

Seeing Our City - Acts 18:10

by Jon Courson

Jon Courson emphasizes the importance of seeing our cities through God's eyes and actively engaging in evangelism to reach the lost.

Scripture: Mark 8:22, Luke 2:10, Acts 5:28, Acts 8:6, Acts 18:9

Topics: "Urban Ministry", "Evangelism"

Description

Jon Courson emphasizes the importance of seeing people through the eyes of the Lord, just as Paul saw the potential in the morally depraved people of Corinth. He challenges believers to not pull away from their communities but to envision, invade, and enjoy being city-takers for Christ. By conversing and sharing the Gospel boldly, believers can fill their cities with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, leading to great joy and transformation in their neighborhoods.

Transcript

It has rightly been said that Europe is looked over by millions of travelers and overlooked by millions of believers. Such was not the case with Paul, who, on his third missionary journey, went to Europe not as a sight-seer, but as a soul-winner.

Here in Chapter 18, however, after meeting opposition in Corinth, Paul was ready to throw in the towel and move out of the region before the Lord spoke to him saying, 'Fear not, Paul. Speak boldly. Don't hold back, for in this place of moral decay and depravity, I have many people.'

It is important to keep in mind that the people of whom the Lord was speaking were not yet Christians. You see, at this point, 'His people' were still wandering the streets, frequenting the temples of prostitution, partying, struggling, and straying. Yet in the Lord's perspective, they were His people nonetheless.

Therefore, I can't help but wonder what He would say about the cities in which we live, the schools we attend, the places we work. For although we might be disgusted by them and grieved by what goes on within them, surely the Lord would say to you and to me as He did to Paul, 'Don't pull away. Don't hold back. I have many people in your city, in your school, in your neighborhood. They're just not saved yet.'

Thus, I believe the Lord wants us as a Christian community to be city-takers for Him. How? Three ways . . .

Envisioning

Acts 18:9 tells us that Paul had a vision from the Lord in the night -- in a time of darkness. So too, when you go downtown to the dark areas, what's your attitude towards the men and women there who will become part of the 4.5 million people this year who will contract a sexually transmitted disease? Some of those very people are the Lord's people -- they're just not saved yet.

What about the kids who smoke in the orchard during lunch hour? How does the Lord view them? I believe He would say to you and to me, 'Don't pull back. Don't pull away. I have many people in that orchard. They're Mine. Many of them think they're seeking some sort of family and some kind of acceptance but in reality, they're seeking Me. I'm going to work on them and reach out to them, and I want to use you in the process of praying for them and sharing the truth with them.'

What about the guys in the park - the ones who sit on the hoods of their cars, waiting for a drug deal to take place? We say, 'Let's clean up the park. Let's call in the Law.' But the Lord says, 'I have many people there -- people who are doing these things because they're craving Me. I know them; I want to reach out to them; and I want to use you in the process.'

Gang, I'm praying that every time you go into a 'dark' place -- into an area which tends to turn you off, that your eyes are opened and your heart is deeply touched by the Lord's perspective of the people there.

Invading

In Acts 5, we read that the apostles were accused of 'filling Jerusalem with their doctrine' (Acts 5:28). How did they do it? I believe the answer lies in the fact that one of the Greek words for 'preaching' means 'conversing' or 'chit-chatting'. You see, 'preaching' is not limited to speaking behind a pulpit or into a microphone. Preaching can also mean chatting, conversing, talking with people, and filling the city with the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

I have found that one of the keys to talking about Jesus is to share with people as if they are already believers. That's what Jesus did. He treated folks as if they were already part of His Kingdom as He spoke to them of heaven.

He didn't come down on them. He didn't preach at them. He shared with them. Be bold, saints, as you invade your home, your school, your neighborhood for the Lord. And listen for His voice as He says to you, 'Fear not. Speak out -- for I am with you and I have many people on your street or in your community who are waiting to hear about Me.'

Enjoying

In Acts 8, we read that after Philip shared the gospel with the people of Samaria, there was great joy in the city, for not only did the people of Samaria see miracles, but they heard them as well (Acts 8:6-8). So too, in a world that is drifting aimlessly and confused incredibly, when you or I speak truth clearly, saying, 'This is the fact about that matter' or, 'Here's the big picture . . .', miracles will follow because people will see changed lives and hear a new perspective.

Imagine what would happen if five people in your office, in your neighborhood, or on your campus, got saved next week, next month, or next year. You would see parents start parenting again; husbands and wives working out their difficulties; people who were once disenfranchised and disoriented made whole again. As a result, not only would they be filled with joy, but joy would fill your heart as well. 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy,' proclaimed the angel the night of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:10). And we can bear

the same message of joy today to the people in our schools, our offices, our communities.

How I pray that the Lord will change us to a greater degree -- that the people we once looked down upon, or were disgusted with, might become part of a tremendous harvest of souls for His Kingdom. I pray that we might envision -- that we may see people the way the Lord sees them. I pray that we might invade -- filling our city with His Good News. I pray that we might enjoy what the Lord is doing as He drives out demons, heals souls, and works wonders in our community.

Perhaps you're saying, 'That all sounds great, but how does it happen practically?' There's only one way I know in which our perspective on our cities, our communities, our schools, or our neighborhoods can be changed.

Turn to Mark 8 . . . Jesus had just arrived in Bethsaida, when He touched the eyes of a blind man. 'Do you see?' Jesus asked. 'I see men as trees,' the blind man answered. And Jesus touched his eyes again and made him took up. 'Now I see all men clearly,' declared the once-blind man. (Mark 8:22-25).

Maybe, like the blind man, you see the people at work, next door, or in the questionable areas of town as trees. They 'stump' you. You want to 'cut them down'. You wish they would 'leave'. Maybe you say, 'The people in my city bug me. I want to move away from them -- to a place where I can find peace and quiet; to a place where I won't have to deal with depravity, to a place where I can get away from it all.'

But I believe, just as He did with the blind man, the Lord desires to make us took up to another tree -- the tree of Calvary. You see, Jesus was pinned to a tree, saying, 'Jon, I'm in love with the person for whom you have no time and in whom you have no interest. And I care deeply about the person you want to chop down.'

Gang, Jesus loves the girlfriend who dumped you, the husband who deserted you, the boss who fired you. He cares about the kids on skateboards who cuss and swear and wear blasphemous t-shirts. He died for the prostitutes in our city and for the drug dealers in our parks. But we'll never come to that realization until we look up and see Jesus on the tree of Calvary.

Join in Communion. Eat of His body. Drink of His blood. And be reminded all over again that Jesus loves people. If your perspective on people is a little fuzzy, go to the Lord's Table in brokenness and openness. See Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, and you'll see people more clearly. Then you will be able to envision what He wants to do . . .

Then you will be able to invade the area in which you live as you share the good news of His Gospel. Then you will be able to enjoy watching Him work in and through you as He takes your city for His glory.

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