"That Glory May Dwell in Our Land…"

A Brief Introduction to Biblical Community Transformation

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"Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land."
Psalm 85:9

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Foreword

What follows is the result of over a decade of conversations with Christian leaders in our city who have come to be my friends. In numerous coffee shops, in snatches of conversation at seemingly endless committee meetings, in late-night, soul-searching dialogue, in evaluating time-consuming and at times heart-wrenching attempts, our quest has remained to find new levels of effectiveness in impacting our community. A few years ago, the conversation began to center around a new approach, based on the following three questions:

- *What would be the result for our community if all believers in Jesus daily accepted an assignment to full-time ministry where they work and where they live?*

- *What would be the impact if followers of Jesus began to build relationship with other believers where they work and where they live, utilizing small groups to encourage each other, pray together and answer the question, "How can we effectively serve Christ in our field of work or in our neighborhood"?*

- *What would be the legacy if followers of Jesus formed a working, sustainable alliance that brought together their varied perspective, influence, skills, and resources to address in an informed and effective manner the most pressing needs of our community?*

The desire for a fresh paradigm led to these lines of inquiry:

- Jesus called his followers to love each other and prayed that the display of this unity would so impact those who did not yet believe that they would come to know and follow Him (John 17:23 "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me…). *Can an expression of unity be discovered that increases our effective witness and also respects our diversity?*

- Most who believe in Jesus have a desire to impact their community but face obstacles to their involvement. *Can an approach to community transformation be found for these willing ones that produces long-term results, utilizes their unique skills and resources, and maximizes the investment of their limited time and effort?*

- It takes multiple resources and perspectives to develop and implement solutions to our community's most pressing needs. No one individual or organization can accomplish this alone. *How can working partnerships be established that increase results, not rob time, consume resources and drain energy?*

- Past faith-based efforts at city transformation have focused on connecting pastors and unifying church organizations. *Would better results be achieved if the emphasis shifted to mobilizing and then connecting all followers of Christ, not through the church with which they are affiliated, but in the everyday context of where they work and where they live.*

- A city has multiple points of influence upon its well-being. *What could happen if, while recognizing the value of pastoral leadership, churches and Christian organizations, a strategy for community transformation emphasized the equally significant role of believers who serve in the marketplace, in education, in media, in arts and entertainment, in government and in family life?*

As followers of Christ, questions such as these lead us into a search of the Scriptures for answers. The hope is that the ideas emerging in this booklet will join the dialogue on community transformation, a conversation occurring best while our hands actively work side by side, *that Glory may dwell in our land.*

GOD'S HEART FOR COMMUNITIES

"GO INTO THE CITY…"
God loves people. That is why God cares for cities.

Today, 50% of the world's peoples reside in cities, with that number growing to 70% by 2030. Most of us and our families are governed, educated, and supported through the city. The marketplace of business, technology, medical services, and skilled professions determine the economic well-being of a region and supply the jobs that enable each household to provide for its needs. The media and arts of a city daily shape the culture, worldview, and outlook of its citizens. And in the midst of the practical issues of daily life and the drive of commerce, those that live in a city seek each other out to grow in spirituality and faith.

At the same time, those living in our cities are especially impacted by the moral and social decay of our times. Many feel spiritually disconnected. Poverty, the break-down of marriages and families, substance abuse, declining mental health, and rising crime and violence dominate the lives of increasing numbers of citizens, *particularly young children.*

Therefore, to effectively show God's love to people and share with them the hope of the Gospel, followers of Christ must go beyond only extending themselves to individuals in need. They must discover how to impact cities as a whole. Personal, hands-on care extended in the name of Christ will always play an indispensable role in community transformation. However, this is not enough. Followers of Jesus also must gain insight into the larger realities that create pain and hopelessness in a community and strategically address together these highly complex issues with genuine, long-term solutions.

"HIS FOOTSTEPS OUR PATHWAY"

What is the state of our communities? Is there violence or is there safety. Is marriage honored and the family upheld? Is the system of education producing the desired level of results? To what degree are the media, music, and the arts positive influences on our values and worldview? Is business practiced fairly and is opportunity available for all? Are our government leaders truly servants of the people? Do churches complement each other or simply compete for the same members?

Psalm 85 declares God's desire for His very glory to dwell where we dwell.

> *Psalm 85:9-13 (NKJV)*
> Surely His *salvation* is near to those who fear Him,
>   **That glory may dwell in our land**.
> *Mercy* and *truth* have met together;
>   *Righteousness* and *peace* have kissed.
> *Truth* shall spring out of the earth,
>   And *righteousness* shall look down from heaven.
> Yes, the Lord will give what is *good*;
>   And our land will yield its *increase*.
> Righteousness will go before Him,
>   And shall make *His footsteps our pathway*.

God's purpose is for his presence, power, splendor, wisdom, and grace to be "on earth as it is in heaven." The first priority is *salvation*, in terms of both individual redemption and corporate transformation. The resulting habitation of God's glory is described as the perfect balance of *mercy*, *truth*, *righteousness,* and *shalom*. The *good* gifts of prosperity and *increase* are bestowed by the Lord. *Salvation* is increasingly realized as the community follows the ways of Christ in personal living and in love and care for each other. God's glory is experienced as we choose together to make "*His footsteps our pathway*."

Community transformation is indeed a "*pathway*," an emerging process of step-by-step progress. In a world broken by selfish choices and the cumulative impact of human sin, we find ourselves far from "having arrived." Yet, Scripture promises God's people that the rebuilding and transformation of our communities is possible through the power of the Spirit.

> *Isaiah 58:12, 61:4*
> Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
>   and will raise up the age-old foundations;
> You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
>   Restorer of Streets with Dwellings…
> They will rebuild the ancient ruins
>   and restore the places long devastated;
> They will renew the ruined cities
>   that have been devastated for generations…

This text also makes it clear that God's people are to provide the leadership required for such efforts.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

What would be the specific characteristics of a renewed community? The vision of the city in the world to come must guide and govern the process of transformation in the world as it now is. A description of an ideal city can be found in Isaiah 65:18-25.[1] In an atmosphere of *joy*, there is:

- *physical health*,
- *good housing*,
- *abundant food*,
- *justice and fairness*,
- *economic prosperity*,

and *families flourish* in the presence of *spiritual vitality* and prevailing *peace*. The following chart makes this clear.

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1. Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 1997), p. 82-83 was the first to clearly present the concept of seven primary characteristics for community transformation in reference to Isaiah 65. Many others have further developed or adapted Bakke's concept. This presentation of nine characteristics is an adaptation and expansion of ideas found at www.cornerstoneofknoxville.org.

God's Desire for the Ideal City	Isaiah 65:18-25
A place of **joy** — of creativity, beauty, fun, festivals, art, music, and celebrations.	But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more... (vv18-19)
A place that is **healthy**.	Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth... (v20)
A place where people have good **housing**.	They will build houses and dwell in them... (v21)
A place where people have **plenty to eat**.	They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit... (v21)
A place of **justice** and **fairness**.	No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat... (v22)
A place of economic **prosperity** and **opportunity** for all.	My chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain... (v22)
A place where **family life** flourishes.	They will not bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them… (v23)
A place of **spiritual vitality**.	Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear... (v24)
A place of **unity** and **peace**.	The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain... (v25)

Ray Bakke writes, *"*Put simply, if this is what God says a city ought to look like, and if God's Spirit lives in me, this is what I want [my city] to look like."[2] And though the results may not be fully achieved in our lifetime, or even in this era before "the perfect comes," those who will come together around a passion for the Biblical ideals for a community will experience significant and lasting improvements in the natural and spiritual quality of life in a region.

AN ASSIGNMENT YET INCOMPLETE

The degree to which the characteristics and qualities of Psalm 85 and Isaiah 65 are evident in a community reflects the measure and breadth to which the gospel has been believed and incorporated. However, to the extent that even a single citizen experiences a life marked by

- hopelessness and depression,
- ill health and poor medical care,
- inadequate housing,
- hunger and malnutrition,
- legal injustice and social inequality,
- unsatisfactory work environments,
- dysfunctional or abusive family settings,
- violence, intimidation and theft,

is the extent to which the salvation offered in Jesus has yet to be fully realized.

Symptoms of poverty can be eased by handouts and temporal provision. However lasting healing for the above social ills begins with the transformation of the heart by the person of Christ, whether for the first time in conversion, or in the ongoing process of spiritual maturity. This is true whether one is the victim or victimizer, directly impacted or indirectly affected. Further, the measure of unseen transformation within is visibly attested to by the capacity to "love one's neighbor as oneself." Love can not abandon others to spiritual or natural hopelessness, poverty, injustice, or violence. The pathway of community transformation begins in the heart, both for those in need and for those "blessed to be a blessing." The next step forward is to connect together the like-hearted in deepened relationships.

2. Bakke, 82-83.

A PATHWAY FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

A SHIFT IN EMPHASIS: FROM ORGANIZATIONS TO INFLUENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

As "salt and light," the church of the living God is intended to provide leadership for society. But it will never fulfill this role if the meaning of the word "church" is equivalent and limited to "an organization." Rather, the church will lead society when it is not primarily defined by its "brick and mortar" but by its "living stones." A main emphasis in the local church is then to envision and empower each one of its members to fulfill a call to "full-time ministry." For most, this ministry is not in the four walls of a church, but out in the community where they work and where they live.

Most previous attempts at Christian unity have focused on connecting churches or church leaders. A shift in emphasis is needed: from the *power* of the church as an *organization* to the *influence* of its *members* within a city, particularly when they band together with other believers who share their sphere of influence. Although there is value in listing organizations as sponsors in expressions of city-wide unity, the unity experienced from connecting individuals face-to-face in small group relationships will in the end produce a deeper and more lasting form of unity. Building personal relationships makes us work through hidden issues that could continue to separate believers in spite of an "outer shell of public statements and apparent like-mindedness."[3]

A successful strategy for community transformation must focus on the two dominant and interrelated forces that control cities: the **power of influence** and the **power of relationships**. These structures can in effect be "redeemed" and utilized as the framework for lasting positive change, as every believer learns to utilize the power of relationships to increase the power of godly influence.

3. Tommy Tenney, *Answering God's Prayer* (Ventura: Regal, 2000) p. 7.

THE POWER OF INFLUENCE: INFLUENCING PEOPLE AND PLACES

The culture, economics, education, government services, and social provisions of a city greatly influence the well-being of people. The primary areas that exert this daily influence upon the core values, shared perspectives, and central practices of a community have been categorized by Dr. Lance Wallnau in terms of seven mountains of influence:[4]

1. The Mountain of Faith,
2. The Mountain of Family,
3. The Mountain of Education,
4. The Mountain of Government/Law,
5. The Mountain of Media,
6. The Mountain of Arts/Entertainment,
7. The Mountain of the Marketplace.

The peak, or "high place," of each of these mountains significantly affects, and can even control, the ideology and practices of each of these areas of influence. If the most powerful leaders are aligned with secular or demonic values, that area of a city's life will be marked by increasing darkness. At times, people who clearly represent a minority opinion can propagate their values and viewpoints through the media and in legislation with seeming ease – they control "the top of the mountain."

However, if those with the most influence are living out their faith in God and following the commands of Christ, then that sector where they are leaders will become a source of light and well-being for the entire community.

Scripture promises in Isaiah 2:2 a day in which the influence of the "mountain of the house of the Lord" will be "chief" over all other mountains. Every mountain of influence will itself be under the influence of God's mountain.

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4. See Lance Wallnau, "Seven Mind Molding Mountains," http://www.reallifeandtimes.com/pdf/oct04_10-11.pdf. See also the writings of Loren Cunningham, who has built Youth With A Mission's *Nations University* around the "seven mind molders" which influence culture.

Isaiah 2:2 (NASB95)
"Now it will come about that in the last days
the mountain of the house of the Lord will be
established as the chief of the mountains,
and will be raised above the hills; and all the
nations will stream to it."

Those who represent the kingdom must be challenged to excel in their professions and professional lives. The combination of natural excellence and spiritual grace will result in them becoming leaders in their neighborhoods and workplaces. A commitment to grow both in excellence and in the Spirit's anointing will result in believers who bring the blessing of godly influence to people around them. As Wallnau has pointed out, the root meaning of the word "mediocre" is "half way up the mountain."[5] For the sake of fulfilling God's mandate to impact our cities, mediocrity must be rejected and the pursuit of excellence embraced. As righteous leaders become people of influence, they in turn impact "the high place" of influence, with resulting blessing upon the entire community.

2 Samuel 23:3-4 (NIV)
"When one rules over men in righteousness,
When he rules in the fear of God,
He is like the light of morning at sunrise
    on a cloudless morning,
Like the brightness after rain that brings
    the grass from the earth."

Multiplying Influence through Connecting
Influence multiplies through relationships, as those with influence connect to each other with singleness of purpose and vision. If leaders from each of the seven mountains focus their respective skills and diverse resources upon the most difficult issues, they together could discover and implement solutions for the pressing needs of a community. In the pages ahead is an approach to make this level of connection possible.

5. Latin *mediocris* 'of middle height or degree' from *medius* 'middle' + 'rugged mountain' as defined in *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*.

SEVEN STRATEGIC STEPS TO COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Many of the issues in our community will never find solutions solely by throwing money at the problem, no mater how sincere or genuine such attempts may be. Often what is needed is not money, but relationships – greater relationship between those at risk and those with resources, greater relationship between people with diverse resources who share a common vision.

Community transformation involves envisioning, connecting, and empowering people and can be seen as a three-phased process comprised of seven steps.

Envision:	Step 1:	Envision all followers of Jesus that they are called to full-time ministry where they work and where they live.
Connect:	Step 2:	Connect by similarity, first in small groups, then similar small groups into networks.
	Step 3:	Connect diverse networks into a community-wide alliance.
Empower	Step 4:	Develop collaborative initiatives and establish working partnerships.
	Step 5:	Pursue excellence.
	Step 6:	Take on the giants, the most pressing needs of a community.
	Step 7:	Communicate and celebrate.

ENVISION

Step 1: Envision all followers of Jesus that they are called to full-time ministry where they work and where they live.

Every Believer a Full-Time Minister:
Every believer in Jesus has been called by God to full-time ministry. All have been divinely assigned to impact the places of their work (or primary activity) and to grow in influence in the neighborhoods where they live.

Each day God sends thousands of his servants into every city with assignments to touch people's lives and to impact their city's well-being and future. Very few of these ministry assignments are to be fulfilled in the confines of a church staff or a ministry organization. God has deployed His people to their business, to a construction crew, to an office staff, or a police car. They are leaders in the kingdom of God as city officials and government workers, as students on campuses, as reporters chasing a story, as stay-at-home moms, as musicians on a stage, as social workers reuniting families. And when they return to their homes, God's people are to be as lights in their neighborhoods.

Every workplace and neighborhood would experience an immediate level of transformation simply if every follower of Jesus began to approach daily life as full-time ministry. Believers have a daily purpose where they work and where they live. They are to impact their spheres of influence by fervent prayer, extending love, showing practical care, and sharing faith. They are to influence everyone around them through effective leadership, exemplary conduct and pursuing excellence. *Community transformation starts with the mobilization of each individual – because it takes every believer in Jesus activated in his or her sphere of influence to transform a community.*

CONNECT

Step 2: Connect by similarity, first in small groups, then similar small groups into networks.

Connecting People by Natural Groupings
Influence and effectiveness are multiplied when people with similar interests and concerns connect. People working together have the potential to accomplish far more than the same individuals working in isolation. Connecting leaders, *moving past polite conversation to genuine relationships,* is essential for community transformation.

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Two basic types of relational infra-structure underpin every city: the *neighborhood*, established for safety and companionship, and the *workplace*, the gathering of individuals with similar or complementary skills. John Dawson explains this in *Taking our Cities for God*.[6]

> "Originally, people clustered in fortress cities for protection. But, in the modern city, people cluster together to benefit from the principle of specialization within the division of labor. People are able to excel in the job that suits them best and in turn be served by others who are expert in their fields. The city then becomes a cluster of villages or subcultures each serving the other…"

Community transformation is successful when followers of Christ are connected to others both by the specialized field in which they work and by where they live. Having both professional and geographic small groups and networks recognizes the community significance of both task and territory.

Field of work — As mentioned earlier, the structure of influence upon a community can be categorized as "seven mountains." People work daily in one of these seven areas. Instead of being intimidated or threatened by the social influence of government, the marketplace, education, media, or the arts, followers of Christ should recognize that God has assigned them to these very places of influence. His rule increases in every place of influence as believers in Jesus excel in their work and relationships, and connect with other Christians with similar careers.

Neighborhood — Quality of life is also significantly influenced by the level of well-being within neighborhoods. Therefore, believers in Jesus must not retreat behind their front doors away from the world. They must go through their front doors to connect with their neighbors, and with their neighbors pray and work for the betterment of their neighborhoods.

6. J. Dawson, *Taking our Cities for God* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1989), p. 52

Connect individuals to small groups. What would happen to communities if in every workplace, every school, and every neighborhood all who believe in Jesus regularly connected for prayer and encouragement? What divine insights might be discovered if they shared with each other how to apply the teachings of Jesus to their responsibilities and how to effectively influence those around them with the gospel?

Connect similar small groups into a network. How dramatic an impact would there be upon the places that influence society and culture if small groups of believers in that particular field of endeavor were connected into a single network? What powerful strategies could be released if the prayer and vision birth in small groups could be multiplied through networking with other groups in their field of work or locale?

Step 3: Connect diverse networks into a community wide alliance.

Participants from diverse networks come together in an alliance to facilitate relationships between leaders from differing spheres of influence, gather insight from diverse perspectives, and pray for the community as one voice.

Problems within a city, and their potential solutions, are best understood through input by people from diverse fields of responsibility and from multiple locales.

- Complex community-wide issues require a wide range of leaders to effectively mobilize people and resources to provide insight and generate solutions.
- Stakeholders in neighborhoods most effectively convey the heartfelt needs of their area and provide leadership for solutions that partner neighborhood assets with additional resources from residents and organizations outside their immediate vicinity.
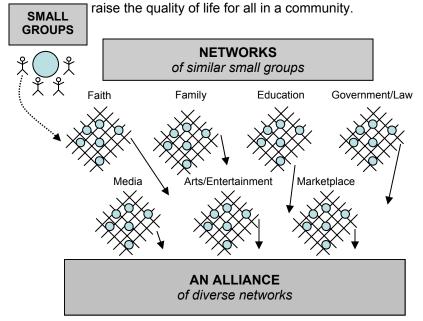
Summary: Three Levels of Connectivity

Relationship-based community transformation requires
(1) connecting individuals to **small groups** where they work
and where they live; (2) connecting similar small groups into
networks; (3) connecting diverse networks into **an alliance**.

Small groups connect believers for encouragement, prayer,
and to answer the question, "How can we effectively serve
Christ in our field of work and in our neighborhood?" Small
groups can be defined *professionally* (a group within a field of
work or a workplace itself) or *geographically* (a gathering of
neighbors).

Professional or geographic **networks** are formed by connect-
ing similar workplace or neighborhood small groups. A net-
work of such groups enables the sharing of information, the
harnessing of a broader range of skill and creativity, and the
enlarging of the scope of vision. (Professional networks are
illustrated below).

An alliance initially connects community leaders of various
spheres of influence and brings together the diverse insights
and resources of the networks. These then work to develop
collaborative initiatives and working partnerships that aim to
raise the quality of life for all in a community.

EMPOWER

Step 4: Develop collaborative initiatives and establish working partnerships.

The alliance of networks empowers leaders and organizations with diverse perspectives, skills, and resources to partner together successfully. Input and assessments from varied points of view can result in collaborative initiatives that incorporate multiple skills and strengths. Moving from planning to implementation, working partnerships mobilize leaders and organizations from various fields of skill and from different neighborhoods.

- Partnerships can either address together a community-wide issue (the most pressing overall needs in our region) or address the needs of a specific locale (based upon block-by-block assessments).
- Partnerships can be formed to address spiritual needs such as prayer or joint evangelistic efforts.
- Partnership can bring together faith-based, community service, private foundations, and government sponsored efforts.
- Partnerships can seek private and public funding utilizing the strength of a collaborative approach.
- Partnerships are strongest when comprised of community leaders from various spheres of influence and different neighborhoods.

These working partnerships with diverse strengths and resources can effectively contribute both short-term and long-range solutions to a community's most pressing needs.

Step 5: Pursue excellence.

Faith-based partnerships should be expected to provide service of the highest quality and with lasting impact. Unfortunately, due to underdeveloped infrastructure, inadequate funding, inexperience in interfacing with agencies and grantors, and poor quality assessment and accountability procedures, far too many sincere efforts fail to provide services at an effective level. A community-wide alliance can help support and empower faith-based efforts to overcome the roadblocks of capacity and funding.

Step 6: Take on the giants, the most pressing needs of a community.

Every Promise Land has its share of giants – ancient, entrenched powers that must be expelled in order for God's army to occupy the territory and build community. Giants that must be overcome in our cities include spiritual blindness, lack of servant leaders, poverty, disease (sickness and addictions), and ignorance.[7]

By utilizing existing community assessment and conducting assessments when data is unavailable, the most pressing needs of a community can be specifically identified. Through the united strengths, wisdom and resources of believers in a community, lasting impact upon the most critical areas of a region's spiritual, social, and practical needs will occur, if focus and commitment are maintained until sustainable breakthrough occurs.

David's victory over Goliath notwithstanding, giant killing usually is best accomplished by a team, particularly if faced with more than one giant. Such a fighting force is created by first mobilizing and connecting people, and then by developing and implementing collaborative battle plans from the gathered strengths, wisdom, and resources.

Step 7: Communicate and celebrate.

Sharing information and inspiration are critical to long-term progress. Efficient and effective forms of communication must be invested in and sustained in order to mobilize prayer, provide ongoing direction for efforts in progress, and build morale and hope through encouraging success stories and testimonies. Because a citywide alliance is first focused on gathering leaders, every effort must be made to insure that pathways to involvement are simple, information and data is correct on all communication, and positive outcomes are consistently appreciated. Effective communication allows those who carry multiple weights of responsibility and who have severely limited time to continue their investment and partnership.

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7. These "five giants" were identified by Jesus Shack, Bakersfield.

FINAL PRINCIPLES

CHRIST AT THE CENTER

For the follower of Jesus, Jesus himself remains the sole solution for the entire range of personal and social ailments. This declaration does not refer to a glib act of preaching empty words to those needing shelter and clothing:

> *James 2:15-17 (The Message)*
> For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is out-rageous nonsense.

Rather, to say that Jesus is the sole solution means that some aspect of his wisdom or power will make the critical difference if lived out in love and faith.

Christ-centered city transformation is not a political purpose (although people with political influence can effectively serve the process), nor social engineering (although society will be changed for the better), nor even a religious agenda (because it is not about promoting an organization but rather the living out of faith). Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are not the exclusive claim of either side of the aisle, any particular denomination, or any ethnicity or culture. These qualities are, however, the unmistakable evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God (Gal 5:22-23).

His presence is to be carried from our homes and churches into our neighborhoods and workplaces. To every person in our community, we are to be ambassadors of the peace of Christ, appealing to every individual to take the extended hand of God (2Cor 5:20).

Presenting the hope of the Gospel to those who do not know Christ is the most important outcome of the work of community transformation. The meeting of practical social needs creates a context to introduce the person of Christ to those served in love. Working for the transformation of earthly cities has as its ultimate priority the opportunity to prepare their citizens to dwell forever in the heavenly city yet to come.

MAXIMIZING THE INVESTMENT OF TIME

To have people invest their time in their field of expertise instead of simply investing their time is also a key to productivity.

> For instance, as someone with minimal construction skills, I can take a Saturday morning and volunteer on a construction site to help build a home for a needy family – and perhaps accomplish in four hours what a professional carpenter can do in about twenty minutes. I believe there is value for me to join together with others for a project as described above, no matter my skill level. It brings me into relationship with others. It helps build camaraderie. It provides me hands-on exposure to the challenges encountered by those in need of affordable housing. Yet working exclusively outside my skill set, my contribution will play a negligible part in finding a lasting and genuine breakthrough for the poor in our city who need housing.

> However, if I utilize my areas of skill, of which one as a pastor is to mobilize people, I can invest some of that same four hours of time and envision fifteen skilled carpenters who can in turn frame an entire house by volunteering four hours each. I can call friends in the media, who with a four hour investment of their time, can put together news stories or public service announcements to raise community awareness and add momentum to the effort. I can convene a lunch that brings together public officials and private business people to create a dialogue on how creating both affordable housing and new jobs within walking distance could stimulate economic development that generates private profit and public tax revenues. If I only had four hours to invest a month, working in my area of skill and working in relationship with others of different skills will maximize my investment.

A structure that allows people to invest their limited time in such a way that their best skills and strengths contribute to a diverse team is essential for long-term success in community transformation.

LEADERS WORKING TOGETHER

"The higher you want to climb, the more you need leadership. The greater the impact you want to make, the greater your influence needs to be."[8] Community transformation is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus. Yet, the success of all involved does rest significantly on the willingness and capacity of those who provide leadership in a city.

These leaders are not limited to church leaders, but must include, even emphasize, the critical role of believers in Christ who lead in the areas of the marketplace, education, media, and government. For community transformation to be successful, leaders must connect with other leaders: leaders within their field, as well as leaders of other key places of influence.

However, leaders working together means bringing together followers of Christ who may be in competitive or even adversarial relationships, whether business, political or personal. It will surface past misunderstandings, broken agreements, unethical behavior, character inconsistencies. These are the true, hidden barriers to unity. Yet, if the gospel is not enough to empower us to chart a way forward through difficult issues, if the message we preach of reconciliation does not have the power to reconcile those of shared faith, what authentic authority do believers truly have to offer hope to our world? The leadership needed for community transformation is not limited to the courage to confront our community's needs. It includes the courage to confront ourselves.

8. J. Maxwell, *The Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) p. 6.

The goal of Christian unity cannot be uniformity, but rather to sustain love, faith, and respect for each other in our diversity and uniqueness. Diversity is a welcomed and necessary part of democracy. Yet only grace can keep it from becoming destructive and divisive. When Jesus prayed that all his followers would be "one," it was with full awareness that this would not be our natural tendency. However, He also knew that the miracle of unity among those such as us with markedly contrasting personalities and cultures would powerfully witness to the world of His saving grace and love.

It is naïve to think that the process of leading community transformation will not be punctuated with many difficult and regrettable moments. Past, abandoned efforts make this abundantly clear. Yet, our shared faith and hope declares that there can be found enough grace on the common ground at the foot of the cross to overcome our errors and failures. Our hope is based on the fact that He still prays that we may become one.

> *Isaiah 1:26 (NIV)*
> I will restore your judges as in days of old,
> Your counselors as at the beginning.
> Afterward you will be called
> "the City of Righteousness,"
> "the Faithful City."

As leaders who follow Christ build relationships and unite in prayer, in resolve, in coordinated strategies and well-communicated efforts, they open the gates for every believer to become involved in effectively contributing to the well-being of our community. To this end leaders must pray and work together, **"that glory may dwell in our land."**

NOTES

Appendix:
A Short Compendium of Biblical Texts on "The City"

The following instruction was given by God to the Israelites carried away to Babylon.

> *Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)*
> 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*.

The promise of restoration of God's people includes the promise of cities restored and nations influenced.

> *Isaiah 54:3 (NASB95)*
> For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.
> And your descendants will *possess nations* and will *resettle the desolate cities*.

> *Isaiah 58:12 (NIV)*
> Your people will *rebuild the ancient ruins* and will *raise up the age-old foundations*;
> You will be called, "*Repairer of Broken Walls*," "*Restorer of Streets with Dwellings*."

> *Isaiah 61:4 (NIV)*
> They will *rebuild the ancient ruins* and *restore the places long devastated*;
> They will *renew the ruined cities* that have been devastated for generations…

Jesus did not only commission his disciples to go out to individuals, he sent them out to cities.

> *Luke 10:1-2, 8-9 (NASB95)*
> Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him *to every city* and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

> "Whatever <u>city</u> you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

That a city is not only a geographic location but considered by God an entity in its own right is shown by Jesus' startling prediction of accountability of whole cities.

Luke 10:9-14 (NASB95)
"But whatever _city_ you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your _city_ which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the Kingdom of God has come near.' I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that _city_."

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon <u>in the judgment</u> than for you."

A city's well-being, particularly in its response to the message of the Kingdom of God, is the corporate responsibility of its citizens. Furthermore, the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation (2:1, 2:8, 2:12, 2:18, 3:1, 3:7, 3:14) shows that Christians in a city could be addressed as a single entity with corporate responsibility:

"To the angel of *the* church in Ephesus write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Smyrna write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Pergamum write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Thyatira write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Sardis write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Philadelphia write…"
"To the angel of *the* church in Laodicea write…"

Finally, the make-up and function of a city is a key image in describing the kingdom of God. Jesus compares mature disciples to "a city set on a hill…" (Matthew 5:14). The culmination of our redemption is portrayed with the image of a "holy city."

Revelation 21:9-12, 23-24 (NIV)
"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the *Holy City*, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates…

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.