sandoval:

Enclosed are copies of the newsletters we spoke about on Monday, January 26, which mention some of the programs New Hope Development Center, Inc. utilizes to serve our surrounding community.

I pray that this information will assist you in your thesis.

I enjoyed talking with you and pray blessings upon you and your family as you continue to do God’s work.

God bless,

Karen E. Wilkinson
Executive Director

Enclosures
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about the history of your community and the people that live in it?
2. What has happened to this community during the time that you’ve live and ministered here?
3. What was the reason for the founding of this church?
4. What are the core values of this church in regard to the evangelistic challenge that this city poses?
5. What was the church like when you first came here?
6. How long have you been in this church and what attracted you to come and minister here?
7. What attracts unchurched people to come to this church?
8. What are the things that have helped this church grow?
9. What is special about this church?
10. What are some of the ways this church has had an impact on the community?
11. What social-driven programs have met the social needs of the people outside of the church as a congregation?
12. What principle drives the ministry of this church to be relevant and effective in the city?
13. What are ministries that you believe make this church successful?
14. What strategies are unique to your ministry that have worked in this city?
15. What are the “keys” to the culture of the people in this city that have been the focus of your ministry?
16. What are the challenges you face in presenting the gospel to the people in this city and how have you overcome them?
APPENDIX C

MINISTRY ABBREVIATIONS

Trinity Church

PFC Peacemaker Family Center
TCA Trinity Christian Academy
FCAT Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

New Hope Missionary Baptist Church

NHMBC New Hope Missionary Baptist Church
NHMDCI New Hope Development Center Inc.

Miami Rescue Mission

MRM Miami Rescue Mission
CYAC Community Youth Activity Center
S.L.A.M. Saving Lives Athletic Ministry

Street Smart Ministry

SSM Street-Smart Ministry
WORKS CITED

Anderson, Elijah. *Street Wise: Race, Class, and Change in a Urban Community.*


---. *A Theology as Big as the City.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.


White, Edward. Education in the City Church. Philadelphia: Board of Christian
Education of the United Presbyterian Church USA, 1967.


