

Ronald E. Peters, *Urban Ministry: An Introduction*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.

To close this portion of reading on the urban ministry, I have read an overview of urban ministry. Ronald Peters writes *Urban Ministry* to attempt to give a clear understanding of urban ministry through a few areas: the challenges of urban ministry, the origins of urban ministry and the perspectives of those working in an urban setting. My goal is not to regurgitate the work, but to highlight the main issues within each of the previously mentioned areas.

Peters writes in an informative style, as is usual for an introductory work. He also writes in a historic manner. Why must history be important? Simply put, if future church planters and urban ministers do not know from whence urban ministry came, they may 1) be far away from contextualization or 2) make a mistake with any particular culture. With style now taken into account, let me move to the meat of *Urban Ministry*.

In talking about challenges, you probably wonder what one of the largest challenges may be within the urban context. Peters lists four chasms which include things like urban and rural challenges and ethics in agreement with evangelism. In staying honest, perhaps the biggest chasm may be the first. Peters says, "The first chasm to be overcome is crossing (removing) the artificial barrier between urban ministry in particular and Christian ministry in general" (20). Urban ministry stays a bit more dirty than the typical white steeple Baptist church setting. In order to work within a city setting, the individual must be willing to live among people who live themselves under bridges and eat out of garbage cans.

The following may not be true, but perhaps when people think of Christian ministry, they think of door-to-door evangelism within suburban neighborhoods. To

assume this would be correct, but these same people must realize that Christian ministry also happens downtown. The difference, according to Peters, is as follows: "Clearly, its methodology (within urban settings) will differ from nonurban contexts as urban Christians seek to be authentic in their faith as well as contextually appropriate in their witness" (21).

Peters then turns to the origins of urban ministry. His theme relies on history. Though history can sometimes be boring, in this case it is needed so that church planters will be more encouraged to go to the cities and urban centers of the world. It should be noted that the majority of people live within the city limits, or at least commute there for work. Let us look at perhaps another key point of *Urban Ministry*.

We must realize that even centuries ago, the cities were where everything happened. Today, the cities are there for people to mostly work in, so the population in and immediately around a city will probably be large. However, the city center used to be the place where all celebrations were held, even religious ones. Peters does a great job of putting Jesus at the forefront. On Jesus' example that we must follow Peters writes, "His teachings clearly reveal...intimacy with the poor and working-class people struggling to survive oppressive circumstances characteristic of urban culture than is usually recognized" (43).

The last main point on origins to be mentioned will be Peters' call for urban planters to work from the bottom up rather than the top down. Bottom-up ministry means working with people of lower social and economic status prior to working with middle to upper class people. There are so many people on the lower class level that perhaps the best way to love the people within the city is to give them food and coats. A

top-down mentality, which is not necessarily terrible, seeks out the local business owners and such for support of the particular urban ministry. Christ loved the sick and poor, so I believe we must do the same. Of course, it will be smart to question whether or not this is the best way to do urban ministry (or begin to). We must do our own research about the city and the culture within before we decide which way we will minister.

Peters turns to different perspectives to close his work. Similar to the chasm between Christian ministry and urban ministry, urban planters must be aware of what Peters calls parish ministry and public ministry. These are the two main perspectives discussed, along with some core values of urban ministry that can be examined as well. On the core values, test them to see that really are core to urban ministry. Let us look more at parish and public ministries to see if they coincide.

Honestly, I believe these two things must coincide to live a gospel-centered life, but you must be the judge for yourself, along with the testing of Scripture. Parishes (or churches) give individuals the chance to have corporate worship services, Bible studies and do evangelism together (144). Public ministry would involve going into communities to meet other citizens and build relationships. Peters separates these two areas of life and seems to make them separate communities. Someone should argue that the church must be willing to do public ministry (cleaning highway medians, tutoring, etc.) as a way of personal worship of God. Doing things like this will allow the parish ministry and public ministries to come together. Perhaps Peters separated them to show the clear differences, but they must come together eventually to reach others with the love of Christ for the sake of community.

Ronald Peters gives challenges, origins, and a couple perspectives of urban ministry. This work is very factual, stripping away any sugarcoating of what urban ministry may be. Peters does well to demonstrate how Jesus must be our greatest example of working with many people in different settings. I truly hope church ministry and public ministry does not stay too disconnected, as was portrayed by Peters in his work. Let us reach the culture within the city limits, so that they may go to the rural areas outside of the cities.