

## **Urban Mission**

*We are glad to be reminded that You are the Lord. You draw close to individuals and to families to bring comfort, miraculous deliverance, protection, salvation, and redemption in Your Son. Thank You for evidences right around us and other parts of the world, too, of how You are at work. We ask that as we meet again for this lesson that You would lead us and guide us in our time together. Thank You for guests who are here to help us think through particular issues of Your mission in this world. Sharpen us and equip us to be Your servants. We ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We are temporarily skipping over topic 29 in your syllabus, "The Gospel." We are not leaving that out. There was a recent merger in Japan of two churches: Japan Christian Presbyterian Church and The Gospel Presbyterian Church. These two churches came together, and their new name was Japan Presbyterian Church. The joke was that they took out Christ and the Gospel and left it "Japan Presbyterian Church." That is the joke, but it is, thankfully, not the reality. We will come back to topic 29 in the next lesson, lesson 16. I hope that the matter of the Gospel permeates all of this class. It is not a one-time topic. I also hope that that is the case for the two topics we will be considering, namely, urban mission and Saint Louis in particular. These are matters that pertain to all of us in one form or fashion.

We have two men with us today who will help push and sharpen us in our constraint to follow Christ wherever He leads us. Barry Henning is the pastor at New City Fellowship in the Central Missouri Presbytery. He has been in Saint Louis for eight years and has seen some significant things happen in that church's intentional focus on racial reconciliation. They have been looking at issues of justice and peace, and they help those of us in the rest of the city to be more sharply aware of the poignancy of those issues. Bill Yarborough is also here from New City after serving 16 years in Mexico. He brings further passion among New City to be multilingual as well as multiracial and multiethnic. Their experience, passions, and training will help spur us on and equip us in these topics. As is normal when we have guests come in, each of them will take about 20 minutes, which we will follow with some discussion time.

[*Barry Henning*]

I am really glad to be with you today. Twenty minutes is a really short amount of time. We will just throw some things out on the table, and I really want to encourage you to ask questions. Let me start by saying that I am not a sociologist or an urban expert. Those things are not what qualify you for urban ministry. They are not the kinds of things that even qualify you for cross-cultural ministry or ministry in justice and mercy. You do not have to be an expert in anything. You just have to say, "God, take me in Your love for the world and lead me by Your Holy Spirit into the things You would have us be as the church." Strangely, you will find yourself being drawn together as the nations of God's people. You will find yourself being drawn into issues of justice and mercy. And, you will find yourself being drawn into an urban context. Some of you may not even be thinking that you are going to be ministering in an urban context, but you are already in one. You are in one in Saint Louis. This is really an urban context. We will define that further in a moment as we go along. If you have been around our church, New City Fellowship, or if you have heard us talk about issues before, you know that these are common things that we talk about. One of the biggest things for us as we seek to do the Lord's will and His purposes and follow Him is to be sure that we are being driven by God's vision of what it is that He wants to accomplish. That puts issues of urban and cross-cultural ministry into tremendous perspective.

Bill Yarborough is going to talk to you in just a little bit about Saint Louis City in particular and some of the issues. Let me just say that we do find ourselves very multilingual and multiethnic, beyond what we had anticipated even on a leadership level. We now have two African Americans who are pastoral staff members. Of course, Bill is kind of an Anglo guy, and I am as well. We also have a Columbian young man who is a pastoral intern, and we just had a first-generation Chinese man who made a commitment to be on pastoral staff with us and to be a pastoral intern. We have our eye on a French-speaking man from the Congo who is part of the immigrant community that has moved here to Saint Louis from the Congo as refugees. We are looking at him in the future to be an elder or even pastoral staff. None of this is by our great design. We did not come in with a strategy and plan as to how this was going to happen. It is really an issue of following the Holy Spirit and letting God lead us into His purposes. I think if you look at the book of Acts, that is what happened with the early church, with the Jewish church in Jerusalem, and even with Paul. It was the Holy Spirit who was leading His people into relationships with the nations. The thing we are going to say in just a minute is that so much of this takes place in an urban context. If you read through Scripture carefully, you will realize that cities and urban-type contexts took place all the way back in the book of Genesis. It runs through the whole thread of Scripture and is part of God's definition of how He works among us as people.

Regarding God's purposes, where is He leading us, where is He taking us, and how does this come to bear in the urban context? We are going to look at Isaiah chapter 2. The book of Romans is the incredible New Testament letter that gives us the great theology of the Gospel unpacked and unfolded. I would encourage you that Isaiah is kind of the equivalent of Romans in the Old Testament. If you are going to spend a lot of study time working in one book, work in the book of Isaiah. Get a hold of the themes in there, because it is really an outlaying of the Gospel and of God's plan of salvation among the nations in a very profound way. In Isaiah chapter 2, Isaiah sees this vision of what Judah, and in particular Jerusalem, is going to be. That is important, because Jerusalem is a city. It actually becomes the paradigm city of what God is going to do with the city of God versus the city of man in all of Scripture. That paradigm city is, in fact, what you and I are brought into. Are we not? We are brought into the new Jerusalem. All the promises of God and the unfolding of God's blessing through the Old Testament become focused around Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the city where God's plans and purposes for mankind in relationship with Him were to be lived out. What is it supposed to look like? In Isaiah chapter 2, Isaiah says,

In the last days [the days of Christ] the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Maybe this passage of Scripture is more pointed to us as we think about the events that are going on in the world today. The warring of nations, the divisions against one another, the factions and the destruction of one another happen across the world all of the time. Here in the United States, we are sometimes oblivious to that because of the context in which we live. However, many peoples in many nations around the world constantly live in this turmoil of the nations with one another in bloodshed and warfare. We got a dose of it here on September 11 in a way that we never have as a nation. God's promise is to bring the nations together under His Law. The Law of God is a reflection of God's character, and the Law is something we delight in, because God is holy, loving, just, and merciful. If you

take some time, this will hopefully drive you back to Deuteronomy and Exodus and some of these passages. The Law is an incredible description of this mercy, love, justice, and compassion of God. The Lord really wants to gather the nations together across the division and lines of rebellion they have against God and against one another and really unite them as one people underneath His Law, His purposes, His salvation. How does that happen? What is the tool? What is the means? How do we become the people of God, and how do we get brought into the church? We do this through Christ and through the preaching of the Gospel. You absolutely have to be rooted in God's grace all of the time to know that God delights in you and that He delights in the nations of people as He brings them into relationship with Himself. Through Christ, we all have access to the Father. We are all sons and daughters of God by faith. The Lord is going to work this law into our hearts (Jeremiah 31). That is what the Lord is doing among the nations.

So where does it take place? Most of it takes place (I say "most of it," because that is where we know the trends are headed) in urban communities. I would suggest to you that they probably always have. We are just not used to looking at things in those terms. It is in the urban communities—in the cities, in the city of Jerusalem—where the many different people groups come together, and everything that was lost at the Fall is now reclaimed in the Gospel. All the glory of the diversity that God has created in us, which because of sin we now use as positions of superiority and hatred and division against one another, all get redeemed in Christ. There is this beauty of the demonstration of God's glory through the diversity of the nations and the people groups that He has created. It happens through the Gospel and in an urban context. It is the city of Jerusalem. It is the city of God. That is where the Lord is taking us.

The reason I want to make this clear to you is because if you do not take seriously these issues of the power of the Gospel for God's purpose of teaching His people to become a people of justice, love, mercy, compassion, and following the Law, then none of this stuff will work. The coming together of the nations will not work if we are only here to be gathered together as a church and the context in which we live our lives is simply that we gather on Sunday mornings to worship but then live our lives in the world separated from the issues of the culture and separated from one another. It has no context or focus—not a big enough focus. In Isaiah 42, this is what God says about the work of Christ: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." This is the purpose of God's salvation. This is where it is taking us so that, as the people of God, we will demonstrate to the nations and bring to them the nature and character of God's justice. Is that not what Jesus did? He came and showed people what the Father was really like. He lived out compassion, love, and mercy.

I was preaching one time, and we had an InterVarsity leader who came to visit. He came up to me after the service and said, "You used the word 'justice' a lot. All I can think of when you say justice is that we are supposed to go out, lock people up, and make sure that they pay for their crimes." Many evangelical Christians do not have a fully developed biblical view of what justice is. Yes, God's justice is to punish the evildoer in His time and in His way. However, it is also to care for those who are being oppressed. It is to make sure that justice is being done on behalf of the persons who are being treated with injustice. In particular, the Lord tells us, "If you are going to have the mark of my compassion, you are going to be involved with the helpless, the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant—the people who are most vulnerable and who are taken advantage of the most. That is where my compassion is going to manifest itself in the fullest way." When Jesus comes and announces the Gospel, what does He say? What does he do in Luke 4? He opens the scroll of Isaiah and says, "The Lord has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to set the captives free."

As Isaiah goes on, there is so much wrapped up in these issues of justice and mercy—caring for the poor, taking care of the needy, taking care of the hungry, taking care of the widow. In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about the end time when the division between the sheep and goats takes place and eternity arrives. Basically, the question that he asks is “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What are we going to say? We should say that it is because of the finished work of Christ that you should let me into heaven. Is that not right? That answer is fine. However, what is God going to say when He hears that answer? Matthew 25 says that He is going to say, “I was hungry. Did you feed me? I was thirsty. Did you give me drink? I was in prison. Did you visit me? And that is how I am going to know whether or not my Gospel has actually taken hold in your life. Once you taste my mercy and compassion, it is going to drive you to be a compassionate person like me.”

Now, this is so crucial in the urban context. There are many ways to describe a city or urban setting. Fundamentally, it is just issues of families or groups of people who come together in a particular locale in order to do business, commerce, and trade, to develop culture and expressions about who they are as human beings created in God's image. It can be a small city of 25,000, or it can be a huge city of 10 million or of 25 million, like Mexico City. What happens when you get different people groups and families together? They fight. They train for war in some form or fashion. We have Serbs and Bosnians in Saint Louis. I do not know if you knew that or not. One of my sons is a police officer. He works down in the third district of Saint Louis where the Serbs and the Bosnians live. I promise you that they train for war against one another right here in the city of Saint Louis. The great good news of the Gospel is that God is going to teach His people not to be those who train for war but to be those who give themselves over to His Law, which leads them into compassion, mercy, love, and justice. As we embrace those things in the midst of the city of man, Babylon, God demonstrates the city of His people—the city of God, the city of Jerusalem—right in the midst of that. While they are warring and fighting with one another, we are demonstrating justice, mercy, and compassion. All of that takes place in an urban context.

Read the book of Ephesians in light of the perspective of God's commitment to reconcile the nations together in Christ. The great beauty in Ephesians 3 is when Paul says that God's purpose (and this is the great mystery) is that the Gentiles become heirs with Israel through the Gospel. He says that God's purpose is the manifestation of the manifold glory of God as He gathers all these nations together in Christ Jesus. Then, he prays a prayer and says, “I am praying this prayer to the Father from whom every family on earth derives its name. My prayer is that you will understand how wide and long and deep is the love of Christ that surpasses our greatest expectation.” This is not a prayer for you to understand the depth of God's love in your own life in some pietistic way. It is for you to understand that God is actually saving all the nations of the Earth, and that is how vast and glorious His love is. And, He can lead us into these things.

We are incredibly weak as we do this. There are so many times that we do not know what we are doing. We are constantly on our faces before God, saying, “What are we doing? What do we do next? How does this work, God? How does it work out?” It is a glorious thing to have the Holy Spirit leading you in these issues.

I have to read this to you. This is out of Ray Bakis. He says, “You probably know the United States has long been the largest Irish nation in the world. Our population encompasses far more Irish than there are in Ireland. We have also long been the largest Scandinavian nation in the world. There are far more Scandinavians here than live in Sweden. We have been the largest Jewish nation in the world. There are more Jews who live in New York City than the whole country of Israel. There are 50,000 Serbs living in Southwest Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh is the Serbian capital of America. Chicago is the largest Polish city

in the world. There are 840,000 Polls in Chicago. By the year 2001, Arabs will outnumber Jews in America as they already do in major cities. At this moment, the largest United States capitals of the Arab world are New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Dearborn, Michigan.”—I grew up in Dearborn, Michigan. It is an Arab stronghold. Do you know how when you go to Miami, everything is in Spanish? When you go to Dearborn, there are many different Arabic dialects and languages. It is an amazing thing.—“Did you know that the United States is now the second largest African nation in the world? There are 54 countries in Africa. One fourth of all Africans live in one of those countries—Nigeria, and it is the only African nation with a greater population of Africans than the United States.”

And, that is really just the beginning. There is a huge movement in the United States and all across the world of God moving in history to mix the nations up. What is His purpose in doing this? Look at Isaiah chapter 2. This work is a fulfilling of bringing the nations to Christ. He is teaching us to walk in His ways together, and so much of it happens in an urban context.

The question has been asked, “Can you convince those of us who more used to suburban settings how we are related to urban settings?” First of all, let us debunk some myths. This is an urban context. Part of what makes something an urban context is simply a diversity of people groups coming together to engage in commerce, to produce culture, to protect one another (you see that in New York City and in our country as a whole), to deal with nature and subdue the Earth. Do you know that there are African-Americans, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Hispanics from a great number of South American and Central American countries who live outside of the city of Saint Louis? It is newer and nicer in the suburbs, but it is still made up of those people groups who have all kinds of problems. The greatest incidence of drug addiction is not in the inner city. In terms of the number of people in the inner city, it is a huge issue in their own context. However, the actual greatest number is out in what we call the “suburbs.” Problems such as drug abuse, child abuse, spouse abuse, breakdown in the family relationship, and single moms are all in the suburbs. Why were the suburbs started? They were originally started to get away from the problems of the city. What is the only problem with that? You cannot get away from people. When you move, you bring with you all of your problems. So, let us just debunk the idea that the seminary’s town is a suburban community and what we call downtown Saint Louis is an urban community. This is all an urban area. It is just pressing itself on us. Do not worry. Your buildings will fall apart in a few years, and things will begin to deteriorate. That is why newer suburbs exist even farther outside of the city.

Are you familiar with the suburban sprawl and urban sprawl issues? Saint Louis is one of the worst cities in the country, but it does not mean that you cannot get away from it. There are illegal Mexicans working at Macaroni Grill, a restaurant right around the corner from here, and they live out here, too! So, what you think separates us is very, very small. It is a mental idea. We tried to make it happen, but it did not work. The urban context is here. In the worship context, how do we reconcile that we want to be homogeneous yet there is this call to diversity? We wrestle with this all of the time. Part of the question is, “What is worship for?” I am sure that you have heard this in many of your theology classes, but what is worship for? Is it to glorify God and to delight in what He is doing, or is it really about me and what I am going to get out of worship? Do I get fed in worship? Is my heart strengthened? Do I learn the love of God? Am I fed in my faith so I am able to go out on Monday and serve God in this world? Yes! However, because of our commitment to homogeneity, we are really committed to worship the way I like it and want it. Part of the solution is learning to not be quite so self-centered in our worship and, as an Anglo, to embrace the beauty of what God is doing in the African-American community or to embrace, as African-Americans and Anglos, what God is doing in the Hispanic culture. God loves His people, and He is teaching them to worship. We can learn from one another. It really strengthens our faith. It does not diminish it. We are always afraid that we are going to lose something if we give up that

which we hold so dearly, even in our Christian walk. How do you grow the most? You grow the most by stepping out, dying to yourself, and embracing what God is doing in the world and cultures around you. That does not mean there is not a lot of work in that. We wrestle with these issues. Personally, we wrestle with these issues all of the time. We do not have all the answers. We have more questions than we have answers. However, there is an incredible beauty of seeing God's people come together and embrace one another.

I have been asked, "What did your church do to get a hearing from people who are ethnically and culturally different from you?" There are three very crucial areas. One is that we made a commitment to ethnic diversity in the leadership. God is working in every people group. He is not an Anglo God. Hallelujah. He is a God of all the nations. So, we looked for how we could invest and encourage, promote, and submit ourselves to leadership from these other ethnic groups. This is a challenge in part because our particular system in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has a very Eurocentric, Reformed approach to our theology, and we kind of want leadership from other groups to fit that mold. In a wonderful way, it forces you to strip away your cultural biases and attachments of your theology so that the only thing that is left is the Gospel and Christ and those issues of justification, which are dear to every believer in every culture. You latch on to those, you look for them, and you invest in the leadership.

The second thing is worship. You have to embrace God teaching His people to worship in those different cultures. We need cultural humility in worship where we say, "This other culture has something to teach me that I can embrace and learn." I have talked to many pastors who say, "Our doors are open. We would love to have different people come. We would love for them to be here, but they just do not seem to want to come, no matter how open we are." They do not wrestle with the fact that what they are really asking them to do is leave all of their cultural expression in worship at the door. They are expected to leave who they are and who God has taught them to be at the door and totally embrace what you are doing. And, you do not have to embrace anything that they are doing. Of course they are not going to come in droves to that. Some people will, but not in masses. Are you worshipers? I hope you are. And, I hope there are some hymns and Scriptures songs that when you sing your heart lights up and you worship God. Do you experience that? Okay, so do African-Americans, so do the Chinese, so do the Congolese, and so do the Ethiopians. We need to embrace that together.

The third issue is that you have to have an outward focus of justice and mercy. This is one of the things that gives validity to our relationships with one another so we can trust each other as we work through the issues and divisions that have separated us for years. I can trust you, because together we are going to care for an Hispanic single mom. Together, we are going to care for immigrants. Together, we are going to care for a white, Anglo, single mom. We are caring for somebody who is poor. We are doing that, and the Holy Spirit says, yes! No matter what doubts I have about you (and I have them), I am affirmed, because I see the Holy Spirit working in you. So, I can say, "Yes, let us embrace this together."

[*Bill Yarborough*]

I am going to pick up where Barry left off. Nelson asked me to share specifically about Saint Louis as seen in the missional perspective. I am going to go through some themes very quickly, and hopefully we can talk about them.

Saint Louis has been called the most dying city in the United States. This is from one perspective, and I want to tell you why they call it that. Also, as we talk about these issues, I want you to think about

Jesus' calling card. You can look it up later. It is in Matthew 11. The disciples of John go to Jesus, and they ask Him on behalf of John, "Are you the One or are we expecting another?" How did Jesus respond to that? He said, "Go back and tell John a few things." Now, this is how Jesus presents Himself as this calling card. He says, "You go back and tell John: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are healed, the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor." Of course, this ties into what Barry said about Isaiah, the salvation of God, the kingdom of God, and the grace of God. As we listen to these things, remember to think about your city in light of a missional context. Saint Louis is where I live right now. You may be journeying through to another place. But, think in terms of the kingdom of God, Jesus' calling card. Jesus said very openly and freely, "As the Father has sent me, so have I sent you." So, we are on a journey with Christ Himself toward the values that He is impassioned about in terms of His commitment. He said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The mountain of the Lord's house will be established. It will be above every other hill, and the nations will flow to it." This is God's vision and His promise. Ask yourself where you are in terms of your church life and in terms of your commitments of time, money, and energy.

Why would somebody give the perspective that Saint Louis is the most dying city in the United States? Some years ago, there were 854,000 people in the center of the city. It was the third largest city at that time and the fastest-growing city in the United States. It is now thirteenth or fourteenth on the list, with a current city population of only about 350,000. It is your typical donut shape, with the suburbs around it. It has one of the highest median ages and yet one of the smallest working-age populations. It has the largest shares of elderly people of all the largest metropolitan areas of the United States. Saint Louis County and the area around it has gained 26 percent in population while the city has lost almost 46 percent of its population just in the last 20 years. This has been an enormous Catholic center and stronghold. However, between 1915 and 1990, the Catholic population lost 58 percent of its population. The community around our church has over five square miles of what is called blighted city, which is empty buildings and lots. This is the secular prophets' condemnation of our region as being one of the most dying cities in the United States.

I have the median income comparison for West County, which is out in the suburbs of Saint Louis. Think about this in terms of what we have been talking about—the poor, the widows, the needy. West County has a median income of \$63,000, while in North Saint Louis it is only \$23,000. In the city itself, the median income is about \$34,000, which is about half of that in West County. Things such as the percentage of families who live below the poverty line are things that sociologists talk about and things that we can observe. In the county, only 15 percent live below \$15,000. However, a third of the city lives below the poverty line, and this is true even more so for North Saint Louis. Twice the number of children are born with low birth weight in the city as in the county. There are a lot of factors that account for that, but those are real issues of children and families. In North Saint Louis, a third of all children who are born are born to women under 20. In the county, it is only 7.5 percent. This is not even talking about the issues of abortion, social justice, and mercy. In the county, there is about a 4 percent high school dropout rate. In the city, it is pushing 17 percent. This is a huge disparity. Many factors feed into these percentages, such as family, care, and educational opportunities. What about the graduation rates in Missouri as a state? About 77 percent of high school students actually graduate from high school. In Saint Louis County, it is almost 84 percent. However, it is only about 36 percent in the city. This is the community we live in.

I used to surf, and I compare what God is doing to surfing. As a surfer, you do not produce the wave, the energy, or the movement. It comes from somewhere else. You catch it and ride it. This is what is happening in the world. Barry was talking about the huge movement, not just of peoples but of God's commitment to save people of many nations for His justice and mercy to go out. In fact, when Calvin

wrote about Isaiah 2, he said, “The nations will be subdued by the doctrines of grace,” because the grace of God is committed to taking us, as on a wave, to where He is going and where He wants to move us. Even though Saint Louis has been called by secular prophets “the most dying city” because of that donut effect, there is also now a wave of movement into the city—30 percent of Saint Louisans are immigrants. That population is growing. People are coming again and again and not because the suburbanite has some kind of compassionate view of getting involved in education or in the care of the poor, the widow, and the needy, regardless of where they are. This movement is occurring because there is a commitment on behalf of the movement of the Earth of immigration and migration to see people coming to our community. That is the missional city that we live in today.

There are perhaps as many as 40,000 Bosnians living in the city. And, there are 70,000 plus Hispanics of all types not only in they city but scattered from the suburb of Saint Charles to the heart of the city. They are working in every conceivable kind of place. This is where we need to embrace the promises of God. When Jesus taught us to pray, He said, “Our Father who art in heaven [...]” Then, what does He say? He says, “...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done [...]” Where? It will be done here on the Earth, just like it is in heaven. So, what would it look like, then, to pray such a radical prayer in Saint Louis or wherever God has you? What would it look like in your congregation, wherever you worship, in the context of your community life?

I just want to offer a few suggestions for us to think about. I pray that you will do these same things wherever you find yourself worshiping, whether it is in another huge urban area (as we would call cities with over 1,000,000 people) or any diverse cultural context in which you may find yourself. One of the issues is—and I will quote Dan Doriani’s book, *Putting the Truth to Work*—we believe in theology, and I think one of the safest things we can say as an encouragement to one another is to be theologically driven and motivated about Saint Louis and not demographically motivated. Let me read this wonderful quote by John Perkins. Take it as you will. Embrace it, love it, chew on it, and be pricked by it. Perkins said, “Today, Christians study the science of withdrawing from others, and then we use that to attract converts. This so-called church growth or homogeneous principle should make us question the church the same way we should question the humanizing ghettos. It sugar-coats racial separation with a veneer spirituality and, in practice, it continues the legacy of segregation that has divided whites and blacks into separate churches, into separate relationships, and into separate agendas. We have taken that, embraced it, and made it a church-planting strategy.” What would it look like to put the truth to work? What would it be like to say, “Lord, Thy kingdom come”? We want to have that calling card of the Lord Jesus. Listen to this. Perkins goes on to say, “Homogeneity does not mirror the image of God. It cheapens the people who proclaim it and mocks God’s call”—Again, the theology of it, for us to be agents of reconciliation.—“What makes it even more harmful is how it is justified: ‘If we are segregated, more and more people will come and hear the Gospel, which in turn will advance the kingdom of God.’ This logic basically spits in the face of a Holy God by playing out to human weaknesses and the sin nature the very thing that they Gospel of grace and the wonderful work of the Spirit comes to heal and break down.”

So, one thing to do in Saint Louis or wherever you are is to truly pray, “Lord, Thy kingdom come.” What would it be like to be able of tell the disciples of John, “Go back and tell John that the poor have the Gospel preached to them.” Where is the movement of our hearts? Where is the movement of our energy? Where are we putting (as Dr. Dorian’s book says) the truth to work in terms of the investment of our time and life? Or, are we continuing to define ourselves by our taste, our comfort, and our movement? James Boyce said, “For too long, evangelicals in particular have been guilty of what has been called ‘white flight,’ whereas we have moved away from the action where we have been needed.” Those areas with needs include low birth weight babies, single moms, women under 20 having children,

the great disparity and divide over economic issues, and the disparity between families in the city and people who have migrated for economic reasons. Boyce said, "We have moved from where we are needed to where it is nice." And, I would argue that this is the greatest challenge at this time to a serious Christian witness. It is a challenge to establish an evangelical presence in this city and all the cities of the world. Boyce quoted Ronald Sider (and this is amazing to think about), who said, "Tens of thousands of evangelicals ought to move back into the city. If only 1 percent of evangelicals living outside of the city context who have moved further and further out had the faith and courage to move into town, evangelicals would fundamentally alter the history of urban America." They would alter history just by being there. You affect the neighborhoods you live in. We affect them just by being there. The issues of trash or kids on the street become your issues. They are not demographic studies. They are just studies in life, which is why I agree with what Barry said when he said that you do not have to be an urbanist to be a spirit-filled believer engaging in issues. You have to be a friend, you have to ask for God's Spirit, you have to confess your weakness and know that the hope of the Gospel and the grace of God is the only hope for all of us. Being "missional" means movement.

Also, we need to think in terms of being hospitable as a congregation to all those people around us. Barry talked about it. Being missional in life and church life means being intentional about hospitality so that the people you invite to church will feel at home there. We need to be hospitable toward people who are invited to your fellowship meals, those who gather in your house churches or in different activities in your church and life, and those who gather in community. This recently impacted me when I went to Chicago. I went into a very fine church. It had the cutting edge of technology, comfort, and efficiency—everything from the entrance to the bathrooms to the sanctuary. As we walked in, there were 25 or 30 people doing the landscaping. Who were they? They were our Mexican immigrant friends. I talked to them for a while. They came from Chiapas all the way to the border looking for work. They were welcomed, yet they did not feel at home to go through the doors of the church and connect there. I think we need to work through those issues, praying, "Lord, Thy kingdom come," and ask ourselves what it looks like to be hospitable in worship, in our preaching, in our praying, and in working out together the issues of our community—the issues of being regional in our relocation and participation. We are a regional people. We thank God for all of the churches in this community and the area around us. Like Barry said, "It is not just an issue of the inner city. It is an issue of our region where God is, by grace, helping us to network and learn to live as peoples in these congregations as we link hands for issues such as the poor, single moms, the elderly, widows, and orphans. If we are going to say, "Thy kingdom come" and put the truth to work, then we must hear again and again James, who says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress." So, we want to have this as a calling card as we pray as leaders of churches, youth ministries, or whatever God has you connected with in your context.

I just spoke to a pastor friend yesterday who confessed to me, saying, "I do not have a clue about the multicultural or multiracial issues in our community." It is wonderful for us to admit that, but then we need to ask ourselves what we need to do together to join hands and learn to walk together. I invite all of us to think in terms of meeting the educational needs of our community missionally, which means tutoring. The safest and easiest way for any of us to be missional toward the needs of our community is tutoring children. Please do not ever hire out mercy ministry. When the median income in one area of the city is \$60,000 and the other area is only \$20,000, it is easy to hire out mercy ministers. However, the Lord wants all of us to embrace the process by putting the truth to work in our lives. Remember that there are mentors available. You will export who you are when we think in terms of our region becoming very intentional about learning the process now. The wonderful education that we receive needs to be linked heart and soul to our hands and feet. We need to be moved and motivated by the theology of grace, not because it is just an intellectual pursuit, but because it really is our heart's cry. We

know that we are weak and broken. Our world is so that way. Saint Louis, not from a kingdom perspective, is a dying city. From God's perspective, however, it is a living community of diversity. It is a wave of God, waves of people, the waves of grace and mercy, and we are being asked to ride those waves. It is outside of our abilities and strength. We cannot do it on our own. We are weak and broken. Perhaps we have been in churches that have defined us by the divisions of our culture. We are often times even offended or made very uncomfortable because modern-day prophets speak things like this. Yet God is so committed to the Earth. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world"—that means the cities, the nations, the peoples—"that He gave His Son." Then, He gave Himself to us, and He has asked us to pray with Him, "Thy kingdom come." This would look very missional for your city. These are just a few things to talk about.

I have been asked to speak about multilingual ministry in a local church. Barry said it so well. We wrestle with that issue. We have several people in our church who actually speak Spanish. You will find that in most churches and most congregations there are people who speak at least bits and pieces of so many languages of the world. Spanish is a classic. So, on that level, we have begun worshiping in different languages at church, not as a technique but because these are languages of the heart. At our church, we do some Spanish. I will use my daughter as an illustration. We came back to the United States a little over five years ago and visited a suburban church in the county. I felt like a fish out of water, because I had done all of my church work in Alaska and Mexico. I was totally underdressed. I did not feel at home. Then, we were asked to stand up, sit down, read, and sing hymns. My daughter asked, "Daddy, is this a Roman Catholic Church?" I said, "No, sweet heart, this is a wonderful Reformed church," but it was so culturally strange to her. My daughter helps with one of the worship teams at church. When we started doing some of our worship in Spanish, it was the first time I saw her lift her hands to the Lord again in worship.

So, how do you do this? For example, we offer language classes. We have called them ESL, but "English as a Second Language" sounds enormously difficult. However, we try to connect non-English speakers with people who do not know any other language beside English. They meet over coffee, and it is very non-threatening. Most people drink coffee or coke, and people enjoy being together around the issue of language in that kind of way. You will find as you make friends with some of the other immigrants that they desperately want to know English. It is wonderful to open your doors to be able to provide coffee, fellowship, and practice in speaking English. This is just one little way to break that barrier. Most of us feel hugely threatened when we do not know someone else's language. I love to be in Latin America, because I feel at home there. I have a very hard time in Turkey, where I do not understand the local language. When I am there, I am so glad when I hear English. Put yourself on the other side of things. One of the neat ways to do that is by learning how to worship in another language. It breaks the ice for you. It helps your congregation or your network to feel more hospitable to people from different cultures. Learn how to go out for coffee and discuss language issues. People who want to learn English will hang out with you. We were teaching one of my Bosnian friends English, and she said something I could not believe that she said to me. She said, "Americans are so non-welcoming." I said, "What? Why are you saying that to me? I am here welcoming you!" She said, "No, Americans shy away from me, because I do not speak English very well." They are as uncomfortable as we are. We just need to ask God for the grace to say, for example, "Can I sit down and have coffee with you? I will let you practice your English."

I have been asked how someone is supposed to do all of these things when he or she is really busy. First of all, I think it is important to drink deeply of the promises of God. I assure you that this is the inevitable movement of the Spirit of God. I always quote Paul Simon, who was not a theologian, but he did say, "Who am I to blow against the wind?" God is moving in so many powerful ways today. This is

an inevitable future. If you are not moving toward this end, you will find yourself defined increasingly by your sameness, your smallness, and your inability to truly love people. So, this is an inevitable movement regardless of what people are saying or how much they are resisting it. This is the movement of God. I encourage people (pastors, elders, deacons, and others) to begin to pray together, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Also, if you know your church is not going that direction, find places that are willing to go that direction. Churches that have been very traditional are actually opening their hearts and minds and asking God's Spirit to help them break out of their traditional ways. There is a huge cry for that, and there is revitalization and freshness coming into so many churches. I encourage people to pray that way and begin to wrestle with these issues openly and freely.

One of the issues that we talk about is how this issue is affecting younger generations. In the past, churches have been defined ethnically (whether they are Anglo, African-American, Asian, etc.). There are so many stripes and flavors today of all kinds of groups. The kids in this generation are finding themselves increasingly uncomfortable with being defined ethnically or linguistically, because the marketplace, universities, work places, and public places are so multicultural. Because everything is so multicultural, our kids find it increasingly uncomfortable to be defined by a church life that is mono-cultural or mono-linguistic. This wave or movement of God is taking us there even against some of the older generation. I even wrestle with some of these things, but my kids are helping to bring me along.

Not long ago, Barry and I were in a meeting with a presbytery in the Andes. The biggest issues among the people there was worship—whether it should be contemporary or traditional. I was thinking, "How can this be?" We need to pray, "Lord, give us Your Holy Spirit. Bathe us with your grace," because this is the inevitable future of wherever you go. We need God's grace to embrace the whirlwind, because it is God's wind, not ours. It is God's surge, His movement, and His promise. Obviously, there are going to be a lot of wonderful struggles, but that is why God has us in presbyteries and networks. We are learning to do these things together. So, I encourage you to take a risk, get outside of your comfort zone, and scream for mercy on the way down. God is committed to taking us forward on these things. We need to put the truth to work.

The question has been asked, "Can we reverse 'white flight?'" If we believe that the answer to everyone's problems is to have new homes, to fix things, and to pay for things, we will never be missional. We need to very humbly and carefully ask God. In 1 Corinthians 12, it says, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free." This is why it is so critical in any kind of movements that we do to have a context of both rich and poor, both Jew and Gentile in the sense of being multiethnic and multi-economical in order to be able to wrestle openly with these issues. The answer is not to displace people but to come alongside people, to humble ourselves, and to ask those hard questions on the street with the people we are walking and working with. Together, we need to depend on grace and the Holy Spirit. This is a huge issue that is happening. Even some of the people in the inner city want to gentrify. They are not wrestling with these issues. I would encourage you to find yourselves in fellowship, and I do not just mean in Bible study, but in fellowship, food, and walking together with rich and poor and with the nations of the Earth. It is the only way we can all have perspective. It is the only way our churches can find themselves truly honoring the work of the Spirit in the city. This requires huge amounts of intentionality.

[*Professor Jennings*]

I should mention that Barry and Bill are helping at the seminary with an urban ministry initiative. There are several people here who are seeking to "ride the wave" within the seminary community. We are

trying to see how it is that God would help us to be more intentional about involvement in urban ministry. It has been something that the seminary, at different points during its history, has tried to be intentional about, but it has fallen away for various reasons. However, the hope and intent at this time is to see something happen that is more lasting, that is significant, and that plugs into what is happening in Saint Louis and other places so that all of us here can learn, grow, and be challenged by all that God is doing in urban settings. So, be involved with that ministry as you are able.