

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

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 and history-driven manner. Why is history 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*.

Peters lists four chasms which include things like urban and rural challenges, and ethics in agreement with evangelism. 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 messier 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.

Peters then turns to the origins of urban ministry. Though history can sometimes be tedious, 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.

Centuries ago, 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. It follows that the city center was the place where all celebrations were held, even religious

ones. 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).

In his final point on origins, Peters' calls for urban planters to work from the bottom up rather than from 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. 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.

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.