

Our Attitude to the City Has to Change

The pentecostal and charismatic churches have trained us to ‘steer clear’ of evil. This is correct when it comes to who we mix with as friends and what we allow ourselves and our families to be involved in. However, it has caused us to withdraw from the society in which we live because we know it is controlled by evil forces, both human and spiritual. This is why we have developed ‘holy huddles’ (churches) to protect us so we can wait (as we’ve been taught from the pulpit) for either the rapture or our death. We disengage with everything around us, we see life as evil (even though it was given to us by our Creator) and we focus on going to Heaven where there is no evil. Death has become our saviour.

In the Kingdom we are directed to be out in society to be the light and salt so that we impact it and bring change – just like Jesus of Nazareth, our prototype, exemplified. But, we can’t do this if we follow our church system’s instruction to remain uncorrupted by the world system. Mother Teresa¹ has been a fool for us because she didn’t ‘monasticise’ herself and so remain holy, but she touched the “unclean thing”².

We cannot impact society with such attitudes. Our attitudes must be reprogrammed to align with the Kingdom, just like we have to be deprogrammed from religion and legalism. Unfortunately, however, most of us (including myself) don’t realise what non-Kingdom attitudes we have so we know what needs changing.

We have been told by our King that he wants a Kingdom Community on every street. He has also instructed us to focus on our street (neighbourhood) and to cease wanting to draw like-minded believers from all around town to join us in our home. We have to get past our attitudes which prevent us from aligning with the Kingdom, otherwise we won’t be able to be used wherever we are sent.

Karina Kreminski resigned as a Baptist minister a moved out into Sydney (Australia) society where the Spirit told her to go. She connects with people of all sorts and persuasions, touching them with love and care – just like Mother Theresa. She holds the view that the various evangelical church systems have given a bleak picture of the city so that it is abandoned to the pervading evil and stop the Kingdom from penetrating.

“At a time when we are experiencing globally the impact of urban culture more and more, Christians must reflect on the city and urbanism from God’s perspective. My concern is that instead, because we have in recent times largely ignored the city and fled to the comfort of suburbia, we have become more a religion of and for the middle-class and suburban cultures in the West.

What comes to mind when you think of the city? In general, I find that many Christians have a bleak view of the city. Often when I speak with my peers in ministry about the city they tend to want to avoid doing long-term ministry there. It is perceived as a place that is unhealthy for nurturing children, a context which can be dangerous, and a place that lacks community, is congested, polluted and too busy.

Four biblical images of the city capture our imagination as Christians; the tower of Babel, Nineveh, Babylon and Jerusalem. Most of these images are seen in a negative or at least a confused light...

For whatever reasons, this incorrect appropriation of the city has persisted in Christian culture. We need to recover a more balanced view if we are going to live in, love and redeem our cities...

This is a much more positive approach to the way that we can think about the city and urban culture as Christians. Will we forsake our cities or will we move towards redeeming, living in and loving the city as God does? Have we become a primarily suburban and middle class religion that ignores the poor and the creative, intellectual elite who dwell in the city often in tension with each other? We need a better, more affirming theology of the city if we are going to practice an urban spirituality³. ”⁴

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1 – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_Teresa

2 – 2 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV)

3 – ‘Urban spirituality’: Simply put, operating spiritually in the city/town instead of hiding away in a retreat somewhere.

4 – Karina Kreminski (2018) "URBAN SPIRITUALITY: Embodying God’s Mission in the Neighborhood" p:20-22 [KINDLE]