



INCARNATIONAL

TRAINING FRAMEWORK

A TRAINING GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING INCARNATIONAL
LEADERS ENGAGED IN CITY TRANSFORMATION

BY KRIS ROCKE AND JOEL VAN DYKE

Incarnational Training Framework

A TRAINING GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING INCARNATIONAL LEADERS
ENGAGED IN CITY TRANSFORMATION

Second Edition

WRITTEN BY KRIS ROCKE & JOEL VAN DYKE

Urban Training Collaborative Hub Map



street psalms



And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

JOHN 1:14-16

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	6
Incarnational Training Framework Overview	8
Introduction	9

SECTION 1

Prolegomena

CHAPTER 1 Urban Context	19
CHAPTER 2 Incarnation	31
CHAPTER 3 Transforming Assumptions	42

SECTION 2

Incarnational Framework

CHAPTER 4 Message: A Way of Seeing	56
CHAPTER 5 Method: A Way of Doing	67
CHAPTER 6 Manner: A Way of Being	77
CHAPTER 7 Messengers: Called Out of Fear Into Freedom	91

SECTION 3

Postlegomena

CHAPTER 8 A Great Beauty	99
CHAPTER 9 Case Study: From Crisis to Community	104
CHAPTER 10 Twelve Questions for Incarnational Leaders	111

APPENDIX

A City Mapping Exercise	118
B Letter to Diognetus	120
C Girard's Anthropology	122
D Last Words: An Ecumenical Spirituality of the Cross	125
E Manners of Mission	126
F Prayer of Discernment (Examen)	127
G Prayer of Vocation	129

ENDNOTES

ENDNOTES	131
-----------------------	-----

Acknowledgments

The second edition of this training guide is the fruit of the ongoing project of Street Psalms (SP) since its inception in 1999 when we first trained urban youth workers in Philadelphia. In 2002 we expanded our training to 9 U.S. cities through our partnership with World Vision. Between 2005 and 2013 we offered what we called the Street Psalms Intensives in 35 cities and 23 countries worldwide.

In April of 2014 Leadership Foundations hosted 17 leaders in Memphis from across our network at a training summit where we formally established the Urban Training Collaborative (UTC). The Urban Training Collaborative is now an initiative of Street Psalms serving the networks of Leadership Foundations (LF) and Resonate Global Mission (RGM) as well as others. The combined networks of LF, RGM and SP represent nearly 100 cities around the world.

Our dream is to develop incarnational leaders throughout the UTC who are formed and shaped by the incarnational vision of this training guide. We are establishing training hubs in cities throughout the collaborative that develop incarnational leaders who love their cities and seek their peace. These hubs function like ecumenical urban monasteries that develop leaders for holistic mission. The Incarnational Training Framework is the internal operating system that helps these hubs form and shape training, curricula and incarnational programs for the city.

The Incarnational Training Framework condenses more than 20 years of creative learning into a small space. Street Psalms' books, *Geography of Grace: Doing Theology From Below* and *Meal From Below: A Five Course Feast with Jesus*, are companion resources that explore the themes of the ITF in greater depth.

Many dozens of leaders throughout the network have their fingerprints all over this training guide. We want to express our sincere appreciation to those have been vital in creating this resource.

The principal authors and practitioners of this training guide are the Street Psalms Senior Fellows many of whom serve as training hub directors of the UTC and have been field testing this resource for more than 20 years in some of the world's most challenging urban communities.

Street Psalms Senior Fellows include: Lina Thompson (White Center), Tim Merrill (Camden), Joel Aguilar (Guatemala City), Gideon Ochieng & Esau Oreso (Nairobi), Mike Ribbens (Johannesburg), Mario Matos (Santo Domingo), Jean Valéry Vital-Herne (Port-au-Prince), Ron Ruthruff (Seattle), Joel Kiekinveld (Anchorage), Justin Beene (Grand Rapids), Hultner Estrada (Managua), D.J. Vincent (Salem), Abhishek Gier (New Delhi), Ken Sikes (Tacoma), Joel Van Dyke (Guatemala

City), Kris Rocke (Tacoma).

We also want to thank Justin Mootz and his team at Matt Jensen Marketing, including designer Kirstie Wollman, without whose expertise the IFT would have remained scraps of paper littered over our desks. Cody Lail has added his creative touch to this edition. A special thanks to Caleb Seeling from the Samizdat Group for his masterful editing as well as Chris Williams and his detailed editorial work on this edition.

To Leadership Foundations, we are greatly indebted for the profoundly significant contributions and support of LF President Dave Hillis and LF Board Chair Jack Fortin, along with LF staff Melissa Monroe and Kerri Feider (Tacoma) as well as Larry Lloyd (Memphis), H Spees and Gloria Meyers (Fresno), Art Erickson (Minneapolis), Stephan & Wilna DeBeer (Pretoria), and Eric Geary (Lexington).

To Resonate Global Mission, we are so very thankful for the blessing it has been to work with Joel Huyser, Mission Innovation Leader of Holistic Missional Networks. Other Resonate team members whose voices have been instrumental in helping to chisel out this current form of the ITF include: Jeff Bos (Bangladesh), Gil and Joyce Suh (Phnom Penh), Mike Ribbens (Johannesburg), Pablo Canche (Mexico City), Steve Holtrop (Managua), Rachel Beveridge (San Salvador), Mark Wallace (Toronto) and Kevin Schutte (Kansas City).

To James Alison (OP), Dale Irvin, president of New York Theological Seminary, and Steve Lantry (SJ), we are grateful for their wisdom and work on the case study presented in chapter 9, which began as a conversation hosted by Leadership Foundations to explore how to keep people at the table when confronted by divisive issues.

Most of all we thank the vulnerable in cities throughout our network, who have been our primary teachers and who are the face and grace of Jesus, returning us to ourselves, clothed and in our right minds, at least some of the time.

Kris Rocke & Joel Van Dyke

Incarnational Training Framework Overview

1. MESSAGE: A WAY OF SEEING

What is our Transforming Perspective?

KEY INDICATOR

Does our message call people from *scarcity* to *abundance*?

PATHWAYS TO PERCEPTION

- City as Classroom
- City as Parish
- City as Playground

2. METHOD: A WAY OF DOING

What is our Transforming Practice?

KEY INDICATOR

Does our method call people from *theory* to *practice*?

PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE

- Nurturing Relationships
- Stewarding Power
- Engaging Systems

3. MANNER: A WAY OF BEING

What is our Transforming Presence?

KEY INDICATOR

Does our manner call people from *rivalry* to *peacemaking*?

PATHWAYS TO PRESENCE

- Contemplative Activists
- Ecumenical Discerners
- Eucharistic Community

Introduction

Imagine a circle of compassion. Now imagine that no one is standing outside that circle. Imagine going to the edge of that circle and standing with those who have been demonized until the demonizing stops.¹

This is the imaginative exercise of Father Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries and author of *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. We begin here because it beautifully names the essence of what this resource is all about – developing incarnational leaders who build just communities of compassion for all, especially the most vulnerable.

We believe that the most powerful resource in under-resourced urban communities is the leaders themselves. Unfortunately many faith leaders are not equipped to face the challenges of an urbanizing world. Even fewer have an incarnational vision of mission to ground them. As a result many well meaning faith leaders are doing more harm than good, and many more walk away burned out and bitter.

The data is clear. We are witnessing the largest human migration in the history of the world. Currently more than half the world's population lives in cities, and in 2050 it's expected to reach 66%. The fastest urban growth is happening in Africa, Asia and Latin America where there are currently 1 billion people living in slums.² The implications are immense, especially for the most vulnerable. It will take the best of human ingenuity, courage and wise stewardship of resources for our cities to become places of flourishing for all people, especially the most vulnerable. We need creative programs, bold initiatives and just policies for our cities to be great. Most of all, we need leaders from all walks of life who know how to build authentic community that calls forth the best in one another.

Some see cities as a necessary evil. We see cities as the natural product of our God-given impulse to create community. Cities are powered by the gravitational pull of our own nature. We are inexorably drawn to one another because we are created in and for relationship. If God exists in community (Father, Son, Spirit), we who bear God's image are co-creators of community. When God said, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Ge. 1:28), and "tend the garden" (Gen.2:15), it was the cultivation of cities that God had in mind. In the end, it's a city with a garden at its center, and the slain lamb as its mayor, that God is gifting, and calls home (Rev. 21).

However, we have made it abundantly clear that we have much to learn about how to be together if we are to survive our urbanizing impulse. Most cities are relational tinderboxes ready to ignite. Our cities, especially the most vulnerable within them, are urgently calling us to practice new ways of building community, which not only transcend the complex concentration of hu-

man diversity, but also fully include it.

Cities are healed at the same level they are created. They are healed relationally, in love. That is how change happens. It's in and through the power of relationship. The Incarnation (Word made flesh) provides the spiritual technology necessary for human flourishing and shows us how to activate, leverage and steward the power of relationships for the sake of the city.

Eugene Peterson says, "Leadership fails -- every time -- when it becomes mechanistic, formulaic, or in any way impersonal or relationally anemic."³ Bryant Meyers, in his book, *Walking with the Poor* argues that at its root, poverty and social evil are the result of broken relationships. Research in the field of resiliency demonstrates empirically what we know intuitively -- Relationships are the vehicle of change! For example, the most important success factor of those navigating the challenges of a high-risk community is the ability to form deep social connections and the unconditional love of at least one caring adult in their life.⁴ An ex-gang member sums this up brilliantly, "We can walk through trouble, if there is some place to walk to, and someone to walk with".⁵ This diagnostic training guide develops leaders from all walks of life including ministry, marketplace and public sector, to creatively engage the most intractable challenges of their communities with those they love and serve.

In the end, it's really quite simple; things that are loved bear the marks of love. That's how things grow great. The Incarnational Training Framework is designed to help leaders and their organizations love their city into greatness through the power of the Incarnation.

ANIMATING CHARISM

There is a particular charism that animates this framework and brings it to life. It's a way of seeing and celebrating Good News in hard places. This gift has been cultivated in vulnerable urban communities with grassroots leaders serving in some of the world's most challenging contexts. It's a gift that is born from below, in the lowest places. What we know from experience is that seeing God at work in difficult places takes practice. It also takes courage to join the party and celebrate what we see God doing. This is especially true when the party is more lively and colorful than we expected and includes people and places we didn't anticipate.

This framework is designed to make our gift available to any leader or organization who wants it. But fair warning; as with any gift there are risks. In this case, to receive the gift of seeing and celebrating Good News in hard places is to risk becoming fully human, and to be fully human is to be completely free. As Jesus has made abundantly clear, being fully human and free is a risky thing.

PRIMARY AUDIENCE AND USE OF TRAINING GUIDE

This training guide is written to and for the hub directors of the Urban Training Collaborative (UTC) – an initiative of Street Psalms that serves the shared networks of Leadership Foundations, Resonate Global Mission and others. This is our “community of practice,” a term coined by Richard McDermott at the Harvard Business School, who argues that a community of practice is necessary to sustain the creative learning culture of an organization or movement.⁶ The primary function of this guide is to cultivate and curate a community of practice that shares a common vision and language in our efforts to develop incarnational leaders.

Our community of practice extends beyond the Urban Training Collaborative to include those who are interested in developing incarnational leaders in vulnerable urban communities. This includes churches, missional agencies, organizations and movements interested in developing incarnational leaders.

A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

The Incarnational Training Framework (ITF) also functions as a diagnostic tool that helps leaders and organizations examine their own approach to urban transformation in light of the Incarnation. The framework asks a series of questions concerning the message, method and manner of Jesus’ mission. The framework is structured to help leaders/organizations undergo three key paradigm shifts guided by three questions:

1. Message: A Way of Seeing—Does your message call people from scarcity to abundance?
2. Method: A Way of Doing—Does your method call people from theory to practice?
3. Manner: A Way of Being—Does your manner call people from rivalry to peacemaking?

Ultimately the ITF is designed to free the messenger to do the work of urban transformation.

As a diagnostic tool the ITF follows the wisdom of the poet E.E. Cummings who once wrote, “Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question.”⁷ We have come to believe beautiful questions do indeed yield beautiful answers. Perhaps this is why God asks Adam and Eve a series of questions after “the fall” that begins with, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9) Similarly, Jesus begins his ministry with a question, “What are you looking for?” (John 1:38). Asking beautiful questions requires deep listening, compassion and a lively imagination as well as a deep trust that the answer lay within us, and is waiting to be discovered. Beautiful questions free us to see in new ways and act creatively. On the other hand, small questions yield small answers. The Japanese word “mu” means “un-ask the question.” Mu is the appropriate response when

the question is too small for truth to emerge. We trust the power of beautiful questions to call forth and uncover life-changing answers.

A FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK

Our framework is designed to invite a robust conversation from a variety of contexts in cities throughout the world. What is essential for UTC Hubs is unity of purpose, not uniformity. We follow the wisdom of Rupertus Meldenius who said, “In essentials, Unity. In nonessentials, Freedom. In all things, Charity.”⁸ To press the point, the principal authors of this training guide represent two very divergent traditions. Joel Van Dyke was raised in the Christian Reformed tradition. Kris Rocke was raised Catholic. Together, we represent a kind of theological patchwork quilt. We serve a network that spans a wide theological spectrum. The particularity of each context and the wide variety of spiritual traditions and theological perspectives represented by the network enliven the framework and make it all the more useful.

To be sure, we offer a particular view of the Incarnation that might be considered a minority voice throughout church history. It honors a long line of nonviolent peacemaking traditions and yet we have no interest in being dogmatic because we recognize there are many diverse theological traditions that have contributed to the peace of our cities, even ones with which we disagree. The training guide is not designed to convert. It is meant to invite dialogue with a wide variety of perspectives. It’s the dialogue we value. And since wisdom is acquired over years of practice, and failure is an essential part of wisdom, it too is built into the framework. In this sense the Incarnational Framework is, and always will be, a work in progress.

We want to reiterate, the ITF is a framework, not “THE” framework, and in that sense is descriptive, not prescriptive. It is not a program, nor does it seek to compete with the various best practices of city transformation movements. It is incarnational and therefore entirely contextual. No two cities are alike, and the principals of the training framework are applied uniquely in different contexts. It assumes the Spirit is always at work in our cities inviting us to pay attention and participate. The task of leadership and city-serving organizations is to discern the Spirit’s movement in a given place and time, and to call others to participate in practical ways.

A LEVER AND A PLACE TO STAND

Archimedes said, “Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the world.”⁹ Our training framework assumes that leaders and city-serving organizations have a particular “lever,” or way of loving a city and seeking its peace. We acknowledge that there are many ways to love a city and seek its peace. While the training framework can help structure a wide variety of

approaches to loving a city and seeking its peace, it does not endorse or embrace all approaches. It is a thoroughly Christ-centered framework. At the same time, our way of training seeks to foster dialogue and collaboration with people of many faiths and persuasions in the shared pursuit of urban shalom. A deeper identity in Christ frees us to work alongside people of all faith traditions.

Our framework also assumes a particular “place to stand”—the city itself. It assumes that real transformation is possible when we stand in one place for a long time. The missional call of city transformation requires a kind of priestly vow of stability. By way of analogy, God gave the 11 tribes of Israel land to cultivate, but the Levites (the priestly tribe) were given 48 cities. Six of these were cities of refuge to protect fugitives who committed crimes of passion (Joshua 21). God called the Levites to remain in the city, to stand there and strengthen the social and spiritual fabric that held their society together. And so we take our cue from the Levites, assuming a vow of personal and organizational stability.

The Incarnation speaks to the particular way in which we activate the lever and the particular way in which we stand. We stand with those who have been pushed to the margins, and this is what our framework affirms. We stand in a way that builds bridges between the powerful and the powerless. As such, our framework has a deep commitment to a theology of place and the important truth that place matters!

JAZZ-LIKE

For years now, Street Psalms has used jazz as a metaphor for doing theology. We first borrowed this concept from Carl Ellis Jr. in his book, *Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African-American Experience*.¹⁰ Jazz is an interactive musical conversation that comes out of the African American experience. However, Geoffrey Ward & Ken Burns show in their documentary, *Jazz: A History of America’s Music*, that jazz is more than just a musical form.

*The history of jazz turns out to be much more than a study of this extraordinary American music. Jazz has been a prism through which so much of American history can be seen—a curious and unusually objective witness to the twentieth century...Our study of jazz offers the explosive hypothesis that those who have had the peculiar experience of being unfree in a free land might actually be at the center of our history.*¹¹

While jazz is particular to the African American experience, it speaks universally to the vulnerable urban communities represented by the UTC, especially as a metaphor for our approach to developing incarnational leaders. It is consistent with Paulo Freire’s approach in his landmark

book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which challenges traditional methods of learning whereby the student is a vital participant, not a passive recipient, in the learning process.¹²

Jazz is dynamic, improvisational and finds beauty in the soul of the performers and in the act of the performance. Classical music, by contrast, is carefully structured and finds beauty in accurately presenting the original intentions of the composer. Speaking metaphorically, we might say classical theology arranges what we know about God into formal, consistent systems of thought. In fact, one can see some classical elements in the framework. However, the temptation of classical theology is that it often leads to a preoccupation with correct belief systems. This can result in top-down systems of belief controlled by power structures that exclude the marginalized. On the other hand, jazz theology is participatory and bottom up. It recognizes that the marginalized and the dispossessed hold the key to transformation—a much-needed complement and equal partner to classical theology.

There are three critical notes discovered by jazz. They are called blue notes: the flatted 3rd, flatted 5th and flatted 7th. The bluest of the blue notes is the flatted 5th. It's the note that Miles Davis and many others perfected. These notes give voice to pain. That's their function. As Kathleen M. O'Connor said in her book, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, "The first condition of healing is to bring the pain and suffering into view."¹³ Throughout this training guide, we explore the blue note. It is a source of great hope and healing for vulnerable urban communities.

Sharon Welch reflects beautifully on the power of jazz,

In Jazz and blues we find the power and pleasure of "virtuosity in the face of limits," the power and joy of holding together seemingly intractable oppositions (suffering, rage, hope, and determination) all without illusions of simple and or final answers....the pleasure and energy of Jazz comes from hearing both a familiar chord progression and melody and the new possibilities, what can be done from that structure. The ability to improvise is fueled both by individual effort, creativity, and technique and by group synergy: The technical skill and creativity of each player is as foundational as is the spark that comes from playing off each other.¹⁴

This training guide is designed to help us develop leaders in our local contexts by "playing off each other."

A PARTICULAR KIND OF LEADER

This tool is designed to help hubs develop a particular kind of leader—incarnational leaders. This training guide focuses primarily on the incarnational aspect of leadership, but it's import-

ant to emphasize that our goal is to develop leaders who participate in holistic, social and spiritual renewal in vulnerable urban communities.

There is a massive array of resources available on leadership. For the sake of simplicity, our working definition of leadership comes from Robert Terry in his book, *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*, where he argues that “Leadership is the courage to call forth authentic action in the commons.”¹⁵ There is much to unpack here, but we want to highlight three keys inherent in Terry’s vision of leadership.

1. Leadership is both an individual and communal act. It’s not one or the other. It’s both.
2. Leadership “calls forth” what is already there. It does not impose. It recognizes and awakens what is latent in others. This is an asset-based, inside-out, and bottom-up vision of leadership.
3. Leadership calls forth “authentic action in the commons.” There is a public reality to leadership. It’s for the common good of others, not the private good of the leader. Authentic action is not parochial, private or self-aggrandizing. Authentic action serves the public good.

For some, leadership is exemplified simply by seeing followers in a rear view mirror. Our understanding of leadership, however, looks forward. It’s much less about whether the leader has followers, which tends to feed big egos and shallow movements. It is more about the capacity to call others to a common task or vision that is bigger than themselves, and to do so in a way that frees all involved to seek the common good. Our vision is the shalom of the city. And authentic and integral action is that which helps bring about the vision modeled for us by Jesus.

HOPE

Our training framework is hopeful. It is not pie-in-the-sky hope, but hope that is born in the context of great suffering. All of the great prophets were clear-sighted and sober-minded about hope. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. said, “The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”¹⁶ Similarly, great poets see hope in the midst of hopelessness. Denise Levertov could see “paradise in the dust of the street.”¹⁷ This kind of hope allows us to speak frankly and deal honestly with injustice and suffering.

Our framework is built on the huge and hopeful claim that all of history is moving toward a new heaven and new earth. Scripture describes this as the New Jerusalem, the city of peace! All of creation is being called into the reality of this vision. The apostle Paul says it this way,

He (Christ) is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Col 1:18-20).

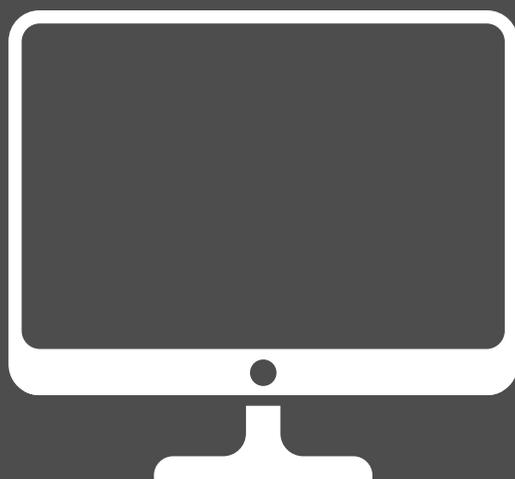
The Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin echoes Paul when he says all creation is moving toward an “omega point.” He refers to this process as the “Amorization” and “Christofication” of the cosmos.¹⁸ He is saying what Paul is saying, that the universe itself is created in Christ (alpha) and consummated in Christ (omega). In other words, the universe is not just the thing God created and therefore loves, but the universe is love in motion. It is infused with love and unfolds in love. Creation itself, in a mystery too big to fully grasp, is giving birth to Christ even now. This is what Teilhard calls “Christogenesis”—Christ, who is the beginning and the end, is also being born into the present moment.

The cosmic dimensions of hope empower us to practice the concrete reality of hope in everyday life. In the first line of her poem, *The Gates of Hope*, Victoria Safford courageously insists, “Our mission is to plant ourselves at the gates of Hope.”¹⁹ It is here, kneeling before the gates of hope, we find a place of healing, mercy and truth-telling.

SUITE OF RESOURCES

This training guide is not meant to be a standalone text or even a curriculum, per se. It is designed to shape and inform a wide variety of training curricula and approaches to urban transformation from the perspective of the Incarnation. The ITF is supported by a suite of resources including a series of webinars, workshops, assessments, case studies, and fellowships. We also offer informal and formal courses. We offer customized training for organizations, churches and missional communities interested in developing incarnational leaders.

Please contact Street Psalms for more information about how the ITF can be a resource in your context. www.streetpsalms.org



WATCH

Take a look at Street Psalm's video entitled "Grace Is Like Water." It names why we do what we do.

WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/INTRO





SECTION I

Prolegomena

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy.”²⁰

ALBERT EINSTEIN

CHAPTER 1

Urban Context

“I saw paradise in the dust of the streets.”²¹

Denise Levertov

Evangelical scholar Dr. Donald A. Carson ascribed the following phrase to his father, a Canadian minister, and it has since become widely known. “Text without context is pretext.”²² For us, the text is the incarnate Word of God. The context is the city that gives shape to God’s Word.

As we’ve suggested, cities are the product of humanity’s God-given impulse to be together. It’s no accident then that the majority of the world’s population now live in cities. Urban expansion is expected to continue at unprecedented rates. In 1800, 3% of the world lived in cities. In 2000, 50% of the world lived in cities. By 2030, it’s expected to reach 65%. World population is projected to be 10 billion by 2050 with most of the additional 3 billion living in cities. That means we will need to build the equivalent of one new city that can support 1 million people every five days between now and 2050.²³ The fastest urban growth is in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We are in the middle of the largest human migration the world has ever known. The migration from rural to urban is massive and complex. Sixty to seventy million people worldwide are moving into urban areas each year. That’s equivalent to twice the size of the entire population of Canada having to relocate itself every year.

INCARNATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE CITY

We begin by knowing our cities anthropologically. As Scottish poet and preacher George MacDonald said, “If there be any meaning to the Incarnation, it is through the human that we must climb up to the divine.”²⁴ There is no other route. Humanity is the divinely inspired path to God. Similarly, Simone Weil wisely recognized that the Gospel texts present a “theory of man,” an anthropology, before they offer a “theory of God,” a theology. Denying the anthropological mirror of the Gospel, which tells us the truth of

In this chapter, we introduce the basic shape and grounding of the Incarnational Training Framework.

who we are blinds us to the truth of who God is. The city is no different. That is why in order to know our cities we begin with anthropology, from below, with things as they are.

In his book, *The Urban Order: An Introduction to Urban Geography*, J.R. Short says,

*Cities are a mirror of our societies, a part of our economy, an element of our environment. But above all else they are a measure of our ability to live with each other. When we examine our cities, we examine ourselves.*²⁵

Here, Short reveals the anthropological roots of the city. To know our cities is to know ourselves, and what it means to be human. Cities reveal us at our best and worst. Perhaps this explains why cities are at once an alluring mystery that we can't resist and a frightening reality that we want to avoid. The advantage of seeing our cities anthropologically is that it forces us to face ourselves and deal honestly with the complex reality of the human condition. When we recognize that cities are mirrors of humanity, honest self-examination is possible and real solutions grounded in reality become visible.

If cities are mirrors that let us examine ourselves, the reverse is also true. When we examine ourselves, we examine the city. In other words, to know ourselves is in some real sense to know the human condition. It is in the particularity of our life that we come to know what is universally true. Theologians call this the “scandal of particularity” and it is the huge and wonderful claim of the Incarnation. Jesus occupied one human life, in one place, in one moment in history, and in doing so he knows all humans, in all places, in every age.

Flannery O'Connor, an artistic and spiritual genius of the Incarnation, said it this way, “Somewhere is better than anywhere.”²⁶ Her point is that when we locate ourselves and let our roots sink deep, we can be true citizens, not only of a particular place, but of the world.

As it turns out, locating ourselves and occupying our particular “somewhere” is far more challenging than we might imagine. The mobility of our culture mirrors our restless souls. In a recent study of city dwellers in the US, 46% said they would like to live in another city other than the one in which they are living.²⁷

When we find it hard to locate ourselves in a particular place, it's difficult for the roots of our life to grow deep and build lasting bonds. It's challenging to look in the mirror



*“Somewhere
is better than
anywhere.”*

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

long enough to see clearly. The Incarnation insists that liberation is learning to occupy our lives, to locate ourselves somewhere and stand firm, to make a vow of stability and stay put. To know one place is to know every place. To know one person is to know every person. To know Jesus is to know God. It's the scandal of particularity.

Fortunately, we are seeing young leaders for whom the city is not a place through which they are passing on their way to somewhere else. The city is not something they use and discard when they are done with it, or when the reflection in the mirror becomes threatening. Their love roots them deeply and securely, making honest self-examination possible. See [Appendix A for City Mapping Exercise](#) rooted in the anthropological reality of the city. It is a helpful method to know a city from the bottom up.

INCARNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE CITY

Cities are more than mirrors. As urban missiologist Ray Bakke says, “Cities function as magnets and magnifiers of culture. On one hand, cities import the nations: this is the magnetic pull-factor. On the other hand, cities also export culture; this is the magnifying push-factor.”²⁸

The city is a magnet that draws people seeking opportunity and fleeing oppression. As such, it gathers and compresses humanity's greatest hopes and its greatest fears. The compression transforms them into noble gifts as well as unspeakable curses.

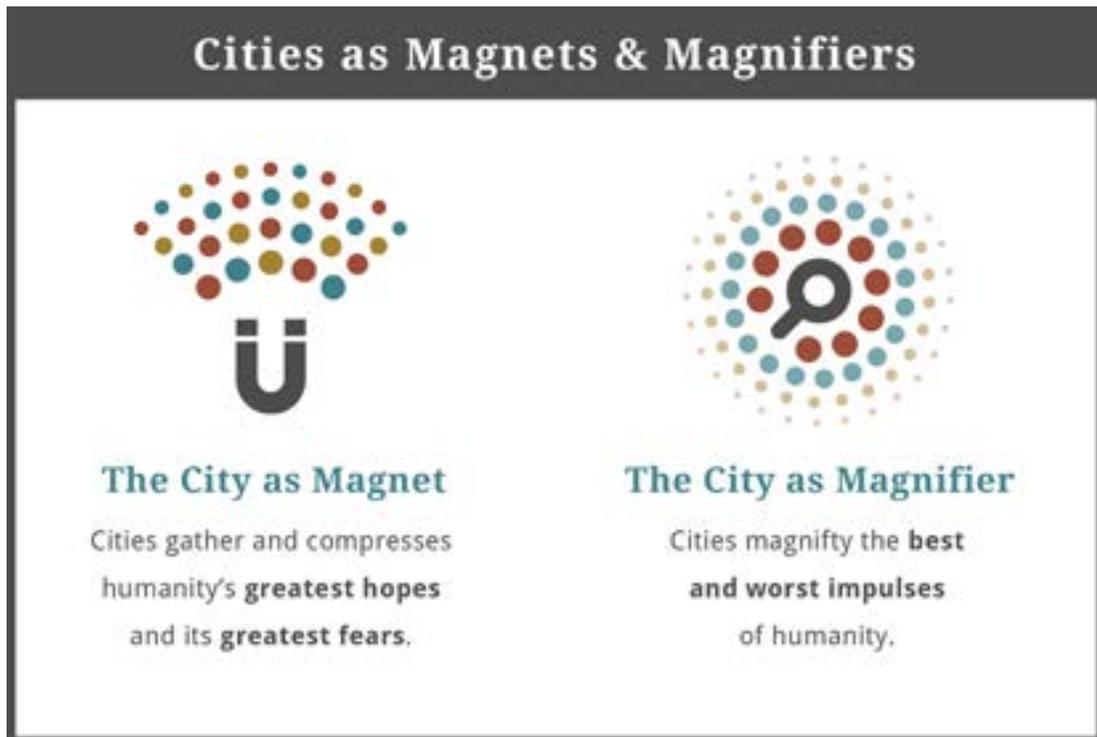
E.B. White, in his book, *Here is New York*, says the city is like a poem: “A poem compresses much in a small space and adds music, thus heightening its meaning. The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds, into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines.”²⁹

The city is also a magnifier—it magnifies the best and worst impulses of humanity. Shifting metaphors slightly, Bakke refers to cities as the woofer and tweeter that amplify culture. Through a complex combination of media, technology and the constant flux of population, the city exports cultural values to the world. Rural communities may be geographically distant, but their worldview is increasingly shaped by the urban context.

This is why sociologists make a distinction between urbanization (the growth of cities) and urbanism (the impact of cities no matter where we live). Cities are no longer just places, they are a process by which we become human. In this sense, even rural communities are being “urbanized.” There is no escape from the city.



Cities are no longer just places, they are a process by which we become human.



Cities are more than their sociological functions. They are living, breathing organisms.

Most sociologists see cities in terms of their functions. For example, Lewis Mumford said, “The unique office of the city is to increase the variety, velocity, extent and continuity of human existence.”³⁰ In other words, a city is what it does.

Joel Kotkin suggests something similar, “Since the earliest origins, urban areas have performed three separate critical functions—the creation of sacred space, the provision of basic security, and the host for a commercial market.”³¹ These three functions correspond to the three classic systems that make up a city—the religious, political and economic systems. Any serious effort to transform a city must engage these social systems. Urban mission that does not engage the social systems that order and shape society is not serious about city transformation.

INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY OF THE CITY

Cities are more than their sociological functions. They are living, breathing organisms. Jesus speaks to cities as though he were speaking to a person: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes” (Luke 10:13). Jesus cries three times in the Gospels—once for his friend Lazarus, once for the city of

Jerusalem and once on the cross for all creation. People, cities and all of creation itself call forth the deepest passions of Jesus.

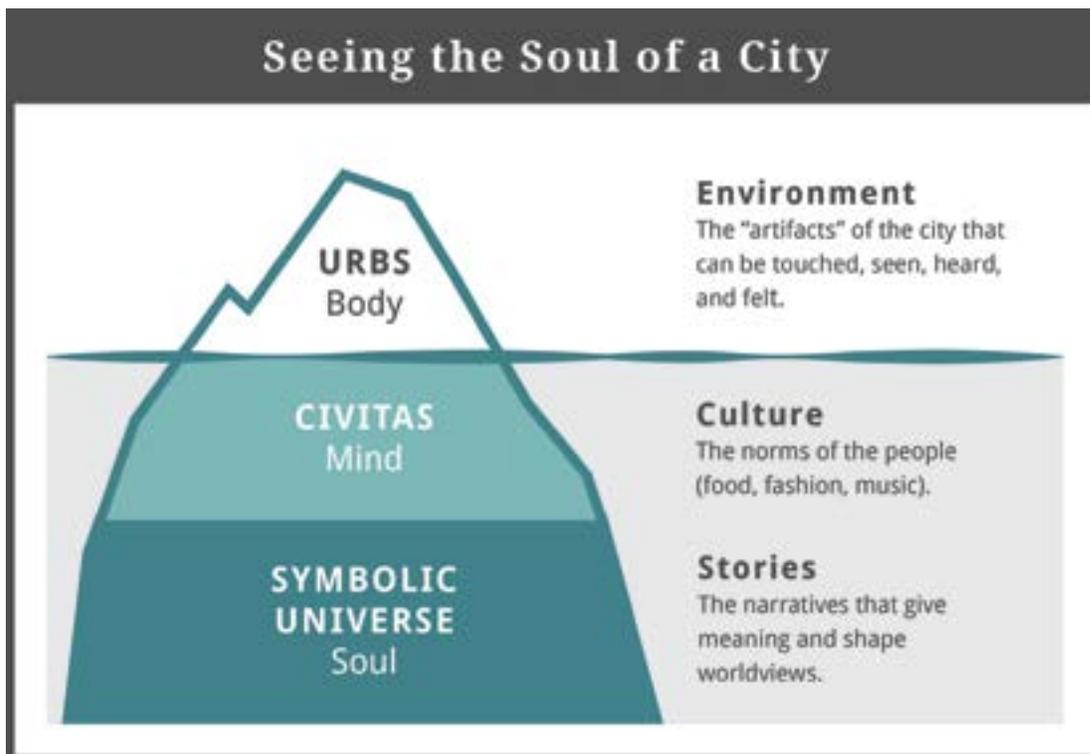
A city is more than the sum of its parts. Cities are spiritual realities. Scripture insists that each city has its own angel. The book of Revelation is written to the “angels” of the seven churches in Asia.

Father Ben Beltran, in his book, *Christology of the Inarticulate*, describes a way of knowing a city through what he calls its symbolic universe.³² The symbolic universe is the narrative structure of the soul that holds us together and makes meaning of life. In fact, the Latin word *symbolum* literally means, “to hold together.” The symbols and stories we tell ourselves are what hold us together, and this is true for both people and places. C.S. Lewis said it this way, “Symbols are the natural speech of our soul, a language older and more universal than words.”³³

Beltran sees the city as an iceberg: The most visible parts of the city are the tip of the iceberg, or what he calls the “urbs.” The urbs are the body of a city—its physical environment which can be seen and felt (geography and architecture).

Just beneath the surface is the “civitas,” or the mind of the city. These are the norms,

A city is more than the sum its parts. Cities are spiritual realities.



values and culture of a place.

Deep beneath the surface is the largest part of the iceberg. This is where we find the soul of the city, or what Beltran calls the “symbolic universe.” The symbolic universe includes the unconscious symbols and stories that give meaning. Beltran’s argument is that unless we can engage the symbolic universe of a place, we will get stuck in what he calls systemic misunderstanding. We would address a city’s body and mind, but we would miss the soul.

In order to address the symbolic universe of his community the Gospels record that “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matt 4:1). The devil meets Jesus in the desert to discuss the symbolic universe of Israel. As such, Satan chooses the elemental symbols of life—bread, temple and crown. If we step back and take a big view, these symbols represent the economic, religious and political systems by which society functions. When seen this way, the temptations are about the narrative structure of life itself.

Donald Kraybill, in his very helpful book, *The Upside Down Kingdom*, sees Jesus’ conversation with Satan as a confrontation with the principalities and powers that have colonized the imaginations of the world.³⁴ We are not dealing here with merely personal temptations of the flesh or the pride of life—a perspective that has often dominated the teaching and preaching of a hyper-personalized Western culture. When considered symbolically, Jesus is naming the “principalities and powers” of the world (to use the language of Paul). He is naming the economic, religious and political realities that claim godlike powers for themselves and do great harm when allowed to govern by fear.

As it turns out, these systems are the substructure of society. In fact, modern sociology teaches us that these are the systems by which every society and every city functions. Jesus is doing battle with the same principalities and powers that he ultimately exposes and defeats on the cross. Jesus is meeting with Satan to talk about things of ultimate significance.

BREAD: GOD’S ECONOMY

Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread. Jesus resists and insists that God’s economy is one of abundance not scarcity. Alone in a desert filled with nothing but sand and rocks, he does not react in fear. Jesus says, “Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Jesus knows there is more than enough

bread for all if we can only see by the light of his Word. In fact, later in the Gospels he feeds five thousand people to prove the point. More importantly, he is revealed as the very bread of life that we celebrate at communion—a table open to all where there is enough for all. More than enough. That is God’s economy.

TEMPLE: GOD’S RELIGION

Jesus is taken to the temple, which is the sacred center of Israel. The devil tempts Jesus to throw himself into a religious system built on the sacrifice of innocents, what others have called a giant abattoir or slaughterhouse that supplied eighty percent of Jerusalem’s economy, offering twice-daily sacrifices on the ever-burning alter. Jesus says, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” Jesus resists the temptation to throw himself into a violent system and in doing so reimagines the entire premise of religion itself. In fact, he tears down the temple system and builds a new temple (which is himself) that is founded on mercy, not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6). That is God’s religion.

CROWN: GOD’S POLITICS

Satan offers Jesus a crown of “glory” if he will “worship” Satan, but the crown that he offers is really a crown of thorns. Satan’s politics of domination and coercion, of might-makes-right and bigger-is-better always ends with someone being sacrificed. Jesus exposes Satan’s twisted view of power and insists on a new kind of power—one that is



perfected in weakness and is given away. Jesus says, “You shall worship the Lord your God and only Him shall you serve.” Only God’s power is worthy of “worship,” which is an important word in this temptation. The Greek word for worship is *doxa* from which we get the word “doxology” (i.e. praise God from whom all blessings flow...). It’s the same word that is used for “glory” with which Satan tempts Jesus. The point here is that what gives God glory is when power flows out, not in, and down, not up. That is the true meaning of worship. That is God’s politics.

On the cross, Jesus finally and fully divests himself of Satan’s economy of scarcity, religion of violence and politics of domination. This is what the apostle Paul is referring to when he speaks of Jesus having “disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15). The word “disarmed” literally means to “divest.” In other words, Jesus divested himself of the symbolic universe of Satan. By divesting himself, he exposed Satan for who Satan is—a liar and murderer. René Girard puts it this way, “The powers are not put on display because they are defeated, but they are defeated because they are put on display.” What happened privately in the desert was made public on the cross.

The implications of this are significant for urban ministry. It is only as we divest ourselves of Satan’s twisted symbolic universe based on fear that we can reimagine God’s symbolic universe/kingdom based on love and build cities of God’s peace for all people.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE URBAN CHURCH

While the world streams to cities, the church is undergoing equally massive shifts, much of it fueled by urbanization. The body of Christ looks very different today than it did a century ago. For example, in 1900, 80% of Christians were White, Western, and Northern European or North American. In 2000, 80% of Christians were non-white, Eastern or Southern.³⁵ The face of Christianity is finally looking like the world it is called to love and serve, where black and brown people make up 88% of the total population and Caucasians comprise just 12%. Christianity, which used to be the only game in town in many contexts, is now finding itself living side-by-side with a wide variety of faith traditions.

We are witnessing an urban Pentecost. The scattering at the Tower of Babel is being reversed. God is gathering people to cities from every kindred, tribe and nation. The

artificial dividing lines of race, culture and even religion are being softened. We are discovering our common humanity, learning to listen to and appreciate each other in ways that were unthinkable even 25 years ago. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists are finding the resources within their own traditions to love their cities and seek peace in ways that free us all to work together. The same religious institutions that used to hermetically seal us in separation from each other are instead beginning to open us up to one another.

Jewish theologian and activist in the Civil Rights Movement, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his well known lecture entitled, “No Religion Is an Island,” said, “Parochialism has become untenable. The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals or nations. We are all involved with one another. Spiritual betrayal on the part of one affects the faith of us all.”³⁶

Those who are ruled by the myth of scarcity can only see this as a threat, as a dangerous brand of secularization. When seen through the eyes of God’s abundant love, we are witnessing the prophecy of Joel, who said, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17). The Spirit is working within the complicated swirl of human history to choreograph the emergence of something truly beautiful—a new humanity, a new city that transcends the superficial boundaries of race, culture, class and even religion that so easily separates and divides.

In light of this urban Pentecost, Richard Rohr writes,

The ecumenical character and future of religion is becoming rather obvious. Either religion moves beyond its tribal past or it has no chance of “saving the world”! The “emerging church” is gathering the scriptural, contemplative, scholarly, and justice-oriented wisdom from every part of the Body of Christ. It is really the religious side of globalization.³⁷

Rohr’s insight is consistent with Phyllis Tickle and other church historians who have noted that roughly every 500 years the Church undergoes a major face lift and a wholesale reorganization of power and authority.³⁸ It’s been 500 years since the Reformation and there is a growing hunger for authentic spirituality that speaks to the complex urban reality we face. There is a holy dissatisfaction with hierarchical, top-down, institutional religion divorced from reality. People want a faith that works in real life. Our holy dissatisfaction with the status quo and the exploding urban reality of our

The myth of scarcity produces scapegoats, and it always ends in violence.

world are conspiring to force much needed change.

Clearly, the tectonic shifts of urbanization, globalization and pluralization have far reaching implications, and these shifts come with huge opportunities. There is good reason to be optimistic. Spirit-led leaders who are prepared to act courageously and creatively are finding ways to harness these forces for good and create a virtuous cycle that builds just and loving communities for all.

But there are also major challenges that pose grave threats. It's no secret that these challenges disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. The misery index of rampant urbanization includes large-scale unemployment, substandard housing, lack of health care, poor education and the proliferation of underground economies that dehumanize all sectors of society. We must acknowledge that the tectonic shifts also affect those who hold positions of power, especially those who preside over weakening institutions (such as the church, especially in the US) that are undergoing massive changes. There is an acute sense of anxiety for both the powerless and the powerful.

This instability is a dangerous cocktail. It is a breeding ground for violence. Communities in chaos attempt to save themselves by looking for someone to blame, for someone on whom to project their misery. Those who are vulnerable, different or easily distinguished from the crowd are prime targets. The myth of scarcity produces scapegoats, and it always ends in violence. This is not a theoretical danger. It is the actual story of high-risk urban centers worldwide.

Perhaps now we can understand the powerful attraction of fundamentalism that offers simple solutions to complex problems and insists on seeing everything in terms of a battle between "us and them." We are familiar with religious fundamentalism in which all of life is cast as a holy war. It is a vision of life fueled by spiritual terrorism that uses the threat of divine wrath to insure compliance and group loyalty.

There are other, less obvious forms of fundamentalism. For example, there is free-market fundamentalism that sees the world in terms of winners and losers. It creates economic disparity on a massive scale and divides the world into haves and have-nots. For example, Forbes' wealthiest 100 Americans are worth as much as the entire U.S. population of African-Americans (42 million), according to a recent report from the Institute for Policy Studies.³⁹

There is ethnic fundamentalism that produces institutional racism. All over the world,

there are school systems, healthcare systems and criminal justice systems that are producing a permanent underclass among ethnic minorities, not to mention brutal forms of ethnic cleansing that continues to happen worldwide. Urban street gangs around the world can be understood against the backdrop of such systemic injustice. No less destructive are the liberal fundamentalists whose “enlightened,” left-leaning worldview is used as a tool of judgment on those who are seen as less evolved.

Fundamentalism is on both sides of the aisle—right and left, conservative and liberal. We get locked into rivalry, each throwing stones at the other in hopes of saving oneself. When these conflicts are full-blown, the rivals become indistinguishable, mirror doubles of one another. Rivals are never more alike than when at each other’s throats.

Unfortunately, fear, anger, and resentment are spreading like a virus, a contagion that threatens cities and nations alike. We are faced with either finding new ways for humans to flourish that transcend the maddening myth of scarcity, or we run the risk of destructive violence on a scale the world has never known.

Followers of Jesus have a vital role to play in responding to these challenges. Our cities need incarnational leaders who embody the message, method and manner of mission modeled by Jesus. This goes far beyond status quo models of leadership that are preoccupied with preserving position, title and power. Incarnational leaders are free of these attachments. Having pledged allegiance to the Kingdom of God, incarnational leaders enjoy the structural freedom they need to work for justice inside complex systems that demand complete loyalty.

Collectively, as a community of practice, Incarnational leaders perform the tripartite roles of Jesus who is prophet, priest and king. We speak truth to power (prophetic). We cultivate the soul of the city through the ministry of presence (priest). We help build just systems that serve all members of the city, especially the most vulnerable (royal).

The ancient Letter to Diognetus is a beautiful description of the threefold ministry of Christ and the kind of incarnational leadership our cities need today. It was written by Mathetes, a Christian philosopher early in the second century. He wrote to Diognetus who wanted to understand the intensely persecuted and rapidly growing movement of Christianity. Christians were misunderstood, maligned and martyred by the Roman Empire. The main charge against Christians was that they were “atheists” because they didn’t worship the idols of the empire. Perhaps the most famous line of the letter is,

“The Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world.”⁴⁰

It’s a significant and beautiful claim—the soul is to the body what faith-filled, incarnational leaders are to the city. The letter is all the more amazing given that it is written about a movement that was suffering severe persecution. (See [Appendix B](#) for excerpt of the letter).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the urban context affirm or challenge your own experience of urban life?
2. How does the urban context affirm or challenge the city in which you live?
3. Imagine how your city might be different if there were a community of people tending to its soul.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Do Cities Tear Us Apart? (Essay)
Written by Andrew Lynn

This short essay examines the misconception that relationships in the urban environment are entirely impersonal, superficial and transitory.



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)
The Urbanization of the World (Ep. 6)
Featuring Dr. Ray Bakke

Bakke puts together a map for working in and embracing our “urban reality and ever expanding urban future.”



WATCH

Video: TED Talk (Video)
How Megacities are Changing the Map of the World
Featuring Parag Khanna, Futurist

Khanna discusses global connectivity networks in the landscape of global mega-cities and the debate around humankind’s primary issue in the 21st century.

FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER1



CHAPTER 2

Incarnation

“The glory of God is humanity fully alive.”⁴¹

St. Irenaeus

In his famous all night prayer St. Francis prayed, “God, who are you and who am I?” In many ways the Incarnation is God’s answer to that beautiful question.

The Incarnation is the mystery of Word made flesh and like all great mysteries it wants to be experienced, not explained. Even the best explanations can lead us into a hopeless maze of abstractions, which is what we risk in this section. The Incarnation is 200 proof undiluted Reality that is often too much for our timid souls to bear. That is why the enfleshment of God is always experienced as a shock to our system.

The word in-carna-tion literally means, “in the state of meat.” Long before it was a doctrine (it took three centuries to form), the Incarnation is the lived experience of God’s presence in the flesh of this world. The Incarnation is love with skin on it. It is God’s “yes” to a world that has forgotten its belovedness.

The evangelist John writes,

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (John 1:14-16).

Eugene Peterson translates John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (The Message).⁴² God moves into the neighborhood – not a high rent district or gated community, but into the low rent neighborhood in which most of the world resides. It’s here in the unforeseen and forgotten places that God takes up residence and reveals what’s been “hidden since the foundations of the world” (Matt. 13:35) – Emmanuel, God with us. The Incarnate One reveals the truth of who God is and the truth of who we are.

In this chapter we lift up the Incarnation as the animating and energizing gift of the framework.

We begin with who we are. St. Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is humanity fully alive.”⁴³ Jesus’ life, death and resurrection reveal humanity fully alive and humanity fully alive is what glorifies God. The most often used title for Jesus in the Gospels is not, “Messiah” or “Son of God” as we might expect. It is “Son of Man,” which simply means “the human one.” It’s the human one who reveals God to us. Scottish poet and preacher, George MacDonald, once said, “If there be any meaning to the Incarnation, it is through the human that we climb up to the divine.” The Incarnation begins from below, showing us what it means to be human and in doing so we discover the true nature of God.

Put another way, the beauty of God becomes fully clear only when we see the beauty of humanity fully alive. What irony! The Incarnation is not an escape hatch from humanity and this world. In fact, the opposite is true—the Incarnation is the counterintuitive journey into humanity and the transformation of this world. It’s the realization of God’s promise in Ezekiel. “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ez. 36:26). This is a poetic way of describing the process of becoming human. The closer we come to being fully human the closer we come to the divine.

When we follow Jesus’ descent into the human condition, we are stripped of judgment and unburdened of the fear and shame that holds us captive. At the bottom of it all, we come to the very threshold of the divine where we meet God face-to-face. We know, even as we are known. The truth of who God is and who we are is made possible by grace. St. Francis’ prayer is answered.

Jack Fortin, board chair for Leadership Foundations and friend of Street Psalms, calls attention to the order “grace and truth” in John 1:16. He points out that Jesus is full of grace first, truth second. The order matters. Grace is what makes truth-telling and truth-hearing possible. In light of this, notice how the passage ends, “from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace” (John 1:16).



The beauty of God becomes fully clear only when we see the beauty of humanity fully alive.

TWO TASKS

God comes to us in Jesus with a vision so winsome that it overwhelms us. We find ourselves falling in love. And this is the first task of incarnational leadership—to fall in love. Thankfully it’s not a burdensome task. It feels more like a gift. Anyone who has ever fallen in love knows that love is pure gift. We can make no claim on it. It’s too big and too generous to own. We can only be in it and enjoy it and let it have its way.

If the first task of leadership is falling in love, then the second task of leadership is to discipline our love—to give it depth, character and body, like a fine wine. God first woos us in Christ, but once smitten, the Spirit transforms our love into something truly useful and life-giving. Like wine, it takes time to become fully human. Of course, great love and great suffering can speed up the transformation, but for most of us it's a long, slow and often difficult process that simply cannot be hurried. The point here is that the Incarnation reveals the very nature of love itself.

BEAUTY BEFORE DUTY

Beauty precedes duty. The order matters. A child falls in love with a game and then masters the game under the skilled guidance of a coach who pushes them beyond themselves. A couple falls in love and then, in the crucible of daily life and complex family commitments, shapes it into something truly transcendent. The deeper the love the more discipline and rigor we can bring to it. Grace before Truth. Beauty before duty. Love before law. Forgiveness before repentance. This is the normative pattern of transformation and the gift of the Incarnation.

Unfortunately there are too many duty-bound leaders who are not in love with the cities they are called to serve and fail to see its beauty. They have what Paul calls “a form of godliness that denies God’s power” (2 Timothy 3:5). Such leaders are driven by their own needs and the needs of others. They are not drawn by the lightness of love. They do the right things, but their desire to achieve some greatness is eventually frustrated by the obstacles they face. They become overwhelmed and oddly fixated on the needs and sin of the city they serve. In the end they are filled with rivalry and resentment and either become bullies who harm others or else they walk away depressed and defeated and harm themselves. Jesus calls these leaders “false prophets” whose hearts grow cold in times of trouble. “And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:12-13).

Our cities are desperate for incarnational leaders whose love endures in the face of great trial, who do not despair when confronted with the worst of the human condition. This is the hope for our cities and the purpose of this training guide—to rekindle love through beauty and provide some structure and discipline for that love to do its work on us—to make us fully human.

The poet Rumi said, “Let the beauty you love be what you do; there are a thousand ways

to kneel and kiss the ground.” In his novel, *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky’s Christ-like character said, “Beauty will save the world.”⁴⁷ The word for beauty in classical Greek is kallos, which is also the root word for “calling.” Beauty calls us, and our first calling is to see and celebrate what is beautiful. Incarnational leaders are those who become the beauty they see, calling others to do the same. Incarnational leaders are those who see through the eyes of Jesus and act accordingly. Only those who are transformed by the beauty they see in Jesus and who learn to see through the eyes of Jesus can love their city into greatness.

THE CROSS

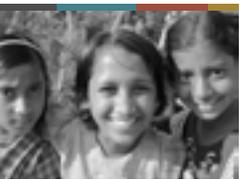
But let’s be clear, if beauty were all we see when looking at Jesus, our work would be simple. However, as broken and sinful people, we are scandalized that God’s face looks more like our enemies than friends, more like the vulnerable than the powerful, more like those we exclude and scapegoat than those we include and admire. In this sense, the Incarnation is not only a window through which we see God’s endless mercy and grace, catching a glimpse of what it means to be created in God’s image. It is also a mirror that reflects the sinfulness and violence of our own hearts. The cross proves that we will do anything, including killing God, to avoid the truth of our violent nature.

There is no way around it. The Incarnation leads to the cross and a confrontation with our own brokenness and the boundless mercy of God. It’s the place where God and humanity are fully and finally revealed. Incarnational leaders are transformed at the foot of the cross where everything is made public for all to see. Incarnational leaders are people of the cross. A people of the wound. It’s where our authority lies. Incarnation without the cross is no more than the “cheap grace” that Bonhoeffer and others have described with poignant clarity.

RESURRECTION

Finally, incarnational leaders see by the light of the resurrection, because incarnation without resurrection lacks the power to transform. In the resurrection we discover that our wounds become wombs of new creation, bearing seeds of new life.

In the resurrection, Jesus comes to us as he did on the road to Emmaus. He comes as a stranger among us. The resurrected victim of a brutal murder teaches us how to interpret the sacred text and tell the story of God’s mercy and grace that we can’t seem to get straight. When we see through the eyes of Jesus, whom theologian James Alison calls



*“Let the beauty
you love be what
you do; there are
a thousand ways
to kneel and kiss
the ground.”*

RUMI

the “Forgiving Victim,” our hearts burn within. We see as God sees, and our eyes are opened. We are set free. We are set free to love our cities into greatness.

INCARNATIONAL MISSION

The word mission comes from the Latin *missio*. It simply means “send.” Mission is not a department within a church. It’s not a program or an initiative. It is not even something the church does, *per se*. Mission is who we are. Mission is to the Christian what water is to the fish. It is the substance that has the oxygen to sustain life and where Christ followers are to “swim,” move and have their being. We are the “sent ones” whose lives are modeled after the Sent One. In other words, God is on mission and God is on mission in a very particular way. It’s the way of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the *Missio Dei*: “As the Father sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21).

We get a highly condensed vision of Incarnational mission in John chapter 20. If there is a shape to the message, method and manner of mission modeled by Jesus, this is it. The risen Christ comes to the disciples who are hiding in a locked room. They are filled with fear. Jesus enters the locked room and says,

“Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:20-23).

First, notice that we are witnessing the scene of a divine break-in! Jesus passes through the locked doors with ease. Nothing prevents Jesus from gaining access to us. Our bondage is literally nothing to Jesus. The Incarnation insists that Jesus is the good thief who comes, not to kill and destroy, but to take away the sins of the world and set us free.

Jesus’ first word is “peace.” It’s always the first word of the Incarnate One. The declaration of peace is coming from the one who is wounded (“He showed them his hands and his side”). The Wounded One has every reason to be angry and filled with wrath, but there is not a hint of it! Jesus is God’s peace in the midst of violence. This is possible because Jesus holds the wounds of violence in his body in a way that transforms it. In Christ, wounds become wombs of new creation bearing seeds of new life. He shows his wounds to the wounded and frightened disciples. They “rejoice.” The Crucified One is not only alive, he’s not mad. Double Joy! Joy is the deepest mystery of the Incarnation. If

there is an inner energy that fuels the Incarnation this is it—Joy!

As if to allay any doubts, Jesus once again declares, “Peace.” He then commissions the disciples, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” This is the payoff line. In the Resurrection, Jesus confirms the Incarnation—mystery of Word made flesh.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The Word, who is always becoming flesh, sends us into the world to enflesh the Word—to make it visible to a world blinded by fear and violence. Jesus sends us into the world to be joy-filled, wounded healers who bear witness to the liberating Good News that is diffused throughout all creation.

SENT WITH A KISS

Jesus “breathed on them.” The image is as intimate as it is beautiful. We are sent with a kiss. We are not given a doctrine or system of belief. We are not sent with some abstract decree. We are quite literally kissed into a new existence—a new way of being in the world! This act reminds us of Genesis, when God breathes into Adam the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). As kissed ones, we kiss the world with the love of God. A world that has long since forgotten its belovedness.

There is a great line in the poem, “St Francis and the Sow,” by Galway Kinnell. It captures the beauty of Incarnational mission. He writes, “Sometimes it is necessary to reteach a thing its loveliness/to put a hand on its brow/...and retell it in words and in touch/it is lovely/until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing.”⁴⁹ We all need to be retaught our loveliness. This is the way of the Incarnation! “As the Father sent me, so I send you.”

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE UNDERGOING FORGIVENESS

Having breathed on his disciples Jesus empowers them to do what only God can do, “Forgive!” We are empowered to forgive. This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit—to give and receive mercy. If there is a litmus test to mission, this is it. Mercy is the mission of God. God does what God is. God is mercy. “As the Father sent me, so I send you.”

If the litmus test of the Incarnation is the creation of a community who is undergoing forgiveness publicly, then by definition incarnational communities are imperfect, and unashamedly so. The price of admission is simply the desire to be forgiven, and



*As kissed ones we
kiss the world,
that has long
since forgotten its
belovedness, with
the love of God.*

the commitment to extend that forgiveness to others, most especially our enemies. This public act is a liberating, and sometimes painful process that lasts a lifetime.

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

If we see the Incarnation as the full life story of Jesus (birth, death and resurrection) then it can hold the tensions necessary for real transformation. For example, the Biblical revelation insists that Jesus is both Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus is both human and divine. The Incarnation insists that, “God is with us” as the one who reconciles the split between the human and divine. The two are one in Christ.

Throughout the history of mission there have been two basic fault lines regarding the Incarnation. One side tends to emphasize the immanence of the Incarnation in which Jesus comes to bless humanity as image-bearers of God. Left to itself, this leads to the challenge of syncretism in mission, where the line between Gospel and culture is erased. The other side tends to emphasize the transcendence of the Incarnation in which Jesus comes to save humanity from the bondage of sin and death. Left to itself, this leads to the challenge of colonialism in mission where the Gospel becomes a tool of oppression from the outside.

When we see the Incarnation as the full life story of Jesus, then we can hold the tension



between the immanence and transcendence of God in mission. A robust view of the Incarnation leads to highly contextualized forms of mission that affirm the dignity of humanity in all cultures making visible the hidden patterns of sin and death that must be transformed for us to experience the shalom of Christ.

PLAN A OR PLAN B?

Throughout history there have been two basic views of the Incarnation. The most familiar one goes like this: Things were good (Creation), then we sinned and ruined God's Plan A for creation (Fall). As a result, God created Plan B to fix the problem (Redemption). In this scenario, the Incarnation is God's Plan B.

Unfortunately, the Plan B approach risks reducing the mystery of Word made flesh to a transactional event designed primarily to deal with the problem of sin. It's a problem-centered approach that unwittingly gives center stage to sin. It makes sin the main character and puts God in rivalry with fallen humanity, with Jesus as mediator to deal with the conflict. This view turns the cross into another transactional event, in which Jesus must die to appease God's holy wrath.

The less familiar story is harder to tell in a culture steeped in transactional theology. It goes like this: There is no Plan B. There is only Plan A. The Incarnation has always been part of the plan and pattern of God. While Christ is the definitive and unique expression of the Incarnation, the Word is always becoming flesh to communicate that there is nothing that can separate us from God's love, not even our worst sin. This is what love does. It seeks enfleshment. This is why the early church said, that creation itself is the first enfleshment. They called creation the first Bible. The same could be said of the Covenant, the Church and even the City itself. All are expressions of Word made flesh.

Of course, Word made flesh is difficult for us to see. Our sin blinds us to God's presence and God's true character (as well as our own), which is hidden underneath layers of guilt and shame. As a result, we tend to see God as a rival, unapproachable, and we imagine that God needs to be appeased through blood sacrifice before we can enjoy right relationship. It seems inconceivable that God could simply forgive us and so a complicated sacrificial system is formed – one that seems to please God, but which as it turns out, God repeatedly denies through the prophets (“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”). This is what's been hidden since the foundation of the world– that God has always been delighted to do the one thing we thought impossible – forgive us. This is the core message of Jesus. God has always been making peace with us, forgiving us, even while we

are yet sinners.

In this view, the cross is not a transactional sacrifice to appease God. It is a sacrifice to appease humanity. And what does God do while we are killing him? God forgives us. “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” God does not return violence with violence. God absorbs the violence we dish out because there is no violence in God. This is what Jesus reveals finally and fully on the cross.



This is what's been hidden since the foundation of the world– that God has always been delighted to do the one thing we thought impossible – forgive us.

UNITING WHAT THE WORLD DIVIDES

The Incarnation unites what the world divides, revealing that reality is one, not two. The great illusion is that reality is two, not one. Dualism wants us to believe that reality is divided into an endless series of equal, opposite forces that are in rivalry with one another: us versus them, good versus evil, life versus death and so on. Dualism polarizes and digitizes, turning everything into binary options of ones and zeros. The Incarnation unifies. For the sake of simplicity we highlight three major splits of dualism that the Incarnation heals. In healing these splits the Incarnation recovers the holistic oneness of all things, which is the basis of shalom.

- I/Thou** The illusion that God and humanity are separate.
- Us/Them** The illusion that “they” are not part of “we.”
- Life/Death** The illusion that life does not include, heal and transform death.

Dualism and Incarnation



Dualism
The great illusion that divides and separates



Incarnation
The Living Truth that heals and Unifies

“In healing these splits the Incarnation recovers the holistic oneness of all things, which is the basis of shalom.”

Facing our fear of death is an essential ingredient of becoming fully human and it is not easy. Stanley Hauerwas points out that it requires disciplined training.

To learn to follow Jesus is the training necessary to become a human being. To be a human being is not a natural condition, but requires training. The kind of training required, moreover, has everything to do with death. To follow Jesus is to go with him to Jerusalem where he will be crucified. To follow Jesus, therefore, is to undergo a training that refuses to let death, even death at the hands of enemies, determine the shape of our living.⁵⁰

In the end, the Incarnation reveals that grace really is like water—it flows downhill and pools up in the lowest places. That’s where we see God and ourselves most clearly! That’s where we become fully human. That’s the hope of the world. If our cities are to bear the marks of holistic transformation the process will need to happen from the bottom up and the inside out. That’s the Incarnation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the vision of the Incarnation affirm, challenge and engage your own story?
2. How might it affirm, challenge and engage the story of those you serve?
3. Imagine how your city might look different if it recognized its vocation to create a safe place for us all members to become fully human.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Skin of the City (Essay)

Written by Scott Dewey

Dewey reflects on the flesh that makes up the city. The resource “Jesus from Below” shows how the Incarnation unites Jesus with those on the margins of society.



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)

Theology of Place (Episode 8)

Featuring Will McCall, President of the Dallas Leadership Foundation.

McCall takes a deep dive into the theology of place as one of the most significant ramifications to a belief in the Incarnation.



WATCH

What The Bleep Do We Know?

Dr. Quantum Visits Flatland (Clip)

This short clip (5:11) portrays the “Flatland,” where there is no understanding of three-dimensional reality. It begs the question of how one might see anything new if only what is already known can be seen.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER2**



Transforming Assumptions

**Effacement is the emerald dagger you need to plunge
Deep into yourself upon this path to divine
Recovery—
Upon this path
To God.**

*Hafiz (1320-1389)*⁵¹

There is a fundamental assumption that animates and energizes the Incarnational Training Framework. We assume that transformation is not only possible, but it is always happening if we have the eyes to see it. In fact, though it is not always obvious, all of creation is undergoing the process of being transformed (Col. 1:20, Rev. 21:5). This is not a dreamy hope for us. It is a given.

Catholic theologian James Alison suggests that the movement from impossibility to responsibility is the normative pattern of transformation.⁵² It's the process by which things come into being. We don't make this happen as much as we cooperate with it. We can all name something that used to be "impossible" but is now quite "normal" (e.g. riding a bike, being a parent, making friends with our enemies). Over time and with much practice we find ourselves doing things that formerly seemed impossible.

The Book of Acts is a great illustration of this process in action. In virtually every chapter, the disciples find themselves experiencing what had formerly seemed impossible. With each "new normal," they search for new language to make sense of what they experience and accept greater responsibility for what they encounter. The high point of this process is in Acts 10 when God pours out the Spirit on Gentiles. As a result, Peter has to confront his own racism, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (Acts 10:16).

Martin Kahler captured this pattern with his dictum, "Mission is the mother of theology."⁵³ In other words, the Spirit is always ahead of us at work in the city, expanding the

In this chapter we offer brief reflections on the nature of transformation inherent in the Incarnational Training Framework.



Transformation is the process by which something comes into being.

reach of God’s love and calling us into what seems impossible. The ever-expanding mission of God forces us to find new theological categories to explain what is happening. Eventually we accept responsibility for the new normal made possible by the Spirit at work among us.

The word “transformation” is currently in vogue, and widely used by all kinds of city-serving groups to describe the impact of their work. It is a large claim, one that often seems more like a marketing strategy than a deep conviction about what is actually happening.

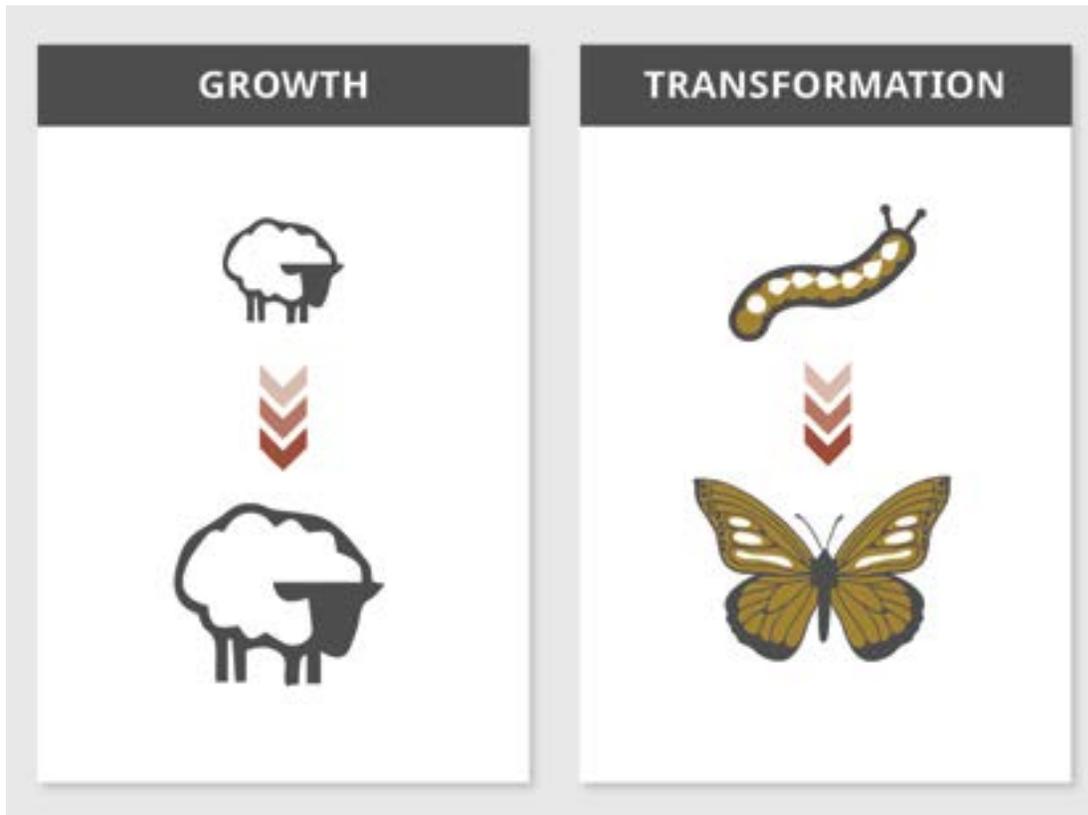
To clarify our use of the word, we distinguish it from “growth.” Growth is primarily concerned with improvement. Training for growth tends to use tips and techniques to make leaders bigger, better, faster and stronger versions of what they already are. We might call this the “good to great” model. Growth is necessary and vital, but our focus is on transformation and the transformational process of leaders and movements that love the city.

Transformation is the process by which something comes into being. It is about becoming. It is the process by which something becomes itself—its True Self as Thomas Merton would say. Transformation is not when a dog becomes a cat, or duck becomes horse. It’s more like when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

We catch a glimpse of this at the Transfiguration of Jesus. To be transfigured is not to become something different altogether, but to become something more beautiful, elevated, transcendent or luminous. On the mountain we see the Incarnate Jesus of Nazareth become the cosmic Christ. In this sense, transformation is the beautification of something. It’s when a curse becomes a blessing. It’s when ego gives way to essence. It’s when the False Self yields to the True Self. It’s when the last are first and the first are last. The ultimate expression of this is Easter morning when death is transformed into new life and a band of frightened disciples are transformed into a community of courageous souls.

When God says, “See, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5), He doesn’t mean that transformation is pie-in-the-sky hope. It is actually the concrete reality of God’s love at work in the present. It is happening now. It is happening here. It is happening in this world.

It’s this kind of spiritual vision that inspired the poet Denise Levertov in her poem, “City



Psalm.” It serves as a kind of anthem for us. In it she declares that even in the midst of horrible pain and misfortune, there is an “abode of mercy.” Inspired by the vision of God’s abundance, she says, “I saw paradise in the dust of the street.”⁵⁴

This is not a romantic vision that denies pain and misfortune. Quite the contrary, it frees us to speak honestly and unflinchingly about the whole of reality—the good, the bad and the ugly, and to do so with authority. But it never lets us slip into cynicism or despair. It frees us to see as God sees.

The following assumptions about the nature of transformation are foundational to the framework.

SEEING – THE LIGHT OF TRANSFORMATION

Stanley Hauerwas says, “We can only act within the world we see.”⁵⁵ We are creatures who act in light of what we see. There is no other path to action.

If Hauerwas is right, then the most urgent task of city transformation is to attend to what and how we see. Transforming sight is the most basic and fundamental task of In-



“We can only act within the world we see.”

STANLEY HAUERWAS

carnational leadership. This is what Jesus did. The Incarnation opens our eyes and transforms our sight.

The Incarnation insists that what sits behind our eyes is as important as what sits in front of our eyes. It insists that for those who have the eyes to see, God is at work everywhere, always calling forth life from death. Incarnational vision allows us to see God in all things. There is nowhere that God is not. Richard Rohr says, “We cannot, not be in the presence of God.”⁵⁶ Madeline L’Engle said, “There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation.”⁵⁷ As a result, we do not bring the Gospel anywhere; we bear witness to the Gospel everywhere. This is why we can see and celebrate Good News in hard places. That is what incarnational leaders do, they act within the world they see and it calls forth what already is, God in all things.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Geography of Grace (Book)

Seeing a New Thing - Ch. 17

Written by Kris Rocke and Joel Van Dyke

This chapter captures the essence of the truth behind the fact that we can only act upon the world that we can see.



LISTEN

Revisionist History (Podcast)

The Foot Soldier of Birmingham - S02E04

Hosted by Malcolm Gladwell

Gladwell revisits the story captured in the most iconic photograph of the civil rights movement. He asks the people in the famous photograph what they think happened that day. It's more complicated than it looks.



WATCH

Video: TED Talk (Video)

Can Art Amend History?

Featuring Titus Kaphar, Artist

Kaphar's paintings and sculptures wrestle with the struggles of the past while speaking of the diversity and advances of the present. He invites us to shift our gaze and confront unspoken truth in artistic expression.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3**



RELATIONSHIP - THE TECHNOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION

Cities are transformed at the same level they are created. They are transformed relationally. We are socially constructed beings. There is no achievement or failure at the personal or societal level that is not the product of an intricate web of relationships. All of reality is relational, whether at the quantum or cosmic level. Therefore all of life is healed relationally. (Sometimes this involves highly technical expressions of relationship such as complex geopolitical, environmental or social interventions, but all acts of healing are done in and through the power of relationship). There is nothing that is not related.

Bill Milliken, who has served high-risk urban youth for five decades, is often asked “Which program really can transform lives?” He says, “I’ve been doing this for 50 years, I’ve never seen a program transform a life. The only thing that can transform a life is a relationship.”⁵⁸ Knowing how to activate, leverage and steward the power of relationship is the technology of transformation. Programs, initiatives, and city serving organizations are like the hardware that need the software of relationship to work. What’s more is that if relationship is real it is always a two way street, which means authentic transformation is always mutual. In the end, all parties are transformed.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

**When Poor is Rich:
Transformative Power of I-Thou
Relationships in a Brazilian
Favela (Article)**

Written by Mary Grace Neville

Neville explores the creation of “relational wealth” found in the boundary of rich human contact holding to the notion that fostering humanness holds potential for transformation and social change.



LISTEN

Replacing Church (Podcast)

Closer to the Edge - Episode 54
Featuring Ron Ruthruff

Ben Katt hosts an interview that centers on the transformation that occurs through learning how to listen to, understand and value people with experiences different from your own.



WATCH

Video: TED Talk (Video)

Social Services Are Broken. How Can We Fix Them?

Featuring Hillary Cottam, Social Entrepreneur

Cottam shares three stories that reveal how authentic relationships have the power to solve the deepest and most complex social problems.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3**



LOVE — THE HEART OF TRANSFORMATION

Things that are loved become loveable. Unfortunately, movements that set out to “transform” the city do not always (or often) result in people loving their city, especially its most vulnerable members. When cities are seen through the lens of our consumer culture and market fundamentalism, they become objects that we use instead of living, breathing organisms that we love. G.K. Chesterton reflected on how cities “grow great.” He said, “Men did not love Rome because she was great, she was great because they had loved her.”⁵⁹

City transformation happens when people fall in love with their city. When people love their city, then over time their city bears the mark of that love. The power to transform cities is located in love, and love is always perfected in weakness. Which means that everyone can participate! Everyone can love their city in big ways and small, rich and poor, young and old, activists and academics, Christian and other faith traditions—all are called to love their city and in doing so participate in its transformation. Paul is right . . . in the end three things transform a city, “Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Orthodoxy (Book Excerpt)

Quote from G.K. Chesterton

Chesterton discusses how cities grow great.



LISTEN

99% Invisible (Podcast)

In and Out of Love - Episode 71

Features the turf battle between city planners and skaters about JFK Plaza in Philadelphia, better known as “Love Park.”



WATCH

TEDx (Video)

For the Love of Cities

Featuring Peter Kageyama

Kageyama speaks on how loving our cities by adding the human heart into the toolbox of community and economic development will create not just livable cities, but lovable cities.

FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3



DESIRE — THE LIFEBLOOD OF TRANSFORMATION

Transformation happens at the level of desire. Human beings are created in and through desire and have a highly developed capacity to imitate desire. It's what makes us human and sets us apart from all other animals. Unlike instincts, (i.e. survival, food, reproduction) which are hardwired into our biology, desires are “mimetic” or imitated and culturally-conditioned. We imitate or borrow the desires of others. As anthropologist René Girard suggests, “We desire according to the desire of others.”⁶⁰ He calls this “mimetic desire.”

Marketing agencies understand mimetic desire quite well. For example, a pair of “Air Jordans” is the object of our desire. The shoe is desirable not because there is something inherently desirable about the shoes, but because “I want to be like Mike.” Marketers advertise models, not products. That’s mimesis.

We are easily deceived into thinking that there is a direct relationship between us and the object of our desire, as if we really do want the thing we seek. However, as marketers understand, Subject A does not desire Object B in any direct sense. Suffering the loss of this illusion is essential to transformation. The object of our desire, whether a pair of shoes, a car, a house, or even a person, is always mediated by Model C, who makes the object desirable to us. When it comes to desire, it's the model that matters most. In this sense, desire is triadic, not dyadic. We want what we want because our desires have been modeled for us by another.

Our capacity to imitate each other is largely good and is what makes the bonds of human community function. Unfortunately, our highly developed mimetic capacity leads to conflict as we compete for the objects of our affection, not realizing that what we are really competing for is each other. In an attempt to bring peace and minimize



the rivalries sparked by competing desires, we create scapegoats. Scapegoats bring temporary peace to unstable communities. When Jesus invites us to imitate him he shows us a way out of this cycle of violence. He shows us how to borrow our desires from God—to imitate the One in whom there is no violence. All desire in God is non-rivalistic. The Son imitates the Father in the Spirit of self-giving non-rivalry (mutuality). This pattern of desire calls forth an entirely new way of being human, which is the hope of the world.

When we imitate Jesus and practice Christ-like desire we unplug from the rivalries that lead to violence and open the way to real and lasting peace. Christ-like desire allows us to live scapegoat-free lives. Awakening and modeling such desire is the work of transformation.

See [Appendix C](#) for further reflections on Girard’s anthropology of desire and why it is so vital to the work of incarnational leadership in an urban context written by Dave Hillis, President of Leadership Foundations.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Prayer: A Case Study in Mimetic Anthropology (Article)

Written by James Alison

Alison invites us inside the adventure of prayer through a consideration of “desire according to the desire of the other.”



LISTEN

Radiolab (Podcast)

City X - July 1, 2008

A fascinating study in mimetic desire as displayed throughout the history of the modern North American suburban shopping mall.



WATCH

Short Primer on Rene Girard’s Memetic Theory (Video)

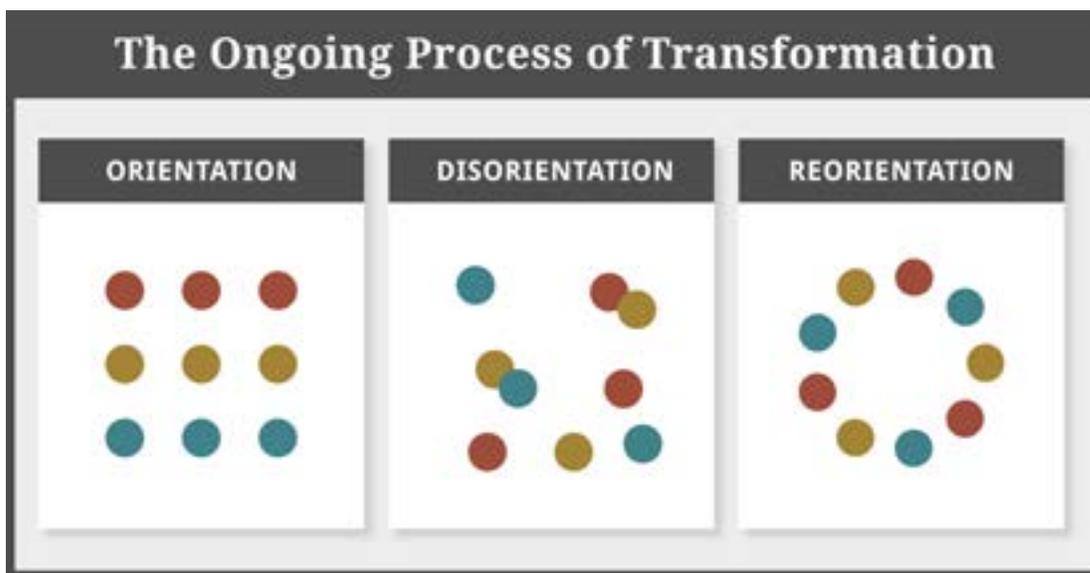
Girard reflects on the fundamental ideas of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3**



SCANDAL — THE STUMBLING BLOCK OF TRANSFORMATION

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann suggests that transformation is an ongoing process of orientation-disorientation-reorientation.⁶¹ He sees this pattern in the life of Israel. The place of “disorientation” is what others have called “threshold” or “cross-roads” experiences. It is sometimes referred to as “liminal space.” Jesus uses a more provocative word—he calls it the place of “scandal.” It is a dangerous but necessary place to occupy if we are to be transformed.



Christian anthropologist René Girard points out that scandal (*scandalizo*) is a technical word in the New Testament often translated as “offense” or “stumbling block.” Scandal is anything that sparks or inflames rivalry, thus creating the conditions for violence. This is why Jesus said, “Woe to those by whom the scandal comes” (Matt. 18:7). Scandal has the dual capacity to simultaneously fascinate and repel, which is why we are so easily entrapped by it.

“The scandal must come,” says Jesus (Matt. 18:7). There is no way around it. It is an unavoidable dilemma and a delicate matter that is largely ignored in most spiritual teaching and leadership training. The scandal takes various forms, and Jesus warns against most of them. But there is also a holy scandal—the scandalous grace of Jesus himself. This is the paradox of the gospel. The grace-filled actions and teachings of Jesus that offend/scandalize the disciples also frees them. To suffer the scandal is to see the way

we are constituted in rivalry with others and God. It is to suffer the loss of our own innocence and the loss of the “God” who protects it. Both must go! It’s the first step of the 12 Step program. Entrapment can easily lead to violence, but when confessed it can also lead to effacement.

The scandal must come as it did for John the Baptist who was deeply troubled by Jesus’ radical acts of mercy. Jesus responded, “Blessed is he who is not offended/scandalized by me” (Luke 7:23). The city is a crucible of scandal that calls forth the mercy of Christ. The challenge is that the mercy that is so desperately needed is also the thing that so easily offends. This is the paradox of transformation.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

The Beautiful Question of the Incarnational Gospel (Article)

By Kris Rocke and Joel Van Dyke

Van Dyke and Rocke find people serving as crucibles of scandal.



LISTEN

Delve Denver (Podcast)

Jim Goodheart - S02E04

Learn about the legacy of Jim Goodheart who fought through his own demons to become a source of hope.



WATCH

Wynton Marsalis on Race (Video)

Jazz great Wynton Marsalis reflects on the scandal of race and jazz as the necessary double bind that we must address to be healed.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3**



PRAYER, PRAISE AND PAIN — THE GATEWAYS TO TRANSFORMATION

Thomas Merton said, “The gate of heaven is everywhere.”⁶² That’s true, but we’ve identified three of life’s primary gateways to transformation: prayer, praise, and pain.

The narrowest and least used gateway is prayer. It’s the one that seems to open most slowly, though over time it may be the surest and most trustworthy of all the gateways. However, if we are honest, as poet Mary Karr suggests, prayer for most of us is like being roasted slowly on a hot spit over an open fire.⁶³ Fortunately, the form of prayer does not seem to matter to God. It’s enough just to show up. Merton declares, “There is an absolute need for the solitary, bare, dark, beyond thought, beyond feeling type of prayer . . . Unless that dimension is there in the Church somewhere, the whole caboodle lacks life and light and intelligence. It is a kind of hidden, secret, unknown stabilizer and compass too. About this I have no hesitation or doubts.”⁶⁴

The gateway of praise opens more easily. Great beauty awakens our soul to its own worth and the worth of others. Beauty begets beauty, opening us up. When we see great beauty “out there,” we feel it “in here.” A soul that feels its own worth and the worth of others magnifies the Lord. Having received the beauty of the Christ in her womb, Mary declared, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46). It’s a stunning claim—somehow God actually grows when our soul feels its worth.

Prayer and praise are essential to city transformation, but the widest gateway is pain. For most (adults) it is the only thing strong enough to awaken us to reality. For pain to be redemptive, we must change our relationship to it, or as Richard Rohr says, “If we do not transform our experience of pain, we will transmit it.”⁶⁵ Our wounds and the wounds of our cities can become wombs that bear seeds of new life if we let them.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Pain as a Gateway of Transformation

Written by Joel Van Dyke

Van Dyke explores the relationship between Hagar and the wives of gang members in Guatemala City.



LISTEN

Voices of the Global Church

Practicing Hospitality & Mission

Featuring Ruth Padilla DeBorst

Biblical hospitality, theological formation, and intentional community in Latin America.



WATCH

Go Forth to Work (Commercial)

Produced for Levi Strauss

Braddock, PA learns to reimagine itself and rebuild after the drug crime epidemic and economic downturn that led to its decline.

METAPHOR — THE LANGUAGE OF TRANSFORMATION

Joseph Campbell said, “If you want to change the world, you have to change the metaphor.”⁶⁶ Jesus was the master teacher in this regard. He was always changing the metaphor to awaken people, sometimes forcefully. He realized that we are formed powerfully by language and images. He also realized that language is limited, it conceals as much as it reveals. Language that once was liberating can, over time, become a trap that holds us hostage without us even knowing it. This is the gift and curse of language. It is dualistic by nature, dividing reality and separating things. So language must be continuously transcended if it is to remain a gift.

The mystics and contemplatives are of great help here. Thomas Keating reminds us, “God’s first language is silence.” The prophet Elijah met God in the “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:12), and Jesus would often retreat to pray in silence. Silence opens space that language closes and blocks, which is why we need large doses of silence, especially as we get older. And yet, we are creatures of language, and transformation takes place at the level of language for most of us, which is why Jesus is so playful and daring with it.

C.S. Lewis writes beautifully about the iconoclastic nature of Jesus with regards to language and images:

Images, I must suppose have their use or they would not have been so popular. To me however, their danger is more obvious. Images of the Holy easily become holy images—sacrosanct. My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great Iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence? The incarnation (Word made flesh) is the supreme example; it leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins.⁶⁸

Jesus’ parables and his public theater tease, confuse, provoke and disorient, much like Zen Koans do in Buddhism. They subvert logic and frustrate the mind. Jesus’ stories and actions have a time-release quality that renew the mind (Rom. 12:2). They get inside and work on us. Western education is almost entirely geared to the mind, but a well-defended mind cannot be renewed by arguments, doctrines and precepts. Direct confrontation almost always entrenches the mind deeper into its circular logic. The better route is an indirect kind that Jesus models for us masterfully. He renewed the mind by opening the eyes of the heart. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will

know what is the hope of His calling” (Eph. 1:18).

Jesus’ method of communication is a Socratic method, also called maieutic communication. Great spiritual teachers have modeled this for us. It is form of midwifery of the soul that draws out and calls forth “truth” that is latent in the other. It does not impose, it evokes. This method creates space for truth to do its work gracefully, though sometimes it can be quite painful. Great spiritual teachers help us discover our deepest intuitions and recognize what we already know to be true. In the end our greatest “discoveries,” feel more like remembrances. We say to ourselves, “Of course, I knew that!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the assumptions listed affirm or challenge your own assumptions regarding transformation?
2. How do the assumptions listed affirm or challenge the community you serve?
3. Imagine how your city might look different if it lived into assumptions..

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Geography of Grace (Book)

Riddles of Grace - Ch. 11

By Kris Rocke and Joel Van Dyke

Rocke and Van Dyke explore the use of metaphor as used by Jesus in the series of parables describing the Kingdom of Heaven.



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)

Bible as Urban Book (Episode 9)

Featuring Dr. Ray Bakke

Bakke describes the great paradigm shift from the Bible as rural book to the Bible as urban book and the crucial difference between the two.



WATCH

TED Ed (Video)

The Art of Metaphor (Video Clip)

Narrated by Jane Hirshfield

Hirshfield examines what makes a good metaphor and how they help us better understand the world. Metaphors bypass the logical mind and allow words to transcend their own meaning. They are handles on the doors of what we can know and imagine.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER3**





SECTION II

Incarnational Framework

“To my mind there must be, at the bottom of it all, not an equation, but an utterly simple idea. And to me that idea, when we finally discover it, will be so compelling, so inevitable, that we will say to one another, ‘Oh, how beautiful. How could it have been otherwise?’”⁶⁹

JOHN ARCHIBALD WHEELER

CHAPTER 4

Message: A Way of Seeing

“We can only act within the world that we see.”⁷⁰

Stanley Hauerwas

Key Indicator

Does our message call people from scarcity to abundance?

Jesus’ message was shaped by a particular way of seeing. We are interested here in cultivating a shared perspective that is shaped by the Incarnation and transforms the way we see our cities. In his book, *And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation*, Robert Barron summarizes it well:

Christianity is, above all, a way of seeing. Everything else in Christian life flows from and circles around the transformation of vision. Christians see differently, and that is why their prayer, their worship, their action, their whole way of being in the world, has a distinctive accent and flavor.⁷¹

Again, we repeat the words of Stanley Hauerwas who makes an equally bold claim: “We can only act within the world we see.”⁷²

We have come to witness people that can see, touch, hear, and even smell love and hope in the most unexpected places. If this is true, and we think it is, the most urgent task of leadership is learning how to see. We want to see our cities and her most vulnerable residents through the eyes of Jesus. This is our “distinctive accent and flavor.” Seeing through the eyes of Jesus gives us an asset-based vision of life that begins with God’s “yes” and rooted in the assumption that there is enough—enough of all the ingredients for human flourishing in every context.

When we see our cities through the eyes of Jesus, we see them as living, breathing organisms filled with the presence of God’s Spirit. We pay attention to how the Spirit is already

In this chapter, we practice seeing our cities through the eyes of abundance.

What is our Transforming Perspective?

at work in cities and joyfully join her in unleashing forces for good. When seen this way, we do not bring the Gospel anywhere, rather we bear witness to the Gospel at work everywhere. It's the superabundance of God's presence and grace that makes this possible.

In his article, "[The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity](#)", Walter Brueggemann argues that the Bible begins in the liturgy of abundance insisting that there is enough.⁷³ Six times God says that creation is "good" in the first chapter of Genesis and a seventh time God says "very good" when speaking of humanity. Unfortunately, the myth of scarcity is also sowed into the garden of goodness and the Bible details the conflict between scarcity and abundance throughout. In Jesus' first miracle (turning water into wine), he made one hundred and twenty gallons of the best wine, enough for all. It's literally the fruit of the garden of God's grace where the liturgy of abundance was first revealed, and it's alive and well in the imagination of Jesus.

In fact the whole life story of Jesus (life, death and resurrection) is a liturgy of abundance, the definitive statement that there is enough for all, not even death can diminish the superabundance of God's grace. Brueggemann argues that the questions of whether there is enough is the most pressing issue in the 21st century. "The conflict between the narratives of abundance and of scarcity is the defining problem confronting us at the turn of the millennium."⁷⁴

Mary Jo Leddy writes,

*The economics of God's love is not based on a law of scarcity but rather rooted in the mystery of superabundance. The personal or political decision to declare that there is not enough is the beginning of social cruelty, war, and violence on a petty or vast scale. On the other hand, the choice to affirm that there is enough for all is the beginning of social community, peace, and justice. The option to assume that there is enough frees the imagination to think of new political and economic possibilities.*⁷⁵

It's only in forsaking the myth of scarcity that we also unveil the myth of redemptive violence that holds us hostage, and come to see as God sees, through the liturgy of abundance.

SEEING ANTHROPOLOGICALLY

We begin by admitting that we see reality filtered through a set of lenses. We do not see things as they are. Rather, we tend to see things as we are. That's a problem, and it is

why theological training traditionally begins with the study of philosophy, to make visible the lenses that we bring to faith.

The point here is that what sits behind our eyes largely determines what we see in front of our eyes. Our culture, our history, our families, friends and even our enemies shape how we see at massive levels. In other words, seeing is not simply a function of our eyes, it is a socially constructed process. The question for us is not so much “what” we see, but “how” we see. It is a question of interpretation or hermeneutics. Cities, like texts, need an interpreter. They do not interpret themselves. The Incarnation insists that Jesus is the hermeneutical key to seeing our cities as God does.

Pathways to new perception begin with the humble but liberating admission that we see through the eyes of the other. “It is always the eyes of the other that let me know who I am,” says theologian James Alison.⁷⁶ The process of seeing through the eyes of the other begins from the moment we are born. It is through the eyes of our parents, family and culture that we see what we see.

The anthropological roots of sight refine our question even further. The most fundamental question we can ask regarding sight is, “Through whose eyes do we see?” The what and the how of sight is really all about the who. Unfortunately there are many urban leaders in the city who are followers of Jesus, but have never been taught to see through the eyes of the one they follow.

SEEING FROM BELOW

Dietrich Bonhoeffer reflects on the art of seeing from below with great precision and power:

We have learned to see for once the great events of world history from below—through the perspective of the barred, the suspects, the badly treated, the powerless, the oppressed, the scoffed—in short the perspective of those who suffer.⁷⁷

This perspective (from below) is what Jesus made possible in the Incarnation and ultimately revealed in the resurrection, showing us what has been “hidden since the foundations of the world” (Matt. 13:35). What’s been hidden is the fact that God is with the “least of these.” Whatever we do to the least of these we do to God (Matt. 25:45).

Seeing from below is not without its dangers and potential blind spots, but it is the most trusted route to clarity. Most of us have been trained to see through the lens of power



The question for us is not so much “what” we see, but “how” we see.

and privilege that so easily distorts reality. Unfortunately, this not only applies to the powerful and privileged who are often blind, but also to the powerless and dispossessed who have adopted this same lens without knowing it. In other words, the powerless and the dispossessed might live from below, but they do not necessarily see in a way that is liberating. For example, when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, the poor, the meek, the hungry and the persecuted did not immediately see their own blessedness. Very likely they saw themselves through the lens of the dominant culture, that is, cursed by God.

So the key to Gospel sight is not simply social location, as if being poor insures that we see things clearly. Seeing from below has a much deeper meaning. It has to do with the Incarnation itself—the mystery of the Word made flesh, which insists that God locates God-self not in the lofty heights of heaven, but in the frailty of the human condition. It is from this place that we see and experience God’s love and blessedness even in our most wretched state.

The eyes of the resurrected Christ let us know who we are and how we can love our cities. Put another way, God’s abundant love reveals the myth of scarcity for what it is: a lie.

The mystery of Gospel sight is that we become what we see. When we see by the light of the resurrection, we see our cities as God sees them and we become living expressions of the Shalom we desire.

SEEING BY THE LIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION

To see through the eyes of Jesus is to see by the light of the resurrection. This is our point of departure. The resurrection is the beginning of our faith journey, not its end. It is in the resurrection that we are given new eyes and it’s how we become truly incarnational.

The disciples did not see as Jesus saw until the resurrection. Until then, they were mostly blind. After the resurrection, they became seers who changed the world. Their perspective was transformed. What happened? Luke captures this transformation beautifully. Three days after Jesus was crucified, two disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus dejected and completely defeated (see Luke 24). They were arguing, trying to make sense of the events and where things had gone wrong. Jesus appeared to them as a stranger and walked with them. He began to interpret Scriptures for them in ways they could never have imagined. They saw their sacred texts through the eyes of a stranger.

James Alison calls the stranger the “Forgiving Victim” and has written an entire series with this title.⁷⁸ Alison points out that this stranger was the resurrected victim of a brutal murder. Jesus is the first murder victim in the history of the world to return to face his victimizers. However, Jesus does not return in vengeance as we might expect. In fact, there is not a hint of vengeance in any of the resurrection narratives, and this is quite shocking. What victim of a brutal murder wouldn’t return with a heart set on retribution, or at least a good scolding? Jesus comes in peace. Jesus returns as the “forgiving victim.”

When we see through the eyes of the victim who forgives his victimizers we can see things as they really are. We can see as God sees. It is the forgiving victim who can help us re-read our sacred texts and locate God’s voice among those whom we thought were God-forsaken. Texts that once seemed toxic and appear to show a God of wrath and fury now reveal a God of mercy, and like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it makes our “hearts burn within.”

Transactional religion has it wrong! We don’t repent so that we can be forgiven. We are forgiven so that we can repent. As theologian James Alison reminds us, without the light of love to guide us we do not know the true nature of our sin. That is why the best liturgies begin with forgiveness and then move to confession. Only when we know ourselves as loved and forgiven can we truly name our sin. Until then, it’s all hints and guesses.

JESUS FROM BELOW

BIBLICAL PORTRAIT	THE COMFORTED
Asian-Born <i>Middle East is in Asia</i>	Nearly 60% of the world is Asian-born.
Political Refugee <i>Jesus flees to Egypt</i>	50 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes in the last 10 years.
Immigrant <i>Jesus returns to Israel</i>	8.7 million undocumented immigrants are currently living in the U.S.
Urban Dweller <i>Ministers in cities of Galilee</i>	By 2020, over 60% of the world’s population will be urban, young and poor.
Homeless <i>No place to lay his head</i>	There were 3 million homeless men, women and children in the U.S. last year.
Lynched <i>Murdered on a tree</i>	Black males (14-24) make up 1% of U.S. population, but 30% of all homicides.
Resurrected as Wounded Healer <i>Raised with wounds</i>	More than 5% of the global population lives with depression.

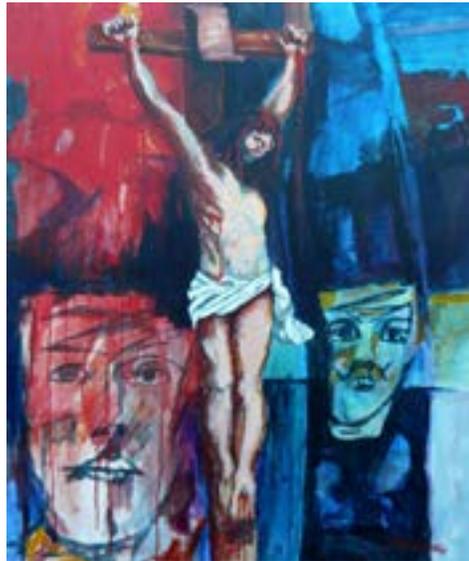
“Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

It is by grace of course that we are forgiven in order to see ourselves and our cities as Christ sees. If we see at all it is only by the light of forgiveness and it is the victim of our sin who gives us the eyes to see. This is what it means to see through the eyes of Jesus.

At the end of the Bible study on the road to Emmaus, the disciples invite the stranger to dinner. Then another great twist happens—the guest turns out to be the host. The guest turned host re-enacts the Last Supper. The language in this passage is liturgical—Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and only then were their eyes opened (Luke 24:30-31).

These exact same verbs show up in each of the feeding miracles, which are in all four gospels and again at the Last Supper. Clearly, this is Jesus’ central message. Jesus transforms scarcity into abundance. Whenever he takes, blesses, breaks and gives the bread of God’s abundant love, we see as God sees. It’s interesting that the Latin word for host is *hostia*, which literally means “victim.” It is the victim who has the author preside over the table, and it is the victim who opens our eyes to see as God sees.

When we see through the eyes of Jesus, we are given what others have called the “intelligence of the victim.” Jesus, the merciful stranger, is the Rosetta Stone of life that allows us to interpret Scripture from a whole new perspective—from below.



Crucifixion
By Pablo Soberano

PATHWAYS TO PERCEPTION

Here are three practical ways to see the city through the eyes of Jesus and its implications for urban transformation.

CITY AS CLASSROOM

The city is a teacher and a living library of wisdom eager to be shared. The city is open 24 hours a day and is home to old sages and young prophets. The built environment and architecture have much to teach us. This can only happen if we are out in the city,

engaging it, interacting, listening and celebrating.

If creation is the first Scripture (as the early church taught), and the Holy Bible the second Scripture, the city itself is the third Scripture. That is why we cultivate an open and inquisitive learning posture. We must learn to read the text of the city and see the urban shape of the Word made flesh.

In chapter two we mentioned ways of mapping the hurt, hope and heart of a city ([see Appendix A](#)). These methods are consistent with seeing the city as a classroom and the Spirit at work in the lives of everyday residents as our teacher. Sitting at the feet of the city may strike us as odd, but it keeps us grounded and humble. This approach complements the academic model of disciplined study and careful research. When the city is allowed its own voice and seen as a living text we can humble ourselves and acquire the skills necessary to become good students. We become storytellers who not only know the history book version of the city, but curators of the soul of the city as revealed by the grassroots stories and symbols that energize our cities from the ground up. The most effective incarnational leaders sit at the feet of the city they serve and let it teach them. And they create opportunities for others to do the same.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Poverty, Diversity and Justice (Article)

Written by Joel Van Dyke

Van Dyke shares about a seminary class in Guatemala City where the city became the classroom and street youth the professors.



LISTEN

99% Invisible (Podcast)

Unseen City (Ep. 210)

Featuring Nathanael Johnson, Author

An interview with the author of *Unseen City: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails and Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness*.



WATCH

The Q: City as Classroom (Video)

Featuring Mosette Broderick, Professor

Broderick explores the history and architecture of New York City. At NYU, the city is the classroom so wearing good walking shoes is a necessity.

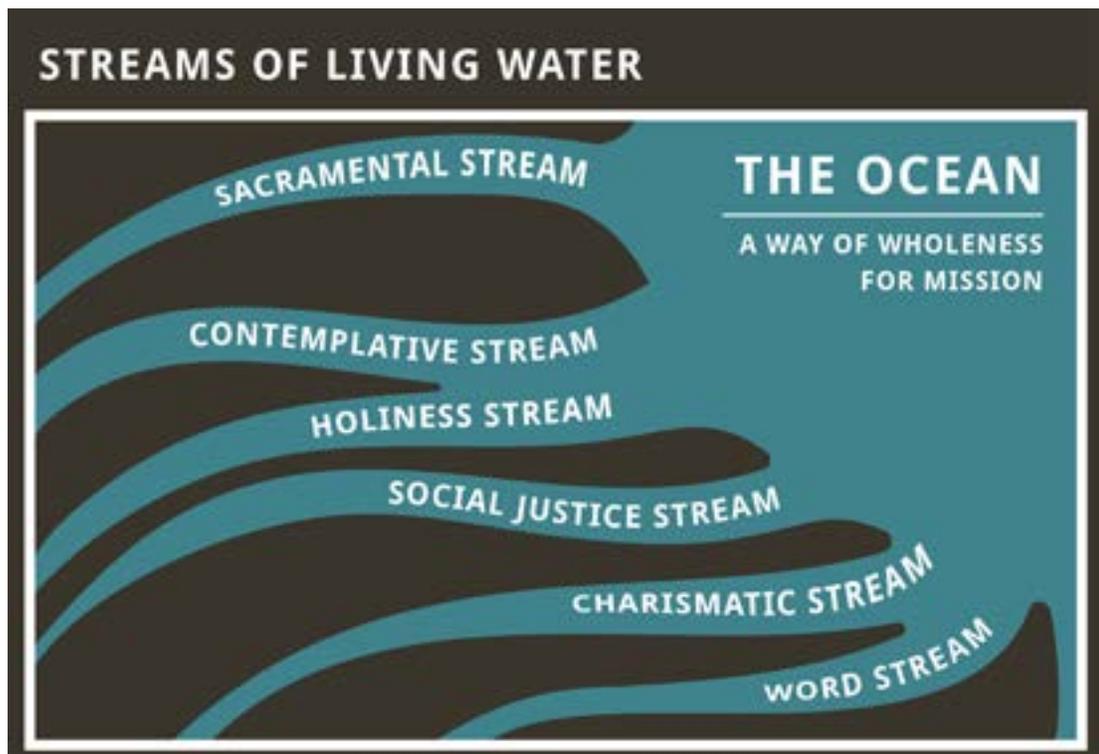
**FIND LINKS TO ALL "DIGGING DEEPER" CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER4**



CITY AS PARISH

We see the city as a sacred space and holy ground—a healing sanctuary filled with all the spiritual streams of faith needed for human thriving and wholeness. It takes a certain kind of courage and sanctified imagination to see the city as holy ground, but through the eyes of Jesus the whole world is a burning bush ablaze with God’s glory. Even the most defiled place is holy ground—from ghettos to gated communities. As the great reformer Abraham Kuyper would have said, “every square inch” of the city belongs to God, if we can only see it.⁷⁹

The Incarnation unites what the world divides, healing the major splits that divide our cities. In Christ, there is no us/them, sacred/secular, life/death. These are not two realities as we are tempted to believe, only one. The dualistic vision that maintains these splits is what the brilliant biblical scholar Robert McAfee Brown called “The Great Fallacy.”⁸⁰ The dualistic mind is violent in nature, contributing to the violence of the city. It is literally “diabolical,” a word derived from “devil” or *diabolo*. In the Greek, it means “to cast aside or throw apart.” The diabolical mind is always splitting and dividing reality in ways that do great violence to the most vulnerable, and thus to all of us.



But the Incarnation insists that there is only one reality—the underlying unity in all things. That is why Saint Francis could say, “The world is my cloister”⁸¹ and John Wesley could say, “The world is my parish.”⁸² That is why we can say the city is our parish—the whole city and all its residents.

It is abundantly clear that with something as dynamic and diverse as the city that no single expression of the Church will be enough to heal it. Richard Foster, in his book, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*, identifies six historic streams of the Christian Church: Word, Social Justice, Sacramental, Charismatic, Contemplative and Holiness.⁸³ They each bring vital gifts and all of them are necessary for healing.

Incarnational leaders seek out and affirm all of these streams. Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17 will find greater expression not in the lofty heights of the Church’s intellectual commitment to ecumenism, but in the depths of urban centers around the world, celebrating all of the faith traditions necessary to love and heal our cities. (For further reflections see [Appendix D: Last Words – An Ecumenical Spirituality of the Cross](#)).

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

The Role of Faith Communities in the Flourishing City (Essay)

Written by Chris Meekin

Meekin explores what it means to faithfully contribute to the flourishing of a city.



LISTEN

Renovaré (Podcast)

Streams (Episode 25)

Hosted by Richard Foster

Foster has an impromptu discussion with his son about traditions of the Christian faith and how they give us a more complete picture of life with God.



WATCH

Message For Christian Unity (Video)

Featuring Pope Francis

In this short video, Pope Francis sends a message to leading “Word of Faith” teacher Kenneth Copeland via Bishop Tony Palmer saying that Charismatics and Catholics must unite.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER4**



CITY AS PLAYGROUND

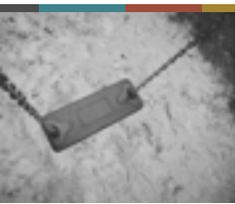
The city is a prophetic sign of peace and a playground of God's grace for all people. When seen through the eyes of Jesus, our cities are no longer the battlegrounds of rivalry and competition they appear to be. The prophet Zechariah imagines an urban playground, "One day the city shall be full of children playing in its streets" (Zech. 8:5). There are many good urban leaders who work tirelessly to achieve this wonderful vision of an urban playground, but do so using a battleground spirituality that is counterproductive. For example, it is easy to get caught up in marking turf and protecting territory in order to keep our programs funded and our churches filled. It is easy to demonize and scapegoat others to advance our own interests. It can be shocking when our attempts to do good become part of the problem.

The violent imagery of warfare must be transcended if we are to see our cities as playgrounds of God's grace. The most mature forms of spirituality let go of these violent images that may have once been useful but are no longer necessary or helpful.

Zechariah's vision of an urban playground emerged from the context of great violence. Zechariah was writing shortly after the time of Israel's exile in Babylon 587 BCE—the holocaust of the Old Testament. Babylon was synonymous with violence and is the arch rival of Jerusalem throughout Scripture. It is all the more remarkable that Zechariah could envision an urban playground here when all he has seen is violence.

Zechariah's vision of peace may have had something to do with the prophet Jeremiah through whom God used to instruct the exiles in Babylon. God said to them, "Seek the peace of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its peace you will find your peace" (Jer. 29:7). This is the Old Testament equivalent of Jesus' teaching, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:44).

It is tempting to see these instructions as a heavy dose of moralism, as if God is saying, "Be good boys and girls and pray for the bullies on the playground who keep beating you up." Perhaps now we can understand the bitter cry of the psalmist who says, "O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!" (Ps. 137:8-9). Any vision of an urban playground that does not address this level of anger and injustice is merely romantic.



The most mature forms of spirituality let go of these violent images that may have once been useful but are no longer necessary or helpful.

But God’s instruction is not a moral burden placed on the backs of brutalized victims. It is the sure, but difficult, route to freedom. When we see our enemies as God sees them, we can be whole and free. To hate our enemy is to be bound by them, nay, to become them. When we see our enemies as friends, no matter how unfriendly they behave, we reclaim their humanity and ours. This is the highest level of spiritual insight made possible by the Incarnation.

The irony, of course, is that when enemies are at each other’s throats and ready to kill each other, they are mirror doubles of one another. They are exact replicas, indistinguishable. The Incarnation rescues us from battleground spirituality based on fear, rivalry, and deeply held resentments. It gives us a vision that only in loving our enemies can we truly be free. Our enemies really do hold the key to our salvation, which is why we love them and pray for them. It’s only then that we become “children of our Father in heaven,” as Jesus says and reclaim our cities as playgrounds of God’s grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the shift from scarcity to abundance affirm or challenge your way of seeing the city and the work of developing incarnational leaders?
2. Which of the three pathways to practice most affirm or challenge your own way of seeing your city?
3. Imagine how different your city would be if it knew there was enough.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

God’s Playground (Dissertation)

Written by Dave Hillis

A short introduction to the idea of seeing cities as playgrounds explores the role of charism, monks and scotch.



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)

Seeing Matters (Episode 1)

A case for the LF movement and the need to reframe work in the city, seeing it as a playground



WATCH

The City as God’s Playground...

Featuring Dr. Larry Lloyd

Lloyd, President of the Memphis Leadership Foundation, gives a lecture at Fuller Theological Seminary.

FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER4



Method: A Way of Doing

“The medium is the message.”⁸³

Marshall McLuhan

Key Indicator

Does our method call people from theory to incarnational practice?

Jesus’ method was shaped by a particular way of doing. We are interested here in cultivating a shared practice that is shaped by the Incarnation. Media analyst and communication expert, Marshall McLuhan, is perhaps best known for his phrase, “The medium is the message.” The way we communicate something is what is actually communicated. For example, if I say, “I love you” by shouting angrily at the top of my lungs while holding a small child in my arms, I think we would all agree that the message heard by the child is that daddy is angry and quite possibly hates me. The medium is the message.

God’s medium is also His message: God comes to us in the flesh through Jesus, the most complete revelation of God. But God also comes to us in the flesh through those in whom we least expect to see God. We are not saved by ideas or theology or doctrine. We are saved in and through relationship, because reality is relational. Sadly, much of Western Christianity for the last 500 years has located faith from the neck up, or what Father Richard Rohr calls the “control tower.”⁸⁵ We feel compelled to get our ideas right and then go about the business of enacting them. Our addiction to “theory first, practice second” is dangerous, as we have already noted. That is why the most successful approaches to city transformation call people from theory (above) into incarnational practice (below), as modeled for us in the life of Jesus.

Jesus makes it clear that it is much more natural to the human condition to practice our way into new forms of thinking than to think our way into new forms of practice. Endless theological and doctrinal speculation keeps us firmly in control and tends to

In this chapter, we explore the implications of incarnational practice for city transformation.

What is our Transforming Practice?

divide and separate us from others. Jesus was much more concerned with orthopraxis (right practice) than orthodoxy (right thinking). For those of us who did not grow up on the margins of society but now serve there, this is our story. We have been converted by those whom we serve. It is through serving that we have been transformed. We have been forced to reexamine long-held beliefs that no longer hold water, showing us that incarnational mission is not a one-way street. It is a two-way street in which all parties are mutually transformed. Incarnational mission is not a top-down, father-knows-best approach (i.e. get the theory right first). Transformation happens from the bottom up and the inside out, very often even as our precious theories fall apart. That's why Jesus tells the story of a man with two sons whom he asked to work in the fields. One son says, "Yes, yes," then fails to act. The other son says "No, no" and then does the right thing. Through the second son, Jesus affirms orthopraxis.

A patron saint of orthopraxis is of course Huckleberry Finn. In Mark Twain's classic American novel, Huck is a 13-year-old white boy growing up in the pre-Civil War American South, helping a runaway slave "Nigger Jim" escape to freedom.⁸⁶ The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law made it illegal to aid or abet a runaway slave and required that every U.S. citizen assist in the capture of runaways. Huck genuinely believes (orthodoxy) that by helping Jim, he will not only suffer the wrath of the law, but also the wrath of God. Huck is convinced that he will be sent to hell for helping Jim escape slavery.

Suffering under the weight of this moral dilemma, Huck decides to write a letter to Jim's "owner," Miss Watson, and turn in Jim—thus freeing his conscience and also his soul from eternal damnation. After writing the letter, Huck begins to reflect on his relationship with Jim, their journey together down

the Mississippi river and the deep friendship they had formed along the way. This reflection does something to Huck—something for which his upbringing, culture and theology had not prepared him—that "Nigger Jim" was a human being. Huck is completely undone. He tears up the letter, convinced that by doing so he is condemning himself to hell.



This is where Huck’s adventure takes a huge turn—he is undergoing grace, the kind that empowers us to risk it all for the sake of those we love. Having abandoned the only orthodoxy he knows in favor of what feels to him like sure damnation, he says to himself and God, “All right, then, I’ll go to hell.” It’s in that moment that salvation comes—to both Huck and Jim. They are of one piece, bound together and inseparable. These fugitives have become symbols of freedom.

Incarnational practice is rooted in reality. It begins with what is. It has a bias toward the bottom. It recognizes that reality is relational and God comes to us in the same way that God created us—relationally. Sadly, there is a huge temptation to bypass the relational reality of creation in our efforts to transform cities. We quickly turn to programs and initiatives in an effort to “fix” things. Programs and initiatives have their place, but it’s only when they strengthen the relational fabric of a community that they are truly transformational. We are desperate for an urban ecology that understands the relationship between people, place and systems. Fortunately, science is uncovering the deep relationality of the universe at both the quantum level (infinitely small) and the cosmic level (infinitely large). Science is catching up to theology as it “discovers” that everything is connected in an ecological dance of relatedness. To put it crassly, relationship is the technology of the Incarnation.

To illustrate the implications of this for urban mission we’ve identified what we call the “Prepositions of Transformation.” Prepositions are relational words that show the correlation between things. Here are three prepositions for city transformation and what they allude to:

Prepositions of Transformation

Preposition	Posture	Outcome
To	Paternal	Oppression
For	Maternal	Co-Dependence
With	Incarnational	Transformation

Of course, the chart is overly schematic and stereotypical, but it illustrates the transformative power of relating incarnationally. The relationality of God provides the connective tissue that reconciles, heals and transforms our cities from the bottom up and the inside out. In the end, the Incarnation is the relentless drumbeat of God who says, “I am with you always.” It’s the with-ness that transforms.

The following are three pathways to Incarnational Practice. We might think of these as incarnational disciplines. They are the orthopraxy of urban transformation.

PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE

NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

Incarnational leaders nurture the relational fabric of the communities they serve, standing with leaders from various sectors (private, public and religious). We might think of these gatherings as “tables” where leaders connect and build the relational fabric necessary for lasting impact. These relational connections create room to collaborate around best practices and co-created solutions. From an incarnational perspective, what distinguishes these tables from many others is that they give preferred seating to the vulnerable. They are open tables where all are welcome—literally and figuratively.

The table is the epicenter of all cultures worldwide. The family, society and even faith itself is formed around the table. If cities are healed relationally, there is nothing more



elemental than table fellowship. The role of faith leaders in nurturing these tables is significant. The privileged words for “ministry,” “minister” or “to minister” in the New Testament are *diakonia* (table service), *diakonos*, (table server) and *diakoneo* (to serve food).

To nurture what we call “Tables of Transformation,” leaders will need to master three essential skills of hospitality: table sitting (guests), table setting (hosts) and table serving (waiters).

Incarnational leadership begins by learning what it means to be a guest—to sit at another’s table. To be a guest is to sit without power. We are on the turf and terms of those who invite us. When we have learned to sit as guests, then we can become good hosts who set tables where all are welcome, especially the most vulnerable. Good hosts create a warm and welcome context for their guests to feel “at home.”

In the end, incarnational leaders become the *diakonos* of the city—table waiters who serve. The purpose of the wait staff is to serve the meal in such a way as to enhance the dining experience. The best waiters recognize that the star of the show is the meal and the fellowship. Great waiters are keenly aware of the entire dining experience, anticipating the desires of the guests. They move in and out of the meal in a way that is seamless. Their presence is part of the dining experience, but they are nearly invisible.

Incarnational leaders master all three of these relational skills for the sake of the city. We are table sitters, setters and servers.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

The Virtues of Hanging Out

Written by Tom Skinner

Skinner explains his proclamation that cities need key leaders to commit to spending 100 hours in each other’s living rooms without any particular agenda.



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)

Power of Relationship (Episode 13)
Featuring Bill Milliken

Bill Milliken, founder of Communities in Schools, talks about the power of relationships to transform people and place.



WATCH

TED Talk (Video)

Danger of the Single Story
Featuring Chimamanda Adichie

African story-teller, Ngozi details what happens when our relational experience is stuck in a single narrative.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER5**



STEWARD POWER

Incarnational leaders are skilled at the art of acquiring and stewarding power. Unfortunately power is often seen as a dirty word, especially among those who have been abused by it, or even among those who are recovering abusers of it. Lord Acton, an English Catholic historian, is best known for saying, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”⁸⁷ There is nothing harder than stewarding power well. Jesus teaches that real power is perfected in weakness and most effective when given away. The Father gives power and authority to Jesus, Jesus gives power and authority to us and presumably we are to do the same—give it away. Nothing could be more counterintuitive! Whenever we grasp for power, it grasps us. Whenever we seize power, it seizes us.

Jesus teaches that real power is perfected in weakness and most effective when given away.

Stewards are not owners. They are managers of that which belongs to someone else. As stewards of power, it is important to know that power simply is. It is everywhere, like God. There is an infinite supply. Unfortunately, we have been duped into believing that power is like oil or a precious metal in which there is a limited supply. This view of scarcity has us jockeying and competing, even fighting to gain control. Jesus, and even modern physics, paints a different picture: Power is everywhere. Learning to access it and harness it for good is the trick.

There is only one kind of power associated with Jesus—the power (*dunamis*) of the Spirit. Walter Wink, in his seminal trilogy on *The Power*, suggests that the only kind of power associated with Jesus is the generative, life-affirming, non-coercive, bottom-up power that is held loosely and given freely.⁸⁸ The power of the Spirit is never associated with violence or force. It is never imposed from the outside, rather it comes from within. From our perspective, God’s form of power looks more like weakness than strength. Certainly, God is omnipotent, as our Judeo-Christian tradition insists, but not in the way we might imagine. God is not throwing thunderbolts to make things happen. God is not manipulating the system or pulling levers at will. That is not God’s character revealed to us by Jesus. God calls forth life in the way a lover calls forth the beloved. God courts us. Inside every creature is the divine spark, and the Spirit of God woos life into being through desire. As with all lovers, desire is awakened most powerfully in great vulnerability and always with great respect to the freedom of the one whose desire is being awakened. In a sense, all of life is seduced into being. The creedal phrase, “God is All-Powerful” is perhaps better understood as, “God is All-Vulnerable,” which accurately describes the nature of God’s power.

Sadly, there are those who, when faced with a difficult situation, still believe in the “myth of redemptive violence” (a term coined by Walter Wink). Redemptive violence is a form of power that is used as a last resort to achieve some greater purpose—as in, the end justifies the means. There are many more who simply believe that “might makes right” and live their lives in an all-out power grab with no apology or hesitation. Both are coercive forms of power that do great violence and harm. Jesus debunks both approaches and shows us a third way. It is the way of the Incarnation, where the love of power is transformed into the power of love.

In light of this, incarnational leaders recognize that it is not enough to simply transfer power from one group to another unless we also transform how power is seen and stewarded. The Incarnation changes the terms by which power functions and releases it to all people everywhere. Changing the terms of power is the key. Incarnational leaders resist the temptation to play power-games based on scarcity. Incarnational leaders are skilled at getting things done through the power of love, awakening desire and calling others to do the same.

Finally, when we’ve emptied ourselves of the world’s love of power, something unexpected happens. We are converted back to the proper use of hierarchy. We are not threatened by the healthy and proper use of power structures. We are not threatened by having a boss or a director. When our authority comes from within, we can serve with great freedom.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Power and Authority: Reframed

Written by Joel Van Dyke

Van Dyke describes the way power and authority were reframed by some courageous leaders in the largest slum of Central America



LISTEN

City as Playground (Podcast)

Power in the Playground
(Episode 17)

Featuring Lisa Slayton



WATCH

TED Talk (Video)

The Power of Vulnerability
Featuring Brené Brown

Author, Brené Brown reflects on vulnerability as the source of power.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER5**



There are three main systems that incarnational leaders must engage—the economic, religious and political systems.

ENGAGE SYSTEMS

Incarnational leaders engage the systems that impact the city. Personal transformation is critical, but it's not enough to achieve city-wide shalom. We not only need just people, we need just systems. A common illustration of this tension is the parable of the caregivers who set up an aid station near a river where injured bodies continuously float downstream. The aid workers retrieve the injured from the river and nurse them back to health, but the bodies continue to come.

Eventually, someone decides to walk upstream to see what is producing the steady flow of human misery and to put a stop to it. This is the difference between a ministry of personal transformation of caring for individuals and a ministry of systemic transformation—heading upstream to engage the systems that are doing harm. Both are necessary, but only one can stop the problem at its source.

PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE

Nurture Relationships

There is nothing more elemental than table fellowship.

Incarnational leaders give preferred seating to the vulnerable.

To nurture "Tables of Transformation," leaders will need to master three essential skills of hospitality: table sitting (guests), table setting (hosts) and table serving (waiters).

Steward Power

Real power is perfected in weakness and most effective when given away.

Power is everywhere. Incarnational leaders learn to access it and harness it for the good of the city they serve.

The only kind of power associated with Jesus is the generative, life-affirming, non-coercive, bottom-up power that is held loosely and given freely.

Engage Systems

City-wide shalom requires leaders who change systems of domination.

Incarnational leaders must engage the economic, religious and political systems.

The Incarnation makes systematic transformation possible through Divestment, Public Display, and Deliverance.

Ray Bakke tells the story of when he was a pastor in Chicago. He and a parishioner spent a day in court where, throughout the day, they witnessed people from their community being treated unfairly. Finally, the parishioner stood up and asked if he could address the judge, saying that, with all due respect, the court did not seem like a court of justice. The judge replied, “You’re right. This is not a court of justice. This is a court of law. If you want justice, change the law.” This is an example of a good individual sworn to uphold bad laws that unfairly burden the most vulnerable people.

Over time, unjust systems produce what Eddie Glaude, Jr., chair of the department of African American Studies at Princeton, calls “opportunity deserts.” Opportunity deserts are “isolated places for disposable people.” They are “places of tremendous hardship, joblessness and what seems like permanent marginalization.” He says even the most resourceful people eventually grow weary in opportunity deserts. We succumb to what Nigerian novelist Chimimanda Adiche calls “the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness.”⁹⁰ We lash out or give up.

There are three main systems that incarnational leaders must engage—the economic, religious and political systems. As we’ve seen already, these are the systems that Jesus engaged and reimagined in the desert of temptation. Systems are like people. They resist change and are by nature self-protective. Systems want uniformity and demand allegiance. They are always bigger than the individuals who lead them and they do not change without sustained pressure. Systems are more than the sums of their parts, which is why the apostle Paul refers to them as “principalities and powers” and why Jesus could deal with them at a soul level. One of the dark realities of systems that bend toward injustice is that they become too big to fail. They become part of what Walter Wink calls the “Domination System.” They become demanding taskmasters. At their worst, they are sacrificial machines that are indifferent to those who must feed them for survival. They are indifferent to those who are cast out as collateral damage or to those for whom the systems simply do not work.

Jesus shows us the way to engage systems, but it is clearly risky business. Incarnational leaders understand the risks and count the cost. In chapter one, we referenced Paul’s reflection of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15). Paul highlights three important movements of systemic transformation.

First, the word disarmed literally means to “divest.” Jesus divested himself of the

There are three main systems that incarnational leaders must engage—the economic, religious and political systems.

domination systems of this world. When we are no longer beholden to the systems, we are free to change them. Second, Jesus made a “public example,” or spectacle of them. When enough people divest themselves of the system, the system is exposed. This is the critical step. Evil by its very nature must remain hidden to survive. When it is exposed and seen for what it is, it eventually dies or finds another place to hide. Third, Jesus “triumphs” over them by the cross. René Girard makes the point beautifully, “The powers are not put on display because they are defeated, but they are defeated because they are put on display.”⁹² Divestment, Public Display, and Deliverance: this is the work of systemic transformation made possible by the Incarnation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the shift from theory to practice affirm or challenge your method of developing incarnational leaders?
2. Which of the three pathways to practice most affirm or challenge your own methodologies and those of the community you serve?
3. Imagine how differently your city would function if prioritized incarnational practices over theory.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Reimagining Mission in the Public Square (Article)

Written by Thinandavha D. Mashau

The future of Christian mission lies not only in identifying “the powers,” but also in engaging them transformationally.



LISTEN

Voices of the Global Church (Podcast)

Pursuing Integral Mission (Ep. 30)
Featuring Dr. René Padilla

Integrating the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel into all sectors of life and mission.



WATCH

Urban Health and Wellbeing: A Systems Approach (Video)

Thinking systemically about the engagement of urban systems for holistic transformation.

FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER5



CHAPTER 6

Manner: A Way of Being

“Given that lambs are infant sheep, that sheep are afraid and foolish, and lack the means of self-protection, having neither rage nor claws, venom nor cunning, what then is this ‘Lamb of God’?”⁹³

Denise Levertov

Key Indicator

Does our manner call people from rivalry to peacemaking?

Jesus’ manner was shaped by a particular way of being. We are interested here in cultivating a shared manner, a way of being in community that is shaped by the Incarnation. How do we embody the message and method of Jesus?

The final vision in Scripture is the New Jerusalem—the city of peace. The Hebrew word for peace is shalom, a richly textured word that is not easily translated into English. It is where justice and righteousness meet. It is the place of human flourishing. Shalom is a divine break-in. It is what happens when heaven breaks into the human condition and becomes visible. Shalom is our deepest intuition. It’s our deepest desire.

Incarnational leaders work for a vision of civil society rooted in the biblical vision of shalom. We practice unplugging from the violence of rivalry and exclusion, modeling ways of being in community in which enemies are embraced as friends and all parties are mutually transformed.

The call of the Incarnation is to become the community we wish to see. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Peace is the DNA of God’s family. To be a peacemaker is to be a child of God. One could say that peace has often been the goal, but it has not always been the manner in which we’ve

In this chapter, we consider the ministry of incarnational presence in the way we love and serve the city.

pursued the goal. One could argue that the crusades or the inquisitions were an attempt to achieve some sort of peace (as are all wars and violent conflicts), but the means was anything but peaceful. Jesus makes it clear that it is not enough to have a good goal. The way in which we seek our goal is the goal we seek. We must embody the peace we seek if it is peace we expect to find.

In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus plays the role of rabbi and instructs his disciples about their new identity within the Kingdom of God. We are salt and light. He says, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). As Dave Hillis, president of Leadership Foundations often points out, there are two ways to express the word “good” as in “good works.”⁹⁴ The first is the word *agathos* in Greek. It means “good” in the proper and intrinsic sense and is used as a noun (i.e. do good). The other word for good is *kaylos*. It functions as an adverb and focuses on “good” as in the manner or descriptive sense (i.e. do good in a goodly way). It’s a subtle but crucial difference. Jesus is inviting the disciples not simply to do good, but to do it in a manner that is goodly. It’s

A CASE STUDY



Wilna has an incarnational manner—a way of being that transforms. Wilna helps lead the “Festival of Clowns” in Pretoria, South Africa where every year 20,000 leaders dress up as “holy fools” to speak truth to power in peaceful ways, advocating change in the systems that impact the most vulnerable.

The Incarnation transforms the manner in which we love.

It gives us a new heart—one

that no longer needs enemies and scapegoats, no “us versus them,” no insiders over-and-against outsiders. Incarnational leadership insists that we are one and seeks peace in all things. Wilna embodies the incarnational journey from Rivalry to Peace.



simply not enough to do good works. The manner in which we do them carries more weight. This is the secret of peacemaking.

Being a community of peacemakers begins with the confession that we are caught in a complicated web of rivalries that generate violence of all kinds—both external and internal. Let's face it—we are all violent people. We all have blood on our hands. This is part of what Jesus comes to reveal to us, “I come to reveal what was hidden since the foundations of the world” (Matt. 13:35). What is hidden to us is our own violent way of being, and so it's God's way of being that transforms us into a community of peace. (See [Appendix E: “Manners of Mission”](#) for further reflections)

We've suggested that transformation always happens at the level of desire. We are created in and through desire, or as Robert Farrar Capon said, “We dance under the banner of God's desire.”⁹⁵ Jesus was a genius in relating at the level of desire. He began his ministry in the Gospel of John by asking, “What are you looking for?” (John 1:38). In other words, “What do you want?” When looking at his beloved city he says, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!” (Matt. 23:37). And again at the Last Supper, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you” (Luke 22:15). Jesus models for us the kind of desire that gives life and refuses desire that leads to death.

René Girard has convincingly shown that the anthropology of desire revealed in the life of Jesus is what makes us human. His claim is that we become human by imitating each other's desire, and this means we are massively dependent on one another. Girard's anthropology is vital for city transformation because it shows how mutually dependent we are on one another, for better and for worse.

As we already mentioned, Girard calls this process of becoming human “mimesis.” Mimesis is our ability to imitate desire. Girard argues that all desire is imitated. In other words, we don't know what we want until a model designates a thing desirable. The object of our desire is largely irrelevant, it's the model that matters most. He says, “We desire according to the desire of others.”⁹⁶ The modern marketing industry gets this. Unfortunately, when we borrow our desires from each other, it eventually leads to rivalry and violence on both a petty and vast scale. Girard calls this “negative mimesis.”

Jesus models for us a new pattern of desire (positive mimesis). Instead of imitating the desires of others, Jesus imitates the desire of the Father, “Whatever He does, the Son also



Being a community of peacemakers begins with the confession that we are caught in a complicated web of rivalries that generate violence of all kinds—both external and internal.



If we are to be authentic peacemakers, we must accept the hard truth that violence is the bitter fruit of human rivalry.

does in like manner” (John 5:19, NKJ). The Spirit dances for joy and makes this pattern of desire available to the world. This new pattern of desire leads to peace because there is no rivalry in God. It’s this new pattern of desire that inspires Paul to write, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” The positive mimesis of God is the fuel for city transformation. We create what we call “communities of desire” that model non-rivalistic forms of desire that lead to peace.

If we are to be authentic peacemakers, we must accept the hard truth that violence is the bitter fruit of human rivalry. It is what happens when our desires conflict with the desires of others. Girard takes it a step further in saying that violence is the foundation of human community apart from Christ. When we imitate each other instead of God, we create rivalistic communities that are held together by being over and against the other. Jesus blows the cover on the inner workings of this way of creating community when he says, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Matt. 21:42).

Sadly, the world tends to build community by forging unity over and against the “rejected stones” of society. Of course, we are blind to this when it is happening. We can’t see how the rejected stones that we eliminate actually hold us together. Tragically, without any stones to reject or scapegoats to blame, most communities simply devolve into chaos, and ultimately violence. We don’t know how to function without them, which is why we keep producing them. History is littered with examples of this.

In the summer of 1963, Boston Public Television aired “The Negro and the American Promise,” an hour-long examination of racial tension in America.⁹⁷ It featured interviews with Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and James Baldwin, who put his finger on the scapegoat mechanism as it relates to race in America and the American identity. The movie *I’m Not Your Negro* examines the scathing insights of Baldwin. Here is excerpt from the interview:

*What white people have to do is try and find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a Nigger in the first place...If I’m not a Nigger here and you invented him, you, the white people, invented him, then you’ve got to find out why. And the future of the country depends on that.*⁹⁸

A truly bizarre example of modern day scapegoating is the story of Steve Bartman in the ESPN film *Catching Hell*.⁹⁹ Bartman became a public scapegoat blamed for the Chicago Cubs failing to get into the World Series in 2003. The film chronicles the story of how the

Chicago Cubs blew an opportunity to make it to the World Series and how an entire city unified itself by blaming one innocent man for the loss. It was tragic and frightening.

The parallel of Bartman to the liturgical practice of the scapegoat on the “Day of Atonement” in Leviticus 16 is haunting. Each year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would lay his hands on the head of the goat. He would transfer the sins of the community onto the goat and drive it out of town as the entire community jeered and cursed the goat. The scapegoat took away the sins of the community, thereby preserving it.

The rejected stone and the scapegoat are two ways of talking about the same thing—the way they falsely and only temporarily unite communities, especially communities in the midst of chaos. It should come as no surprise that many ancient cultures practiced “building sacrifices” where a real or symbolic victim was literally entombed or built into the base of the building. They literally held the structure together.

Jesus blows the cover on this game. Jesus is the ultimate rejected stone and scapegoat who holds the world together, but in a whole new way. He is the scapegoat who forgives those who reject him and shows us how to create genuine unity that is not over and against anyone, but with and for everyone. The new cornerstone of love and forgiveness exposes and dismantles the old cornerstone of exclusion and sacrifice. When Jesus quotes the prophet Hosea, “I desire mercy not sacrifice,” he is dismantling the sacrificial system that falsely holds humanity together. When he says, “I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another,” (Mark 14:48), Jesus shows us how to build community based on mercy, not sacrifice. Mercy is the new cornerstone of urban transformation.

PATHWAYS TO PRESENCE

Here are three pathways to becoming an incarnational community of transforming presence. They are the embodiment of the message and method of Jesus.

CONTEMPLATIVE ACTIVISTS

Contemplative activists are “third way” leaders. Third way leaders get beyond the dualism of either/or to the gift of both/and. They do not see the world in terms of win/lose, but in terms of win/win. When confronted between two options that are in rivalry, they look for a third way. We call this the reconciling third, or “*tertium quid*.” This is not compromise. Rather, it’s the ability to reconcile opposites into a new whole. Contemplative



activists hold tensions, incorporate the negative, see without judgment and act without compulsion. Our cities are desperate for contemplative activists.

Franciscan Father Richard Rohr, founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, is a leading teacher of the contemplative mind, especially for those who are engaged in justice work. He’s done much to reclaim a spirituality of engagement that is rooted in the Franciscan tradition and draws freely from other traditions. In the simplest terms, he teaches that the contemplative activist is free, that we act in freedom. Many of the great spiritual teachers, including St. Francis and St. Ignatius, taught that the highest virtue is freedom. Unless we are free, all the other virtues are manifestations of our enslavement. If we are not free, then our expressions of faith, hope and even our love are not free either. Jesus frees us so that we may freely act. Paul says, “It is for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

The level of compulsion, or what Ignatius calls “inordinate attachments,” associated with justice work is alarming. The work itself attracts driven people powered by their highly compulsive nature. Very often these compulsions take the form of something good, say a virtue. But every virtue has a vice, a shadow, that can easily take over. Our gifts become curses. Our angels become demons. Eventually we hit a wall. We fall apart. We need something bigger to hold us. Our gifts are no longer enough and they get us into more trouble than not.

We are drawn by the Spirit into a new way of being, but this only happens as we fall apart. It feels like we are dying, and that’s because we are. We are dying to what Thomas Merton called the False Self.¹⁰⁰ Over time we are given the True Self. The True Self is who

we are when we've accepted who we are, warts and all. The True Self is when we are no longer ruled or run by our compulsions or addictions. The True Self is the self that knows that it is forgiven and loved.

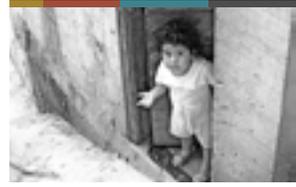
The process by which this happens is counterintuitive. We do not eliminate the shadows, instead we incorporate them. We acknowledge, accept and even bless them. We digest our sin until it makes us sin-sick and finally admit that we are powerless to change. In this, AA gets it right—we are addicts, and our drug is the False Self.

The metaphor of “the Loyal Soldier” is a good description of the False Self. The Loyal Soldier is our well-intended but messed up way of being faithful to the truth. In this sense, the loyal soldier is not bad, just blind. In fact, the Loyal Soldier is trying very hard to be good, and this is the problem. Condemning the soldier for doing his duty is counterproductive. The only real way to new sight is through mercy. Sometimes it is a “severe mercy,” as C.S. Lewis suggests, but it is always mercy that allows the Loyal Soldier see what is happening and to stand down.¹⁰¹

The metaphor of the Loyal Soldier, developed by Molly Young Brown (Unfolding Self), Bill Plotkin (Soul Craft) and Richard Rohr (Falling Upward) is based on an actual incident of a Japanese soldier from WWII who was discovered on a remote Pacific Island years after the end of the war. The soldier did not know the war was over, so he faithfully kept his post fortified and defended! When he returned home, the people of Japan welcomed him home as a hero.

Rohr suggests that one of the primary tasks of the contemplative activist is “discharging the Loyal Soldier.”¹⁰² It is a useful description of what Jesus did with the Pharisees, Sadducees and the older son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. We must admit here that it is very difficult to get a Loyal Soldier to abandon his post when he is convinced it must be defended (just ask the Apostle Paul!). Much of the harm suffered in our cities is at the hands of Loyal Soldiers who are simply doing their job and trying to be faithful to what they know.

The Loyal Soldier who is blinded by their faithfulness is healed through a process that initially feels like betrayal. Loyal Soldiers need an honorable discharge. That is the work of the Spirit. This is why Jesus gives us the Advocate who defends us against the voice of the Accuser. The contemplative mind does not judge or evaluate. It beholds. And so the Spirit reveals without judgment, “When the Spirit comes, he will prove the world



*The True Self
is the self that
knows that it
is forgiven and
loved.*

to be wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). The Spirit frees us to fall apart—to abandon our dualistic worldview and find ourselves held in the love that is unifying all things in Christ.

As a result, contemplative activists see their city through the eyes of forgiveness. In fact, they see all things this way. The contemplative knows that forgiveness and mercy are how creation unfolds. We are forgiven before creation, and we participate in the ongoing act of creation as we extend forgiveness. It is the deepest and surest form of activism there is. The contemplative sees the underlying unity in all things and acts accordingly.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Letter to a Young Activist (Article)

Written by Thomas Merton

Merton speaks in a prophetic manner about advocacy and activism and the balance of the inner and outer aspects of life and work.



LISTEN

On Being (Podcast)

Being Peace in a World of Trauma

Featuring Thich Nhat Hanh

Nhat Hanh discusses a contemplative way that leads to “being peace” in a world of conflict, anger and violence.



WATCH

The Contemplative Pathway

Featuring Richard Rohr

Rohr explores the contemplative in action.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER6**



ECUMENICAL DISCERNERS

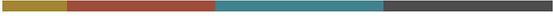
Urban leaders who love their city and seek its peace are like the Tribe of Issachar who discerned the times (1 Chronicles 12:32). Issachar was one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Unlike the other tribes who were given swords and shields and the tools of warfare, Issachar was given the task of discernment. John Howard Yoder wrote, “God is working in the world, and it is the task of the Church to know how he is working; that is to say, ‘Behold, here is Christ. This is where God is at work.’”¹⁰³ This is the work of discernment—to see God at work in hard places.

Discernment is the art of seeing things as they are, seeing what is. The deepest truth is that the Spirit of God is at work in all things, calling forth life from death. Our wounds and the wounds of the cities we serve are wombs of new creation bearing seeds of new life, if we can only see it. We’ve said it before, but we tend to see things as we are, and this is where the trouble begins. This is why discernment is most useful when done in the context of a diverse, ecumenical community that represents a variety of cultures and spiritual traditions in the city. We need the eyes of others to see God at work.



Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command.

1 Chronicles 12:32



St Ignatius developed a method of discernment known as the Examen.¹⁰⁴ It is a form of prayer designed for doers of the faith, such as the Jesuits. The Examen was intended to take just fifteen minutes to pray and helps us discern the spirits so that we can make good decisions in the midst of difficult circumstances. It is based on the assumption that we easily confuse the spirits. As Isaiah said, “Ah, you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Is. 5:20). The Examen is a simple form of prayer that awakens us to see things as they are. Originally, it was designed to be used personally, but we’ve found that when practiced corporately, especially within the context of a diverse community, we see even more clearly.

There are five movements to the Examen: Presence, Gratitude, Gift of the Spirit, Reflection and Resolve. Each movement is a movement of trust that is founded on the assumption that God is in all things working for good, or as Rohr often says, “We cannot not be in the presence of God,” and that presence is good. We’ve re-worked the Examen prayer as part of a corporate liturgy to be a discernment tool for missional groups seeking to love their city. (See [Appendix F: Street Psalms Prayer of Discernment](#)).

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Word From Below (Article)

Pentecost Unity

Written by Kris Rocke

Rocke explores what it means to be one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church from a missional perspective.



LISTEN

On Being (Podcast)

The Calling of Delight... (7/16)

Featuring Father Greg Boyle

Boyle, the founder of Homeboy Industries, reflects insightfully and humorously on his service among gangs in LA informed by his training as Jesuit.



WATCH

Circles of Trust (Video)

Featuring Parker Palmer

In this first of two short videos, Parker Palmer explains a form of discernment in community that is informed by his Quaker roots. He calls it “circles of trust.”

FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER6



EUCCHARISTIC COMMUNITY

The most powerful resource for seeking the peace of the city is the Eucharist itself. As followers of Christ, we are shaped by the Jesus meal and embody its radical commitment to reconciliation, inclusion and unity. It is a meal where natural enemies gather (Ps. 23:5) and where the least are given preferred seating. It is not a private meal that separates us from the world, instead it is a public meal that unites us with the world, its most fractured and disfigured elements. It is a sacrament of the deepest desire of humanity and God, which is the unity and communion of all creation. This is shalom.

Franciscan theologian Duns Scotus, suggested that the narrative of Jesus' life is the narrative map of every soul.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, Jesus is not just the savior of humanity, he is the model or archetype for humanity. This insight rescues us from the temptation of merely being spectators of Jesus' life, worshipping him at a distance. Instead, it calls us to follow Jesus, to join him on the inside of a transforming narrative—the entire narrative of the Incarnation—life, death and resurrection. We are called to pattern our lives after his life, or as Paul says, to “imitate” him. What happens to Jesus happens to us.

On the night before Jesus was crucified, he gathered his most intimate friends and re-told the story of his life in its most condensed form. He offered a narrative map for Everyman and Everywoman, for Every-soul and Every-city. It's the story for All Creation. Jesus is not merely telling the Christian story, he is telling the story of reality itself.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed he took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, blessed it, and gave it for all to drink, and said, “This cup is the blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

As the body of Christ, we are all Taken, Blessed, Broken, Given and Spoken in love. As the body of Christ in the world, we not only partake of the meal, we also become part of the meal of which we partake. The Eucharist inducts us into Reality and reveals its hidden pattern at work in our lives. It gives us a new pattern of desire. Of course, Jesus is the host of our meal, and it's worth noting that the word host in Latin is *hostia*, which means “victim.” Isn't that something? Jesus is the victim (the Forgiving Victim) who hosts the meal that brings peace to the world. As we mentioned earlier, there is a particular shape to the Jesus meal that not only shows up in the Last Supper but in each of the feeding miracles and again on the road to Emmaus. The liturgy is the same.



*As the body of
Christ, we are all
Taken, Blessed,
Broken, Given and
Spoken in love*

Let's dive into the five-course meal that transforms us into a Eucharistic community that is fit for mission in an urban world.

THE SHAPE OF EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY



FIRST COURSE: TAKEN—We are taken into the loving hands of God. We feast on God's love as the foundation of all life and transformation. All of creation is taken into the love that is its source.



SECOND COURSE: BLESSED—In the loving hands of God, we are blessed. We drink deeply of the Incarnation as the blessing of God's presence in the world.



THIRD COURSE: BROKEN—We are broken in and through the love of God. We taste God's own experience of suffering on the cross, and how that experience radically transforms death into life.



FOURTH COURSE: GIVEN—As broken ones, we are given to a broken world. We savor life inside of the resurrection and its gift to the world.



FIFTH COURSE: SPOKEN—We digest the living Word that speaks all of life into existence.

Jesus is giving us a liturgical narrative by which to “re-member” all the random incidents and accidents into a coherent, reconciled whole. We are all taken in love, blessed in love, broken in love, given in love, that we might become the spoken word of love.

In his helpful book, *Our One Great Act of Fidelity - Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist*, Ronald Rolheiser quotes novelist Andre Dubus and his *apologia* on why he received Eucharist so regularly. Rolheiser and Dubus, both Catholic, lift up the radically physical (incarnational) reality of the Eucharist.

This morning I received the sacrament I still believe in: at seven fifteen the priest elevated the host, then the chalice and spoke the words of the ritual, and the bread became flesh, the wine became blood, and minutes later I placed on my tongue the taste of forgiveness and love that affirmed, perhaps celebrated, my being alive, my being mortal. This has nothing to do with immortality, with eternity; I love the earth too much to contemplate a life apart from it, although I believe in that life. No, this has to do with mortality and the touch of flesh, and my belief in the sacrament of the Eucharist is simple: without touch, God is monologue, an idea, a philosophy; he must touch and be touched, the tongue on flesh, and that touch is the result of monologues, the idea, the philosophies which led to the faith; but in the instant of the touch there is no place for thinking, for talking, the silent touch affirms all that, and goes deeper: it affirms the mysteries of love and mortality.¹⁰⁶

Rolheiser goes further, “So on the night before his death, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them, He gave us the Eucharist, his physical embrace, his kiss, a ritual within which he holds us to his heart.” He adds, “The Eucharist is God’s kiss,” and like all kisses, “It needs no explanation and has no explanation.”¹⁰⁷ It wants only to be experienced.

The kiss of Christ calls forth a new community, a eucharistic community, the very body of Christ in a hurting world. When St. Augustine would give communion to someone for the first time, instead of saying, “The body of Christ,” he would say, “Receive what you are.”¹⁰⁸ This is our sign of peace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you identify rivalries in your own life that keep you from making peace?
2. Which of the three pathways to presence most affirms or challenges your community's capacity to seek peace?
3. Imagine how differently your city might be if it was no longer fueled by rivalries.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Meal From Below (Book)

Introduction

Written by Kris Roche and Scott Dewey

This chapter invites to the Jesus Meal and the transformative power of being a Eucharistic community.



LISTEN

Inner Compass

Feasting at a Food Pantry (Ep. 1)

Featuring Sara Miles

In this interview, Miles, author of *Take This Bread*, reflects on the Eucharist in action through her food pantry in San Francisco.



WATCH

Babette's Feast (Film Clip)

In this opening scene, a meal is prepared for a community who has maintained a commitment to purity, but forgotten the joy of the Gospel.

FIND LINKS TO ALL "DIGGING DEEPER" CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER6



CHAPTER 7

Messengers: Called Out of Fear into Freedom

“My work is loving the world.” ¹⁰⁹

Mary Oliver

We have explored the incarnational message, method and manner of mission modeled for us by Jesus. In the end, the incarnational mission of Jesus produces messengers who are free to love their city and seek its peace. Jesus frees us from the fear that binds us to the myth of scarcity, the danger of theory, and the violence of rivalry. When we are free of this fear, we can see through eyes of Jesus and delight in God’s abundance. We are free to serve incarnationally from below. We are free to seek the peace of the cities we love. The key to all of this is Gospel freedom.

The Apostle Paul says, “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). Freedom is the highest of virtues. It’s what makes genuine love and all the other virtues possible. Without freedom, our love is just one more tactical maneuver to curry favor.

Paul continues his reflection on freedom, “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters... for the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”(Gal. 5:13-14). Paul is making the connection between freedom and love. The freedom of Christ leads to the love of Christ. We are set free to love. That’s it! If freedom does not lead to love, it is not the freedom of Christ. When we are free in Christ we lay down our lives in love. This is not muscular Christianity that needs to prove something to the world. It’s the winsome, life-giving result of having discovered ourselves loved by the one who sets us free. Love sets us free to love. That’s the virtuous cycle of the Gospel.

It bears repeating—incarnational leaders are called out of fear into freedom. The specific fear that does so much damage is what St. Augustine called *timor mortis*, which is Latin for “fear of death.”¹¹⁰

In this chapter, we consider how the mission of Jesus frees us to love our city and seek its peace.

In his helpful book, *The Slavery of Death*, Richard Beck points out convincingly that it's our fear of death that is the source of so much "sin" in the world.¹¹¹ This is not a new idea. Augustine, Kierkegaard, Earnest Becker, and many others have seen how our fear of death and unconscious denial of it gets us into all kinds of trouble. Beck affirms the Eastern Orthodox view of the relationship between sin and death. It reverses the Western view most of us have grown up with, which sees sin as the root cause of death (i.e. sin leads to death). The Eastern view reverses the order. It's fear of death that

A CASE STUDY



Nearly 1,000 people from many faith traditions attended Father Bill Bichsel's (Bix) memorial service in honor of his work for peace. He was arrested 46 times. In 2011, at 81 Bix, and four other war protesters, used bolt cutters to cut through three chain-link fences on the Bangor Navy base in Kitsap County where nuclear warheads were stored. He served a three-month jail sentence. Having survived two open-heart surgeries, Father Bix brought along his nitroglycerin tablets and paused to take some during the long hike. About twenty marines with automatic weapons stopped the activists, put hoods on them to prevent them from seeing any more of the top-secret facility. When someone later said to Bix, Please, Father, don't get into any more trouble, he laughed and replied, with a wry smile, "We're all in trouble." Bix was a free man whose relentless acts of freedom came with a price. At his memorial service it was said, "Bix imagined and lived an impossible road, and he asked us to walk it with him...He lived the life of Jesus in his body, his blood, his sinews and bones...His love for everybody burned him up...There was nothing left for him to give, and the Father came for him." What freedom!



leads to sin. The Eastern view is not only good theological insight, it has great practical value. Consider for a moment the trouble we get ourselves into because of all the ways we consciously and unconsciously are driven by fear of death. Now imagine what life would be like when freed of that fear.

The movie, *Of Gods and Men*, illustrates this kind of freedom beautifully. It's based on a true story. In 1996, seven Trappist monks who lived in the monastery of Tibhirine in Algeria were kidnapped and killed by Muslim militants during the Algerian civil war. In the years leading up to this event, the monks lived peacefully in a Muslim community. As pressure mounted the monks had a choice to make: stay and face the likelihood of death, or leave and survive. After a deep, soul searching process, which is the focus of the movie, they choose to stay. One scene in particular captures the crux of the movie and the human predicament. Luc, who represents the spiritual heart of the monastery, is approached by the abbot. Luc is not only a monk but also a doctor. He has been treating local Islamic rebels who have been wounded in the war. The abbot who is working through his own fears, warns Luc to be careful. Luc responds to the abbot.

Throughout my career I've met all sorts of different people. Including Nazis.

And even the devil.

(Pause)

I'm not scared of terrorists, even less of the army. And I'm not scared of death.

I am a free man.¹¹²

That's Gospel freedom!

When we are free of the fear of death we are free to live generous lives in service to the other, even our enemies. William Stringfellow says it this way, "The genius of the Christian life, both for a person and for the company of Christians, is the freedom constantly to be engaged in giving up its own life in order to give the world a new life."¹¹³

The missional history of the church is filled with martyrs who were set free from fear of death. Consider the closing lines of Martin Luther King Jr's final speech the night before he was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on Thursday, April 4, 1968, at the age of 39.

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm

not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.¹¹⁴



The unmistakable mark of freedom is un-anxious presence in all things.

Also, consider Oscar Romero's words in a sermon leading up to his assassination. In 1980, Romero was assassinated while offering Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence because of the way he spoke boldly against poverty, social injustice, assassinations and torture in El Salvador.

Let us not be afraid brothers and sisters. We are living through difficult and uncertain days. We do not know if this very evening we will be prisoners or murder victims. We do not know what the forces of evil will do with us. But one thing I do know: even those who have disappeared after arrest, even those who are mourned in the mystery of an abduction, are known and loved by God.¹¹⁵

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Romero did not come to their freedom easily. None of us do. That is why we trust them and their words have authority. Beck says it this way, "If the martyrs are witnesses to anything—martyr simply means "witness"—it is to freedom from fear in the face of death."¹¹⁶ This is the final and most liberating teaching of Jesus who came to free us from fear, even of death itself. "Do not fear" is the most often repeated command in all of Scripture. By some counts it appears 365 times—one for every day of the year.

The disciple, John, sums it up beautifully. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Gospel freedom, which energizes the Incarnational Training Framework, is the hallmark of all the great spiritual mothers and fathers of the faith, including Ignatian spirituality. The 10-man company founded by St. Ignatius Loyola in 1540 set the world ablaze with their brand of Gospel freedom much like St. Francis before him. The Jesuits are now the world's largest religious order with 21,000 professionals, and has produced Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope. Pope Francis embodies the connection between St. Francis and St. Ignatius in the virtuous cycle of the Gospel—love sets us free to love. We lift up three marks of Gospel freedom particular to Ignatian spirituality.

FREEDOM FROM “INORDINATE ATTACHMENTS”

We all have attachments to people, places and things. That’s normal and good. Ignatian spirituality is concerned about “inordinate attachments.” Inordinate attachments are when we find ourselves bound by our attachments. Perhaps the better word is “addicted.” At worst we are possessed or completely enslaved by our attachments. One can think of any number of addictions. But what makes this difficult is that we can be inordinately attached not only to “bad things,” but also to “good things.” And, in fact, it’s the good things that are most dangerous. The list is endless. What’s at stake is not the object of our attachment, *per se*. It’s the ego.

The ego can attach itself to anything and turn even the best of gifts into a curse. Those of us in ministry are particularly prone to attach our egos to forms of righteousness (external and internal), which is why they are so difficult to release. We can even be attached to negative self-worth, failure or a preoccupation with death itself. There is nothing the ego can’t attach itself to. What our cities need are leaders who know the Gospel freedom of healthy detachment. The unmistakable mark of freedom is un-anxious presence in all things. We are free to act without fear of failure or the need to succeed. Most especially, we are free from the compulsion to manage or defend our own sense of goodness or righteousness. Ultimately, such freedom allows us to take the form of a servant, or as Paul says, “Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another” (Gal 5:13). Such freedom reconnects us with the proper use of authority which is why Jesuits can take the “vow of obedience” without risk of diminishing their freedom. Now, that’s true freedom!

FREEDOM TO “FIND GOD IN ALL THINGS”

Healthy detachment frees us to see things as they really are, and the reality is this: God is in all things. God is revealing God-self in all things, to all things and through all things. As the Psalmist asks, “where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps. 139:7). The Incarnation is the guarantee that God is always moving into the neighborhood and the Word is always becoming flesh among us. This frees us to engage the world and our cities with confidence. The whole world is a burning bush filled with God’s presence. We’ve said it before, we don’t bring the Gospel anywhere, we bear witness to the Gospel everywhere. We simply pray for the eyes to see what’s already there and for the courage to celebrate what we see God doing. That’s mission.

FREEDOM FOR “THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD”

The Jesuit motto is, “For the greater glory of God.” The word “greater” has a critically important role in the motto. The word “greater” keeps the mission of the Jesuits from becoming small, stale or safe. Ignatius recognized that his gift was to help keep the windows of the church open so the wind of mission could blow freely. This is why Jesuit’s would go on to influence society at every level and are particularly geared towards social justice activism in urban centers. Like the Franciscans before them, Jesuits remain largely an urban order, who engage in social action at all levels, especially among the most vulnerable. The Spirit has poured out this wildly liberating gift on all humanity. Jesus himself recognized that the Spirit of God frees us to do “greater works than these” (John 14:13). Paul echoes this in his benediction to the Ephesians, “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21). The adventure always opens towards the future and continually grows. It’s always greater!

Finally, if the virtuous cycle of the Gospel (love sets us free to love) is not animated by the joy of the Lord in the heart of creation, then it’s simply not the Gospel, nor is it sustainable. Joy is the unmistakable sign of the Incarnation and perhaps its greatest gift. Jesus is the joy of humanity’s desiring. Nothing is worth sustaining, not love, not freedom, not even Gospel, if it does come from joy or return to joy. Without joy the whole thing falls apart. But joy...ah, well, when we’ve tasted joy, nothing else will do. Nothing!

So there it is—we are messengers being set free to love our cities and seek their peace with the Gospel of Jesus. We do this with Gospel freedom that is transforming our cities from the bottom up and the inside out. This is serious work, but the burden is light and is sustained by joy. The poet Auden said, “I know nothing, except what everyone knows—if there when Grace dances, I should dance.”¹¹⁷ That is the task of Incarnational leadership—to notice the Spirit dancing in our cities and to join the dance. The mystic-poet Rumi said it this way,

*Dance, when you’re broken open.
Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance when you’re perfectly free.¹⁸*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the shift from fear to freedom affirm or challenge your vocation to love and serve the city and develop incarnational leaders?
2. What resources have you found in your spiritual tradition and the spiritual traditions of those you serve that are freeing you?
3. Imagine how differently your city would be if its members were free.

DIGGING DEEPER



READ

Practices of/for Freedom (Speech)

Delivered by Dr. Stephan de Beer

Ten practices of freedom.

(Given at the closing plenary address of the tenth Biennial Consultation on Urban Ministry in Pretoria, South Africa.)



LISTEN

On Being (Podcast)

A New Coming Together (7/15)

Featuring Rami Nashashibi

Nashashibi explores his liberating approach to urban transformation from a Muslim-American perspective.



WATCH

Of Gods and Men (Film Clip)

In this short, but powerful scene we see the exchange between the abbot and Luc mentioned in this chapter. Luc embodies Gospel freedom.

**FIND LINKS TO ALL “DIGGING DEEPER” CONTENT AT
WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER7**





SECTION III

Postlegomena

“If there when grace dances, I should dance.”¹²⁰

W. H. AUDEN

CHAPTER 8

The New Jerusalem and Its Implications for Leaders

“The Truth must dazzle gradually or every man be blind.”¹²¹

Emily Dickinson

The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a city. It ends with the vision of the New Jerusalem, the city of peace. The New Jerusalem is the fullness of the Incarnation, writ large. We’ve said that the Word is always becoming flesh, beginning with Creation, Covenant, Church and now even the City. Christ is the energizing center of it all, the Logos who occupies flesh.

Emily Dickinson ends her great poem, *Tell All the Truth but Tell It Slant*, with this inspired line, “The Truth must dazzle gradually or every man be blind.”¹²¹ She courageously insists that the whole truth must be told, but is wise in recognizing that telling the whole Truth all at once is like looking directly into the sun. It results in blindness, not sight. That’s why the Truth must be told at a “slant.”

We can see this graceful restraint in Scripture itself. Scripture tells the whole truth, but it dazzles gradually, with great patience, until we finally arrive at the Cross, where Jesus reveals all, for all to see.

Seeing with the cruciform eyes of Christ takes time and lots of practice. It takes a community of practice. This is the purpose of our faith communities – to provide a space to practice over a lifetime a new way of being human, whereby we are inducted into our own humanity and the body of Christ. Yes, it usually takes a lifetime to become fully human. Perhaps this is why the Gospel writers were bathed in the light of Gospel Truth for many decades before they finally submitted what they saw to writing.

It is well documented that the Gospels, which are first hand accounts of the Incarnation, were written after most of the Epistles. In fact, the last Gospel to be written was the Gospel of John, around 100 A.D. We should not be surprised then that it has some of the

This chapter lifts up the vision of the New Jerusalem that is coming towards us and explores the implications for leaders.

most mature language around the Incarnation. John had about 70 years to be seasoned by grace before he told the truth.

As we said from the outset, Jesus is “full of grace and truth”(John 1:16), and it is grace that allows us to see the truth in all its glory, especially the parts that we don’t like. Some things are just too beautiful and too painful to take in all at once, which is why the Good News comes to us over a lifetime and not over night. The Apostle Paul says, “We see through a glass dimly, but one day we will see face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). The “day” Paul is speaking of is the day we are perfected in love. Perhaps it is no accident then that it was John, “the beloved disciple,” who is also the one who gave us the nearly blinding vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation to which we now turn.

What follows are merely glimpses of the New Jerusalem breaking forth. It is the city of peace for peacemakers. We will not attempt to say too much because we still see through a glass dimly. Instead we lift up a vision that dazzles slowly and highlight implications for incarnational leaders to consider.

THE CITY OF PEACE

Take a few minutes to read chapter 21 of Revelations making note of the unusual features of the New Jerusalem.

1. THE DIVINE BREAK IN

“I saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God” (21:2). What we are witnessing here is not the great escape but a divine break in just as we did with the birth of Jesus. Once again God is breaking into the human story “coming down” when everything in us is expecting God to call us up and away. Once again, we are witnessing the great reversal made visible by the Incarnation. We are also witnessing a gift being given. It is a gift from God and not the product of our hard work, though work we must. The hardest work of this gift is on God, not us.

Implication: Incarnational leaders are always looking for the divine break in – the city of peace coming towards us, and when it comes it’s always received as a gift.

2. MOVING INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

God speaks and says, “See the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them...” (21:3). Once again the New Jerusalem follows the flow of the incarnation. “God moves into the neighborhood” (John 1:14) and calls it “home.” In other words God makes God’s

home by dwelling in union with humanity.

Implication: Incarnational leaders are called to the work of hospitality, in which we create room for God to make God's home with us. And since God's favorite disguise is what Mother Teresa called the "distressing disguise of the other," the stranger among us, we welcome the stranger as Emmanuel, God with us.

3. GARDEN OF LIFE

The city is organized around Life and "Death will be no more" (21:4). In the last chapter of Revelations we see that the sacred center of the city is the "tree of life" (22:2). The Domination System of this world that is organized around the principle of death gives way to the way of Life.

Implication: Incarnational leaders renew their baptismal vows and renounce the ways of death in all we do, saying yes to Life, always.

4. NOW, HERE, THIS.

God says, "I am making all things new" (21:5). All things are being renewed in Christ. This is the hope of the world or what Teilhard de Chardin, calls the Christification of the universe. Notice too that this is happening in the present. There is a play on Broadway called *Now. Here. This.*¹²² Its title and content beautifully captures the point we are making. The present reality of the New Jerusalem breaking into the here and now. It's happening *now*. It's happening *here*. It's happening in *this* moment, which is the only moment we have. We do not wait for the city of peace, we receive it, now.

Implication: Incarnational leaders see the present moment is pregnant with the presence of God, calling forth life, which is why we function as midwives to the holy.

5. WOUNDED HEALER

The mayor of the New Jerusalem is the Lamb mentioned in verse (21:9). Throughout Revelation the Lamb is none other than the slain lamb. The slain lamb is the crucified one who bears the wounds of creation eternally. He is not only the author of new creation but also the eternal mayor of the city of peace who lights the city, "its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22). We see by the light of the crucified risen one.

Implication: Incarnational leaders are wounded healers who recognize that wounds become wombs of new creation bearing seeds of new life. The authority

of incarnational leaders is tied to how we bear our wounds and the wounds of our city. In the end, we see by the light of the slain lamb, the eternal mayor of the city of peace.

6. REJECTED STONE IS CORNERSTONE

“The wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the names of twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:14). The foundation stone of the New Jerusalem is the stone the builders rejected. The “apostles of the Lamb” are the rejected stones of the world who hold the city together in a whole new way. In the city of peace a new kind of community is possible – a unity that is forever free of scapegoats. There are no more rejected stones. In fact the rejected stones become the cornerstones of this city of peace as monuments of a new kind of peace. This is what the apostles bear witness to.

Implication: Incarnational leaders form communities that are scapegoat free and are willing to be the scapegoat if needed to show it’s possible to build community without them.

7. CATHEDRAL OF GRACE

When looking at the city John says, “I saw no temple in the city” (Rev. 21:22). The absence of a temple speaks to the sacramental presence of God in all things. In Christ, common ground is holy ground. The entire world is a burning bush and the city is a cathedral of grace. We quote again the words of Richard Rohr. “You cannot, not be in the presence of God.”

Implication: Incarnational leaders recognize God’s presence in all things. Everything is holy for those who have the eyes to see it.

8. HUMAN AND DIVINE GLORY

“The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” (Rev 21:24). Here is an image in which humanity brings our gifts, talents and passions into the city. In other words, our glory is incorporated into the new city. The city of peace is an act of co-creation between God and humanity and in that sense is not a fixed idea but an open ended adventure.

Implication: Incarnational leaders see themselves and others as co-creators with whom God is eager to partner.

9. OPEN GATES

“Its gates will never be shut” (Rev. 21:25). The gates of the city of peace are always open. It has nothing to defend because no one is excluded. All are welcome. This city makes room for every kindred, tribe and nation (see Rev. 5:9). This reveals a new way to form identity, no longer over and against anyone, but with and for everyone.

Implication: Incarnational leaders cultivate communities with open gates.

10. CITY OF PEACE

In the end, “Nothing unclean will enter it” (Rev. 21:27). If we take “unclean” to mean violence itself, then we have a picture of the city of peace that excludes only one thing, violence. And this is why we call it the city of peace. In the end, violence turns in on itself and excludes itself. That’s what violence does, but this exclusion is not God’s doing. It’s ours. Whatever hell we occupy is the hell of our own making.

Implication: Incarnational leaders are peacemakers who work to exclude only one thing from the city they love and serve, and that’s violence in any form.

If the New Jerusalem is the divine in-breaking of God’s mercy, it is a vision of peace born of love that requires our participation. We see the vision dimly, but that’s only because we have not been perfected in love. “Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:12-13). And so we’ve come full circle. The incarnational message, method and manner of Jesus mission frees us to love our city and seek its peace. That’s our call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How does the vision of the New Jerusalem affirm or challenge your dreams for your city?*
2. *What is the in-breaking of mercy that is particularly needed in your city at this time?*
3. *Imagine how differently your city would be if it was free from violence and functioned with open gates.*

Case Study:

From Crisis to Missional Community

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I’ll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about.”¹²³

Rumi

Jack Fortin says, “Community without a mission leads to self-absorption; mission without community leads to exhaustion. Community in Mission creates fulfillment.”¹²⁴ This is what a community of practice does. It develops a community in mission that fulfills all its members. The mission needs to be big enough to warrant a vibrant community and the community needs to be strong enough to support the growing mission.

In our experience community is largely the byproduct of mission. When community becomes the primary focus it nearly always suffers under its own scrutiny. A big mission calls forth a big community. In other words, mission sustains community as much as community sustains mission. Eventually, even healthiest missional communities find themselves on rocky shoals, which threaten to sink them and their mission.

Loving our city and seeking its peace inevitably brings us into contact with people and organizations who see the world very differently from us and with whom we fundamentally disagree. The temptation is to retreat into our various corners defined around doctrine, social policy and political views. This further ghettoizes and polarizes us and the city itself. The most vulnerable are usually the ones who suffer the most.

Our question is how do we build big tent, incarnational organizations that can hold the tensions of diversity without losing its identity? We acknowledge the need for boutique ministries that have a niche focus and whose tent is small, but our cities are calling forth organizations and movements that can model ways of holding the tensions that threaten our communities.

In this chapter we consider how incarnational leaders and incarnational organizations can hold tension in times of crisis, calling forth a greater sense of community.

CASE STUDY

For the purposes of this training guide the following case study is written in the third person and draws on actual events in different organizations.

Imagine two colleagues working for the same organization – a medium sized religious non-profit that serves high-risk youth and families in a poor urban community with 15 staff. After years of working faithfully and effectively in the organization, Colleague A comes out as gay. Colleague B who also has worked faithfully and effectively holds deep convictions that Colleague A is wrong and being gay is a disordered form of heterosexuality. Both are followers of Jesus and both are sincere about serving their community. Both want the organization to take a stance. The tension builds among the staff and volunteers and word gets out to some high impact donors who support the organization who also happen to agree with Colleague B's position. It becomes clear that the organization does not have an official policy regarding the LGBTQ community. Eventually the board reaches out to the executive director to deal with the issue.

How should the organization respond to this situation? Should it develop a doctrinal policy that chooses one side or the other of this issue? Is there a way to hold the tension without making “the issue” the issue?

SCENARIO 1

The board adopts a policy that excludes LGBTQ from serving on staff, even though the organization maintains a loving, welcoming stance to all their clients regardless of race, gender, religious, political or sexual orientation. This policy eliminates the gay staff member and sows seeds of discord in a divided staff. It also maintains the much needed support from funders in order to serve the vulnerable population they serve.

SCENARIO 2

The board adopts a policy of inclusion. This approach keeps the gay employee on staff, and makes room for others, but it too sows seeds of discord on an already divided staff who disagree with the decision. It also runs the risk of losing support from funders.

SCENARIO 3

The board and staff agree on an approach that enlarges the frame of reference, one that lifts up the city and her most vulnerable at the center of focus. The board decides not to write a policy regarding the issue at this time and invites both sides to stay at the table

even though they disagree, by honoring the conscience of the other and resisting the temptation to convert the other. Instead, all parties are held accountable to the mission.

Scenario 3 is not without risks, in fact it puts everybody at risk in some ways making all involved vulnerable to authentic relationship with those whom they disagree, but it holds great promise when confronted by what feels like an intractable “issue” that threatens to separate and divide the missional community. In reflecting on this case study, James Alison said, “It is the messiness of grace that allows us to be non-defensive about not having a perfectly bound up “administrative solution”.¹²⁵ When the “issue” is something as potentially divisive as doctrinal, social or political views it’s very difficult to transcend the zero sum game of “us versus them.” However, if we shift the question from the issue itself to a larger frame of reference it makes room for the tension. It allows us to work alongside those with whom we disagree in the messiness of grace.

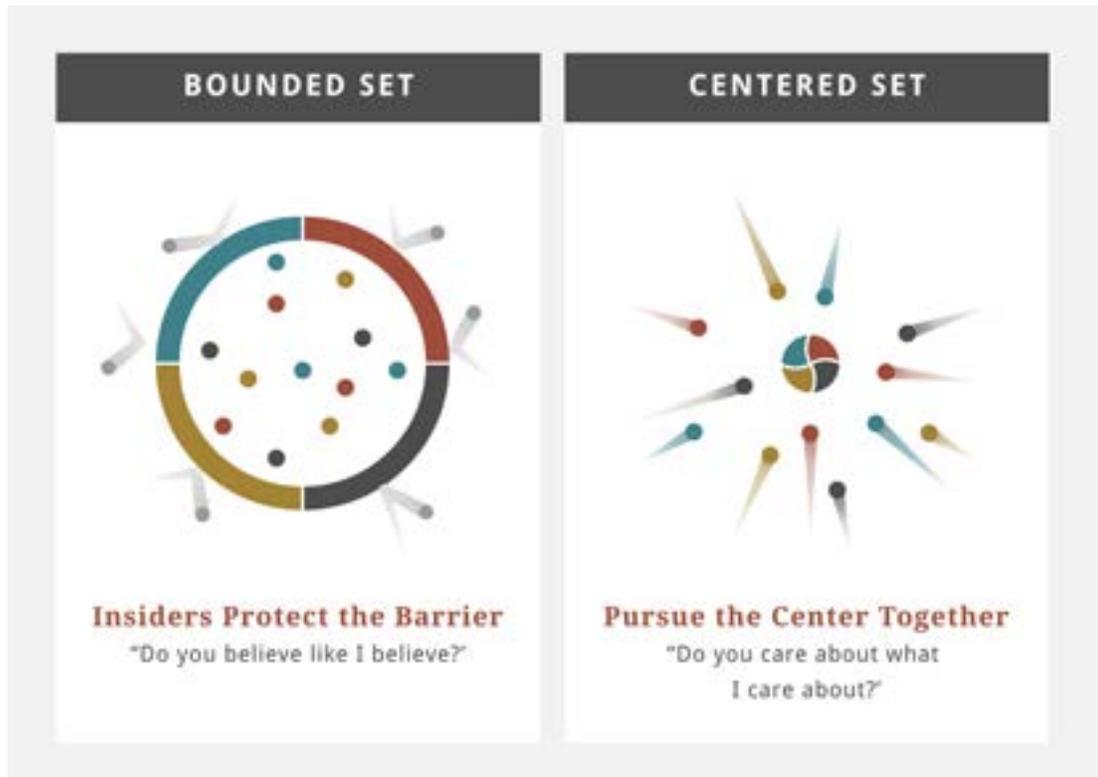
This, of course, is standard practice in the secular context. The shared mission of a company, or agency makes room for all kinds of diversity and not just because the law requires it. The bigger the mission, the more robust the community. What’s important is that the employees work toward the same goal and are held accountable to the agreed outcomes. The problem arises in faith-based organizations when the thorny issues take on a central role and “the issue” becomes THE ISSUE.

We acknowledge that certain churches and faith based organizations may, for very good reasons, need to take a stance on a particular issue for the sake of their community, thus creating a bounded set. However, in our view what’s needed most in today’s urban context are centered set organizations who’ve articulated a vision and mission big enough and compelling enough to demand a robust, diverse community to achieve it.

Bounded set organizations are concerned with protecting the organization. Centered set organizations are concerned with achieving the mission. There is a time and place for both functions, but when doing urban ministry in a radically diverse context such as the city, it becomes difficult when the accent falls on the bounded set approach.

Throughout this training guide we’ve taken a centered set approach by lifting up the mission of loving the city and seeking its peace. We place the city, and especially the most vulnerable, at the center of our focus. By lifting the city high, we now have a mission that’s big enough to warrant a robust community. It makes room for a wide range of religious, social or political views. This allows us to work alongside people with whom

Bounded set organizations are concerned with protecting the organization. Centered set organizations are concerned with achieving the mission.



we may radically disagree, not unlike the disciples that Jesus gathered. It even makes room for our “enemy.” Judas has his part to play too and we must embrace it. There is a vibrancy, and creative tension in this approach. And when a bounded set is needed, as it always is, it makes room for that too. For example, when we lift up the city we are now free to work alongside people from different religious traditions and people of no faith tradition, without forsaking or diminishing our own deeply held convictions as followers of Christ.

Oddly enough, the Incarnation relocates our focus of concern from God (and who’s right about God) to our neighbor, especially the neighbor in need. It’s the love of neighbor that is the ultimate litmus test of our relationship with God. In fact, the Apostle Paul came to realize that the entire law could be summed up in this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”(Gal. 5:14). He sees that loving our neighbor is loving God. The two are one.

This counterintuitive approach frees us to work alongside a wide diversity of people. Sadly when we make Jesus the focus of our concern, it sets the conditions for rivalry. We start bickering over issues of doctrine and before we know it, the issue has become

THE ISSUE and we lose touch with the mission. By lifting up the city and placing the city, and her most vulnerable at the center we can work alongside all people from all faith traditions. People of good faith and good will. This is what centered set organizations do.

The key to this approach, is for there to be mature leaders who can assess the level of scandal (we are using “scandal” in the Girardian sense of the word) and secondly, to not be scandalized by the scandal. Scandals are like fires which need heat, fuel and oxygen to burn. Eliminate just one element of the triangle and the fire dies. Refusing to be scandalized by the scandal is like eliminating the oxygen to the fire. And when we sense ourselves being drawn into the scandal as we often are, these words from Peter, who knew something about how scandals work, are helpful, “...and do not be afraid of their fear, neither be perturbed” (1 Peter 3:14).

THREE PRINCIPLES

When the issues threaten to derail the community, here are three incarnational principles drawn from the life of Christ that help us navigate divisive issues without having to write divisive bounded set policies or police behavior administratively. All of this assumes we are holding each other accountable to a shared mission that gives birth to a robust community.

1. PRIMACY OF CONSCIENCE

We honor our conscience and the conscience of others even when they conflict. What's essential here is the primacy of the individual's conscience.

Within the catholic tradition, the primacy of conscience affirms that God's voice lies in our soul, and it is a sin not to listen to it, even when the institution may disagree and even when our conscience is misguided. It's better to follow a misguided conscience than to deny it. Our conscience, at the end of the day, supersedes the institution, which exists for the individual. Whenever possible we honor conscience.

And he said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Come forward.' Then he said to them, 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored (Mark 3:3-5).

2. PRIMACY OF RELATIONSHIP

Relationship is more important than being right. All “issues” are worked out relationally, which means contextually and in community. This means that relational conflict is worked out directly between disputing parties, whenever possible (the exception to this is in the case of violence or abuse which requires a mediator or separation). Only after direct address between individuals do we involve others. Mountains of division and violence will be avoided if we follow this most basic principle. This is the basis of cultivating a community that is capable of holding tension and embracing difference.

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

3. PRIMACY OF SCRIPTURE

Within faith based organizations Scripture has a voice, but we put this last because it’s the one that is most liable for abuse. The abuse of Scripture has been perhaps the single greatest cause of violence in the world. Using Scripture to justify our positions is dangerous because it creates power plays by enlisting God’s favor. However, if we adopt the hermeneutical key presented in this training guide and we learn to read Scripture through the eyes of the Crucified One, Scripture then becomes a gift. We can now see how God has always been with the crucified of this world, speaking to us through the victim. It’s here that Scripture can speak into conflicts and help us find pathways to unity that have nothing to do with who is right and who is wrong. Here we invoke the Japanese word “mu” again, “unask the question.” Who is right and who is wrong is a dead end question. The more beautiful question made visible by Jesus in the Incarnation is how can we work together to love our city and seek its peace, so that the crucified ones are no longer crucified?

The tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God,” (Matthew 4:3-4).

This principled approach reminds us that the identity of the church is not a people who get things right, but a people who are undergoing forgiveness. This is most essential when forming missional communities of practice for the sake of the city. We practice the giving and receiving of forgiveness and invite others to undergo the same, the results of which are a community in mission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Which of the three scenarios most fits with your vision of your organization?*
- 2. Which of the three scenarios most connects with the community you serve?*
- 3. Imagine what how different you city would be with centered set organizations working together.*

Discerning the Shape of Our Call

**“You have formed us for Yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You.”** ¹²⁷

St. Augustine

In this chapter we ask a series of questions designed to help the leader (and their organizations) discern the particular shape of their call to love their city and seek its peace.

God comes to us in the shape of our own life, therefore the most important thing we can do as incarnational leaders is to show up for our own life and pay attention to the Spirit at work in it. This is much easier said than done which is why we practice discernment.

We offer twelve questions, one for each month of the year. The first set of questions is designed to help us identify the particular shape of our call to love our city and seek its peace. The second set of questions helps us refine the focus of our call and how we lead in light of it. These questions are focused on the leader, but can be explored by organizations too. These questions are most fruitful when explored within the context of a community of trusted friends, mentors, guides and our community of practice.

DISCERNING OUR CALL

Frederick Buechner said, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”¹²⁸ We add a third and crucial ingredient to Buechner’s sage insight. In our experience, vocational call is discerned at the intersection of three things: our deep gladness, the world’s great hunger and a community of friends (i.e. community of practice) to help shoulder the burden. Our call is found and nurtured at the intersection of these three things.

1. WHAT’S YOUR DEEP GLADNESS AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

This question gets at our deepest desires. It’s about what we want. What great beauty or joy draws us out, inspires, awakens, and causes us to fall in love? This question also helps us locate those from whom we borrow our desires. As Girard suggests, “We desire according to the desire of others.” The key here is to name those who’ve modeled for

*In this chapter
we ask a series
of questions
designed to
help the leader
(and their
organizations)
discern the
particular shape
of their call to
love their city and
seek its peace.*

us our great joy (be specific) and on whose shoulders we stand. This helps us name the thing that we cannot, not do and realize we never do it alone.

Practice: Imagine yourself on your deathbed, what great beauty would your dying self ask you to be attentive to? What advice would you give yourself?

2. WHAT'S THE WORLD'S GREAT HUNGER?

This question gets at the deep desires of the communities we serve and connects them with our own. When we plumb the depths of desire it brings us very close to our wounds and the wounds of others. It makes us vulnerable. Our leadership lacks authority until it connects with that vulnerability and the vulnerability of those we serve. In the end, the great hunger of the world is not so different from our own.

Practice: Do a local vision trip where you map the hurt, hope and heart of your community. (See [Appendix A City Mapping Exercise](#)).

3. WHO IS YOUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

This question helps us identify the various communities that call us forth and give us a place to practice our vocational call. A robust community of practice pushes us beyond what we think we can do and creates room for us to fail as well as inspires us to hone our skills and discipline our gifts. The more diverse the community is the greater the possibilities for growth. In this sense a community of practice is much bigger than just our circle of friends, who often mirror back to us what we want to see and hear. A healthy community of practice provides us the creative tension we need for growth.

Practice: Name the various communities of practice of which you're apart and list their particular contributions in your life.

One of the telltale signs of an incarnational call is that when it knocks on the door of our heart, it seems impossible to achieve and brings us to our knees. Very often our heart leaps with joy and says "yes", and our head hurts with the complexity of it all and says "no." Eventually peace settles in, which is the sign to proceed. It is God's delight that we participate in something bigger than we can achieve on our own or in our life-time. This keeps us on our knees, true to the ever-expanding nature of God's mission.

LEADING IN LIGHT OF OUR CALL

The following questions help refine and focus our call, getting at how we can lead in light of our call.

4. WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE PERMISSION TO LEAD AND WHY?

This question gets at the contextual nature of leadership and the way others invite us to serve and call forth our gift in the context of community. The healthiest communities recognize that leadership is situational and not just a title. What's needed in one context is not needed in another. Very often we want to give a gift that is not being asked for or needed in that moment. The key is to give our gift when the gift is needed. Unfortunately, this question is a double-edged sword for those who find themselves overlooked or even systematically excluded from opportunities for leadership, in which case we must name that. And yet, it's important to take note of where we are experiencing invitation to lead.

Practice: Ask three people to help you name how your community is calling you forth, being careful to tease out the difference between what it wants from you and what it needs from you to flourish.

5. WHAT'S YOUR "ORIGINAL SIN?"

This question gets at our besetting sin, the thing we can't seem to get rid of. It is the thing we've spent our whole life trying to deny, manage, or control in an effort to eliminate. It's our stumbling block and blind spot. It presents itself as our great strength, but it's the thing that keeps getting us into trouble. In her wisdom the early church identified the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. We tend to have one that is particularly strong in us and wants to remain hidden. It hides inside our strength or gift, which is why it's so hard to name. Our great gift helps us locate our demon and our demons become angels if we unbind them. It's there, in the midst of our curse that we rediscover our great gift, but not without first suffering the truth.

Practice: Explore the Enneagram and meet with a spiritual director familiar with the Enneagram to help you identify your Enneagram number.¹²⁹ Note: The Enneagram is a tool that helps us identify our particular deadly sin. It adds two additional sins, "deceit" and "fear," to the original list of seven, which is why it's called the enneagram (nine types).

6. WHAT BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN YOU?

This question gets at the "calling forth" nature of the Spirit in our lives. A rule of thumb is that we can trust what brings out the best in us, even if we don't always like the thing that calls it forth. There are certain communities, circumstances or roles that call forth our best, just as there are certain colors or styles that look good on us. There are also

certain conditions in which we tend to fall apart. Knowing these conditions and their triggers is key.

Practice: Identify a time in your life when you felt like your best self was called forth. Describe the conditions of that situation. Identify a time when your worst self was called forth. Describe the conditions of that situation.

7. WHO IS YOUR RIVAL IN LEADERSHIP? WHAT DO THEY REVEAL ABOUT YOU?

We all have those people or groups who push our buttons. Who are they? Our fiercest rivals almost always say more about us than them. They tend to be mirror doubles of ourselves, our doppelganger, our twins whom we find hard to recognize as such. Jesus calls us to love our enemies, until we discover they are our twin double. We are the same.

Practice: List the top three rivals in your life. Very likely they were at one point mentors or people of great influence on you. Identify when the rivalry started and pray to forgive your rival.

8. HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR NARCISSISTIC FIX?

This question gets at what we might call the John The Baptist side of Incarnational leadership; “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). At some point we realize it’s time to pass the baton and let others take center stage. Increasingly our job becomes supporting the work of others, but the ego dies slowly and usually with great difficulty. We have ways of smuggling ourselves back into the spotlight. This can happen quite subtly, even unconsciously. The key is to recognize the particular way our ego likes to get its fix.

Practice: Ask three people to answer this question, “How does my ego show up in the context of community and what would it look like for me to let go of it?”

9. WHAT BLIND SPOTS DOES YOUR CULTURE, GENDER & LIFE STORY CREATE?

This question gets at naming the natural blind spots of being human. We will never see completely or perfectly, which is why we need others to see what we cannot. Knowing what we don’t know is no easy task. But if we can at least name the things that tend to blind us, we can help cultivate an incarnational community of practice that sees more completely.

Practice: Ask three people of a different race, gender and sexual orientation to name your blind spot.

10. WHAT'S LOST WHEN YOU STOP GIVING YOUR GIFT?

This question gets at the reason why we give our gift in the first place, because the world is incomplete without it. If nothing is lost, then it's very likely we are giving somebody else's gift and not our own. When we give our gift, it helps create shalom wholeness. Everyone loses, included us, when we withhold our gift.

Practice: Ask three people this question and help you name a gift in your life that brings life to others but you are hesitant to give.

11. WHAT PRACTICES ARE NECESSARY TO SHAPE AND FORM YOU FOR THE LONG HAUL?

This gets at the rhythms and disciplines needed to sustain the call. What are those things we tend to avoid that gives us life?

Practice: List the key practices, rhythms, disciplines that give us life. How are you going to cultivate your particular call over a lifetime?

12. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

We end where we began, with desire. This question is woven throughout all the questions and it's the hardest of all to answer. It recognizes that we are created in and through desire and our deepest desire is yes, in God. Locating our deepest desires is the work of becoming human. It means working through our disordered desires and inordinate attachments, which is a life-time project. So, the question remains. What do you want?

Practice: Meet with a trusted soul who helps you name the thing that you cannot, not do. Tease out which part of it is compulsion or addiction and which part is your heart breaking free to love and serve the world. Trust it.

To help create room in your heart for these questions to do their work, we invite you to join the Street Psalms community in our [Prayer of Vocation](#). It names the charism and call of those who want to see and celebrate Good News in hard places (see [Appendix G](#)).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How clear are you regarding your call?*
2. *How clear is your community in understanding and supporting your call?*
3. *Imagine how different your city would be if you fully lived into your call.*



WATCH

Watch as street musician Jamey Turner plays Bach's
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" on the glass harp.

WWW.STREETPSALMS.ORG/ITF/CHAPTER10





Appendices

A. CITY MAPPING EXERCISE

B. LETTER TO DIOGNETUS

C. GIRARD'S ANTHROPOLOGY

D. LAST WORDS: AN ECUMENICAL

SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

E. MANNERS OF MISSION

F. PRAYER OF DISCERNMENT

G. PRAYER OF VOCATION

Appendix A

City Mapping Exercise

Here are three incarnational practices that help us look deep into the mirror of our city and know it from below.

MAPPING THE HURT

This has to do with knowing the wounds of a given city. To know the wounds of a people and place is an essential task of incarnational leadership. Remember that wounds can become wombs that bear seeds of new creation, but we must be willing to know the wounds of the people and places we serve. Without this, we have no authority.

One method of mapping wounds is through a practice called “Moments of Blessing” developed by a faith-based group called Associated Ministries in Tacoma and used throughout the Urban Training Collaborative. It is a public liturgy for victims of violent homicide designed to reclaim the space where the homicide occurred. When we stand with a community in grief and pain, we bear the burdens of those we serve, and those burdens become our own.

MAPPING THE HOPE

Hope is always particular, and urban communities express their hope uniquely. For some communities the signs of hope are visible and easy to see, for others they are hidden and hard to see. It is well-documented that humans cannot live long or well without hope. Often in places of great pain, the resources for hope are found not in dreams for the future, but in memories of the past—looking back over our lives to recover lost or abandoned aspirations. This act of remembering can help map the hope that is within when the external conditions seem hopeless.

One method of mapping hope are “Vision Trips,” adopted throughout the Urban Training Collaborative. A Vision Trip is designed to map the signs of hope in a given community—to see the community through the eyes of those who call it home, but who are not often heard or recognized. This cannot be done through Power Points or books. It’s done by literally walking with people through their community, listening to stories, and attending celebrations. Hope rarely resides in big dreams or big programs. Rather, it exists in the daily life of resilient community members who remain hopeful in the face of great challenge. That is why the most effective

Vision Trips are not organized visits to impressive community programs. They are encounters with those who know and love their community in the face of great odds.

MAPPING THE HEART

Knowing the heart of a place is the most elusive part of the mapping process. It is more than the sum of the hurts and hopes—mapping the heart requires discernment to see beneath and behind and within. The key to mapping the heart is to understand the nature of desire.

The heart is formed and shaped through desire. Jesus said, “For where your treasure (desire) is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21). So to know our heart is to know our deepest desires, and this requires discernment which is always a gift of the Spirit received through disciplined practice.

One method of mapping the heart of a place is through prayer walks, another method used by the Urban Training Collaborative. Prayer walks involve walking through a neighborhood, preferably alone, and with the eyes of our heart wide open. The normal walking speed is 1-3 miles an hour. When we walk all of our senses are engaged—not just our eyes, but our ears, nose and even our sense of touch as our feet touch the ground. Walking literally grounds us. Prayer walks are a fully embodied form of prayer that help us know the heart of the communities we serve.

Appendix B

Letter to Diognetus

“Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them (it was a common practice to “expose” unwanted or disabled babies by putting them in the town square to die). They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen . . .

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body’s hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together,

and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together . . . As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself."

Appendix C

Girard's Anthropology

REFLECTIONS ON GIRARD'S ANTHROPOLOGY FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION

BY DAVE HILLIS

MIMETIC CASE STUDY: URBAN GANGS

One of the most intractable issues in cities is urban gangs. Unfortunately, the primary model of engaging gangs is often the legal response where a juridical strategy is generated to include police, court and incarceration. Problem solved! While there is no denying that the juridical model has its place, it is incomplete. It fails to address the underlying reason that drives the young person to join the gang in the first place—the desire for community. The criminal behavior of gangs is subsidiary to the primary draw of becoming a member of a group. In short, gangs answer the question raised by the desire for community: Where is my place to belong?

The future is an urban world. Currently 3.9 billion of a total population of 7.4 billion is living in cities. By the year 2050, 75% of the world's people will be living in cities. The city has become the dominant social reality of the 21st Century. One billion people currently live in overcrowded urban slums, without basic services, clean water, or sanitation. "Poverty in all its forms is the greatest single threat to peace, security, democracy, human rights and the environment." (Michael Moore, Former Director-General, World Trade Organization).

For any program or city-serving agency to claim relevance moving forward, it must be measured in light of how it is strategically responding to the urban reality of our collective future. There are four urban realities that sit at the root of the dizzying array of issues that must be addressed if a city is to flourish.

- People who share common geography but who lack authentic community.
- Activity-rich responses in vulnerable communities that are systems poor.
- Ideologies without a vision for the common good.
- The growing disparity between rich and poor.

These four realities cloak every city throughout the world and are at the source of the more obvious and basic issues associated with urban life. Moreover, because these realities are not addressed at the depth required, the more basic and obvious needs become increasingly intractable and calcified. One of the primary reasons these underlying issues often go unexamined is the lack of a

well-developed anthropology that has been integrated into an organization's response to a city. This deficiency will invariably lead to overly simplistic concentration on the symptoms rather than root causes that prohibit cities from flourishing. And while there are a variety of anthropologies that could be adopted to help, it is my argument and conviction that the anthropology that holds the best answer to engage the urban reality of the 21st Century is the memetic theory of Rene Girard.

The strength and the power of Girard's anthropology for urban transformation is that it allows leaders to engage the urban reality of the 21st Century. Regardless of the presenting issue—food, housing, healthcare, etc.—Girard's anthropology addresses the deeper issues that drive them and allows urban leaders to address the issues at the level that people actually exercise agency. Girard's mimetic theory empowers urban leaders to address the challenges our cities present for the following reasons:

A RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK

First, is the Girardian understanding that desire sits at the base of all human development and growth and, most importantly, is fashioned as a result of our desire for another's desire. In short, we are who we are because we imitate. Girard provides the relational framework that ensures any urban challenge is dealt with at the level they are fashioned: people making choices about desire in light of other people. For example, take the all too common reality in cities—people who share common geography do not often enjoy the fruits of authentic community. We can only transform geography into community if we understand the importance of relationships and how they are formed. Mimetic theory provides the understanding we need.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Second, and this is an outcome of the first, is the Girardian argument that through mimesis we are all interdependent and tied together in common mutuality, for better or worse. Because we constitute ourselves by imitating another's desire, we are by definition dependent on each other. Girard thus helps shape any response toward the city as one that needs to be viewing the parts in light of the whole, looking for ways of inclusion rather than exclusion, working together rather than separately. Girardian anthropology directly confronts any stratagem to divide and conquer, which is a common temptation among urban leaders. For example, Girard's anthropology addresses the second urban reality listed above—that many vulnerable urban communities are increasingly operating as activity rich and systems poor. This can only be addressed with Girard's insights into our interdependence upon one another.

SCAPEGOATS

Third, the Girardian idea that is uniquely calibrated for the 21st Century urban reality is that violence occurs not as a result of differences, but because of things we hold in common. We fight because we want the same things but, for a host of reasons, can't acquire them. When these things are not shared, "the other" (to use the Girardian term, a scapegoat) is found—whether it be the poor, the immigrant, an ethnic group, an LGBTQ person, etc. Many of our cities are wracked and wrenched by violence, and scapegoats abound. Unfortunately, the analysis of the problem is often at the level of the inherent differences between races, gender and class when in fact it is just the opposite. We fight because we hold these things in common. Girard's anthropology helps us address the third urban reality listed above—ideologies without the vision of the common good. This exists precisely because we overlook Girard's insight that our tensions are a result of what we hold in common, thereby creating scapegoat after scapegoat to appease our mis-diagnosis.

NEW MODELS

Fourth, is the idea of Girard's societal understanding that the best way of preventing violence is not in forbidding an object or even a model that fosters desire, but rather in offering people new models who can redirect desire in healthy ways, thus protecting people from being pulled into mimetic rivalries. As a result Girard does away with strategies that call for suppression and replaces them with strategies of permission that create equitable access to desired resources. Girard's anthropology addresses the fourth reality listed above—the growing disparity between rich and poor. It is not enough to simply redistribute wealth. This would not only fail to solve the problem, in many ways it would exasperate the reality into new forms of violence. What's needed are models who demonstrate how wealth can be shared in equitable ways. Stated another way, what ultimately is needed is for women and men who, regardless of the program they administer, to become models that can redirect desires toward the common good.

Appendix D

Last Words

AN ECUMENICAL SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

We pair Jesus' last words of Jesus on the cross with the streams of faith identified in Richard Fosters book *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating The Great Traditions of Christian Faith*.

We begin with Jesus' most sweeping statement. It is the statement of the Forgiving Victim whose radically generous act of abundance affirms God's nonviolence and unifies the world regardless of our race, creed, color or religious tradition. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34). This is the unitive theme of the Kingdom of God that makes us one in Christ.

WORD STREAM

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus Preaches Good News Even In Death.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STREAM

"Jesus said to his mother: "Woman, this is your son". Then he said to the disciple: "This is your mother." (John 19:26-27). Jesus cares for the widow (his mother) and the orphan (John) and rearranges the family system to care for those in need.

CONTEMPLATIVE STREAM

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). Jesus enters into what Thomas Keating calls "God's First Language," which is the silence of God.

SACRAMENTAL STREAM

"I thirst" (John 19:28). Jesus affirms his humanity and remains faithful to the embodied experience of being human to the end.

HOLINESS STREAM

"It is finished"; and he bowed his head and handed over the spirit. (John 19:30) Jesus completes or "perfects" what he was set apart to do which is the essence of the holiness tradition.

CHARISMATIC STREAM

"Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus releases his Spirit to create in darkness and chaos so that in three days he will rise again.

Appendix E

Manners of Mission

“The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does in like manner” (John 5:19). The following manners held by Street Psalms can be thought of as the equivalent of “please and thank you” for incarnational leaders. They might be considered virtues that when practiced over time, produce the kind of humility that is the hallmark of Gospel peacemakers. True to form, we are learning our manners most powerfully from the vulnerable themselves – they who are the face and grace of Jesus, returning us to ourselves, clothed and in our right mind (Mark 5:15). One of the marks of Incarnation is that it makes things bigger, not in the sense that “bigger is better,” but in the sense that it enlarges life and expands our souls. Here are four manners of Incarnational Leaders and the organizations they serve.

GENEROSITY: “ENOUGH FOR ALL!”

A largeness of vision derived from God’s abundance – a willingness to risk big, fail often, forgive much, share much, and act freely in ways that transform our lives and the city.

HOSPITALITY: “ROOM FOR ALL.”

A largeness of heart that sets welcoming and open tables for all and gives preferred seating to those at the margins – a willingness to welcome, invite, gather, network and serve others in ways that nurture ever-widening community.

SIMPLICITY: “LIMITS FOR ALL.”

A largeness of soul that trusts, honors and discerns the limits and healthy boundaries of our gifts, call, roles, and responsibilities. We are free to say yes AND no to opportunities. This discipline is born out of deep trust in the boundless love of God and the Spirit’s unwavering commitment to bring all things to completion.

VULNERABILITY: “RISK IN ALL”

A largeness of strength and courage that risks on the power of vulnerability. Martin Buber said, “All real life is meeting.” Such “meeting” is born of vulnerability that feels a lot like weakness. And yet vulnerability calls forth life, or as Brené Brown said, “Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

Appendix F

Prayer of Discernment

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt. 6:21)

CENTERING PRAYER

Gracious God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of Life, have mercy on us. Reveal yourself in all things, to all things, and through all things. Grant us the gift of becoming a community of the Incarnation, filled with Christ-like desire who sees and celebrates good news in hard places.

INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit. Quiet our souls. Teach us how to pray. Be our guide, our counselor, our advocate, and our defender. Speak to us again the truth of our deepest identity hidden in you: “You are my child whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Breathe God’s Name—YHWH.

PRESENCE

You are Immanuel—the God who is with us. There is nowhere we can flee from your presence, and nothing can separate us from your love. We accept your invitation to relax into this miracle—to notice and to welcome your presence in all things. We name your presence in places where it is particularly needed and hard to see, as well as where your presence is clearly visible...

GRATITUDE

The deepest form of gratitude we can offer is our own joy. We recognize that your presence is the substance of all that we hope for. Our deepest desire is your delight and your Yes. As we learn to trust our deepest desires, we give thanks...

GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

We welcome you Holy Spirit, who gives us courage and compassion to see ourselves, our relationships, our world, and even our enemies as we really are. Ease the fear that blinds us, binds us to our false selves, and keeps us from the Truth that sets us free. Spirit, we receive your light in the movements of our emotions, naming these today...

REFLECTION

As those who are being renewed by your love, we freely confess to you our wounds—the deep wounds of blindness, voicelessness, despair, and isolation. We confess our misplaced desires that

bind us to our wounds in deceptive and destructive ways. We recognize in experience fear or freedom, trust or fixation, false or true selves, anxious attachments or release into you as the Ground of Being. Re-create us in your desire that we might discover ourselves again in you. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy. For ourselves and our communities we confess and acknowledge...

RESOLVE

As your beloved ones who are forgiven and free, we freely forgive those who have done harm. We eagerly loose the chains of injustice that hold your children captive. May we be midwives to the holy and seek the peace of the cities in which we serve. We gladly participate in the ongoing act of creation, expressing your lavish beauty in our daily work and play. Gracious God, we ask for one more grace: to do and to will your good pleasure. Lord have mercy. As your Spirit leads, we resolve to...

OUR LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who is in heaven, holy is your name. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us because She* has anointed us to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

We pray all of this in the name of the Father who is for us, the Son who is with us, and the Spirit who unites us all in the never-ending dance of Love. Amen.

Appendix G

Prayer of Vocation

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. (Is. 50:4)

CENTERING PRAYER

Gracious God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of Life, have mercy on us. Reveal yourself in all things, to all things, and through all things. Grant us the gift of becoming a community of the Incarnation—the mystery of the Word made flesh who sees and celebrates Good News in hard places. Give us the tongue of a teacher to sustain the weary with a word, and mobilize leaders from all walks of life to love their city and seek its peace with the Gospel of Jesus.

PROPHETIC VISION

Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit. Show us the way of the Lord that we might see your salvation and seek your peace in all things. Quiet our troubled souls and teach us how to pray. Be our guide, our counselor, our advocate, and our defender.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISM

Lord of Life, baptize us again in the sea of your love where we release our useless fears and relax into your mercy. Inside this new love we die to all that is false. By your power made perfect in weakness, awaken us to the mystery of life. Speak to us again the truth of our deepest identity hidden in you: “You are my child whom I love, with you I am well pleased.”

CALL TO CREATION

YHWH, in the beginning you formed us from the dust of the ground and breathed into us the breath of life. Breathe on us, in us and through us now that we might embody our most sacred vocation—to become fully human and be one with you and all creation.

Breathe God’s Name—YHWH.

CALL TO PEACEMAKING

Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace and a sign of your unity in the world that we might act, reflect and discern like you. May our wounds and the wounds of this world become wombs of new creation, bearing seeds of new life. Free us, O Lord, to be midwives to the holy in all things. Transform our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

Where there is blindness, call forth the gift of sight.

Where there is voicelessness, call forth the gift of voice.

Where there is despair, call forth the gift of joy.

Where there is isolation, call forth the gift of community.

Where there is fear and violence of any kind, call forth the gift of peace born of your love, and make us a community of the Incarnation who sees and celebrates you in all things, even here, even now.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who is in heaven, holy is your name. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us because She has anointed us to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

We pray all of this in the name of the Father who is for us, the Son who is with us, and the Spirit who unites us all in the never-ending dance of Love. Amen.

*The Benediction scripture has been paraphrased from several translations. In particular, we enjoy the freedom to imagine the Holy Spirit in feminine gender—inspired by the numerous feminine as well as masculine images of God in Scripture. In doing so, our paraphrase reflects what many English translations do not, that is, that the pronoun used for the Spirit in the early Greek texts was not masculine but neuter.

Endnotes

Here you will find a list with many of the sources we've mentioned in the ITF. They have been placed in order of usage in their respective chapters. We hope this proves useful if you would like to read further.

INTRODUCTION

1. Boyle, Gregory. *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. New York: Free Press, 2011.
2. United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division. *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2014 revision*. <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/CD-ROM/>
3. Peterson, Eugene and Eric Peterson. Foreword. In *Incarnate Leadership: 5 Leadership Lessons from the Life of Jesus*, Bill Robinson. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
4. Benard, Bonnie. *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community*. Portland, OR: Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, 1991.
5. McLaughlin, Milbrey W., et al. *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
6. McDermott, Richard. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
7. Cummings, E.E. "Introduction" *Collected Poems 1922-1938*. Book-of-the-Month Club; reprint edition, 1990.
8. Meldenius, Rupertus. *Paraenesis votiva pro pace Ecclesia ad Theologos Augustanae Confessionis auctore Ruperto Meldenio Theologo*. Source discovered on Sept. 25, 2017 on webpage of Georgetown Provost, James J. O'Donnell. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/quote.html>
9. Archimedes. Quoted by Diodorus Siculus. *The Library of History of Diodorus Siculus*. Loeb Classical Library edition. Trans. F. R. Walton. Vol. XI. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
10. Ellis, Carl F. *Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African-American Experience*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
11. Burns, Ken, and Geoffrey C. Ward. *Ken Burns ' Jazz: The Story of America's Music*. New York: Sony Music Entertainment, 2000.
12. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Education, 1972.

13. O'Connor, Kathleen M. *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.
14. Welch, Sharon D. *Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
15. Terry, Robert W. *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
16. King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Where Do We Go From Here?" Atlanta, GA, August 16, 1967.
17. Levertov, Denise. *City Psalm*. Berkeley: Printed for Oyez by the Auerhahn, 1964.
18. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. *The Phenomenon of Man*. 1959. Reprint, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
19. Safford, Victoria. "The Small Work in the Great Work." *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: Perseverance and Hope in Troubled Times*. Ed. Paul Rogat Loeb. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

PROLEGOMENA

20. Einstein, Albert. *The Expanded Quotable Einstein*, ed. Alice Calaprice. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2000.

CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATIONS

21. Levertov, Denise. *City Psalm*. Berkeley: Printed for Oyez by the Auerhahn, 1964.
22. Carson, D.A. "One Way (Matthew 7:13-27)." *Only One Way? Reaffirming the Exclusive Truth Claims of Christianity*. Ed. Richard D. Phillips. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
23. Green, Jared. "World Urban Forum in Rio Focuses on Sustainable Urban Development." *The American Society of Landscape Architects*. accessed on 3/26/2012. <http://dirt.asla.org/2010/03/25/world-urban-forum-in-riofocuses-on-sustainable-urban-development/>
24. MacDonald, George. "The Child in the Mist." *Unspoken Sermons by George MacDonald: It Shall Not Be Forgiven*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2016.
25. Short, J.R. *The Urban Order: An Introduction to Urban Geography*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996.
26. O'Connor, Flannery. "In the Protestant South." *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

27. Pew Research Center. *For Nearly Half of America, Grass Is Greener Somewhere Else*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2011. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2011/04/Community-Satisfaction-POSTED-updated.pdf>.
28. Bakke, Ray. *A Theology as Big as the City*. Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1997.
29. White, E.B. *Here Is New York*. New York: The Little Bookroom, 1949.
30. Mumford, Lewis. "City: Forms and Functions." *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. Vol. 2. Ed. David L. Sills and Robert K. Merton. New York: Macmillan, 1968.
31. Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. New York: Modern Library, 2006.
32. Beltran, Benigno P. *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An Inquiry into the Filipino Understanding of Jesus the Christ*. Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987.
33. Lewis, C.S. "Edmund Spenser, 1552-99." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
34. Kraybill, Donald B. *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 1978.
35. Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
36. Heschel, Abraham. *No Religion is an Island : Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue* , edited by Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, New York: Orbis Books, 1991.
37. Rohr, Richard. "Deep Ecumenism." Weblog. *Center for Action and Contemplation*. Published on January 9, 2015. <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Richard-Rohr-s-Meditation--Deep-Ecumenism.html?soid=1103098668616&aid=LuxCO5drOtU>.
38. Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence*. Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2008.
39. Collins, Chuck and Hoxie, Josh. "Billionaire Bonanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us". Institute for Policy Studies. Published Dec. 1, 2015. Viewed Oct. 12, 2016. "Billionaire onanza: The Forbes 400 and the Rest of Us —IPS."
40. Mathetes. *Letter to Diognetus*. http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html.

CHAPTER 2: SIGNS OF HOPE

41. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. Book IV, Chapter XX. Circa 120-202. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103420.htm>.
42. Peterson, Eugene H. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
43. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. Book IV, Chapter XX. Circa 120-202. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103420.htm>.
44. MacDonald, George, and Rolland Hein. *Creation in Christ: Unspoken Sermons*. Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2004.
45. Fortin, Jack. Given in a talk at Leadership Foundation Retreat for Senior Associates, March 2016.
46. Rumi. *The Essential Rumi*. 1997. Reprint, New York: HarperOne, 2004.
47. Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Random House, 2002.
48. Alison, James. *The Forgiving Victim*. Glenview, IL: Doers Publishing, 2013.
49. Kinnell, Galway. "St. Francis and the Sow." *Three Books*. New York: Mariner Books, 2002.
50. Hauerwas, Stanley. *Working with Words: On Learning to Speak Christian*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSFORMING ASSUMPTIONS

51. Hafiz. "Effacement." *The Gift*. Trans. Daniel Ladinsky. New York: Penguin Compass, 1999.
52. Alison, James. "From Impossibility to Responsibility" in *Broken Hearts and New Creations*, New York: Continuum, 2010.
53. Kähler, Martin. *Schriften zu Christologie und Mission: Gesmtausgabe der Schriften zur Mission Mit einer Bibliographie*. Edited by H. Frohnes. 1908. Reprint, Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1971.
54. Levertov, Denise. *City Psalm*. Berkeley: Printed for Oyez by the Auerhahn, 1964.
55. Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University

of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

56. Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Lives*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
57. L'Engle, Madeline. *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*. New York: North Point Press, 1995.
58. Brooks, David. Sunday Sermon delivered on February 12, 2017 at the Washington National Cathedral. <https://cathedral.org/sermons/sermon-david-brooks/>
59. Chesterton, G.K. *Orthodoxy*. 1908. Reprint, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009.
60. Girard, René. *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.
61. Brueggemann, Walter. *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.
62. Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. 1966. Reprint, New York: Image Classics, 1968.
63. Karr, Mary. "Facing Altars." *Sinners Welcome*. New York: Harper, 2006.
64. Merton, Thomas. *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious experience and Social Concerns*. Edited by William H. Shannon. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985.
65. Rohr, Richard. *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011.
66. *The Power of Myth: 25th Anniversary Edition*. Perf. Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers. Documentary. Athena Studios, 2013.
67. Keating, Thomas. *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation*. 1992. Reprint, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.
68. Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. 1961. Reprint: New York: HarperOne, 2001.

SECTION II – INCARNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

69. Wheeler, John A. "Genesis and Observership" in *Foundational Problems in the Special Sciences*. Eds. Robert E. Butts and Jaakko Hintikka. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1977.

CHAPTER 4: MESSAGE - A WAY OF SEEING

70. Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.
71. Barron, Robert. *And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation*. Spring Valley, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.
72. Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.
73. Brueggemann, Walter. "The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity" This article appeared in the *Christian Century*, March 24-31, 1999.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Leddy, Mary Jo. *Radical Gratitude*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.
76. Alison, James. "Love Your Enemy: Within a Divided Self." Delivered in London, England, October 30, 2007. <http://www.jamesalison.co.uk/texts/eng50.html>.
77. Alison, James. *The Forgiving Victim*. Glenview, IL: Doers Publishing, 2013.
78. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. "After Ten Years." *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Ed. Eberhard Bethge. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971.
79. Kuyper, Abraham. *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Ed. James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.
80. Brown, Robert McAfee. *Spirituality and Liberation: Overcoming the Great Fallacy*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1988.
81. Francis of Assisi. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1*, eds. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short. New York: New City Press, 1999.
82. Wesley, John. *The Journal of John Wesley, May 28, 1739*. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.html>
83. Foster, Richard J. *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*. New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

CHAPTER 5: METHOD - A WAY OF DOING

84. McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964. Reprint, Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1994.
85. Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Lives*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
86. Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. 1884. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994.
87. Acton, John Emerich Edward Dalberg. "Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887." *Historical Essays and Studies*. Ed. J.N. Figgis and R.V. Laurence. London: Macmillan, 1907.
88. Wink, Walter. *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*. New York: Doubleday, 1998.
89. Glaude, Eddie S., Jr. *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2016.
90. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.
91. Wink, Walter. *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*. New York: Doubleday, 1998.
92. Girard, René. *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

CHAPTER 6: MANNER - A WAY OF BEING

93. Levertov, Denise. "The Alters in the Street." *The Collected Poems of Denise Levertov*. New York: New Directions, 2013.
94. Hillis, Dave. "A Goodly Way- Episode 23" Audio blog post. City as Playground, Leadership Foundations, Aug. 26, 2016.
95. Capon, Robert Farrar. *The Supper of the Lamb; a Culinary Reflection*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969.
96. Girard, René. *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.
97. *The Negro and the American Promise*. Perf. Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X, and James Baldwin. PBS. 1963. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/sfeature/sf_video.html.
98. *I Am Not Your Negro*. Perf. Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X, and James Baldwin United States: Magnolia Pictures, 2016.
99. *Catching Hell*. Perf. Moises Alou, Steve Bartman, and Rod Blagojevich. ESPN Films, 2011.
100. Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions, 1972.
101. Lewis, C.S. "To Sheldon Vanauken, August 5, 1955." *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*. New York: HarperOne, 2007.

102. Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Lives*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
103. Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*. 1972. Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
104. Ignatius. *The Examen*.
105. “Il Primo Principio Degli Esseri, Traduzione E Commento Di Pietro Scapin, Padova, Liviana, 1973.” *The Internet Guide to Bl. John Duns Scotus*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2016.
106. Rolheiser, Ronald. *Our One Great Act of Fidelity - Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist*. New York: Image. 2011.
107. *Ibid.*
108. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7: MESSENGERS - CALLED OUT OF FEAR INTO FREEDOM

109. Oliver, Mary. “Messenger.” *Thirst*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006.
110. Augustine. *Augustine Essentials: The Complete Unabridged Texts*. Haines City, FL: Revelation Insight Pub., 2009.
111. Beck, Richard Allan. *Slavery of Death*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014.
112. *Of Gods and Men (Des Hommes et des Dieux)*. Documentary Educational Resources (DER), 2002.
113. Stringfellow, William. *A Private and Public Faith*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.
114. King, Martin Luther, and James Melvin. Washington. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
115. Romero, Óscar A., and James R. Brockman. *The Violence of Love*. Farmington, PA: Plough Pub. House, 1998.
116. Beck, Richard Allan. *Slavery of Death*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014.
117. Fuller, John. *W.H. Auden: A Commentary*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
118. Rumi. *The Essential Rumi*. 1997. Reprint, New York: HarperOne, 2004.
119. Fuller, John. *W.H. Auden: A Commentary*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

SECTION III: POSTLEGOMENA

120. Fuller, John. *W.H. Auden: A Commentary*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

CHAPTER 8 - THE NEW JERUSALEM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERS

121. Dickinson, Emily. "Tell all the truth but tell it slant" from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: READING EDITION*, edited by Ralph W. Franklin, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

122. Blackwell, Susan and Bell, Hunter. "Now. Here. This." Musical, 2012.

CHAPTER 9 - CASE STUDY: FROM CRISIS TO MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

123. Rumi. *The Essential Rumi*. 1997. Reprint, New York: HarperOne, 2004.

124. Fortin, Jack. Given in a talk at Leadership Foundation Retreat for Senior Associates. March 2016.

125. Alison, James. "ITF Case Study." Received by Kris Rocke, Sept. 26, 2017.

126. The concept of bounded and centered sets were developed by missiologist and anthropologist Paul Hebert in his book *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*. His ideas were then popularized by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch in their book, *Shaping of Things to Come*, and in the book edited by Darrell Guder, *Missional Church*.

CHAPTER 10 - DISCERNING THE SHAPE OF OUR CALL

127. Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Albert Outler. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002.

128. Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1993.

129. Rohr, Richard and Ebert, Andreas. *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*. New York: Crossroad Publishing. 2001.

SEE AND
CELEBRATE
GOOD NEWS
IN HARD PLACES