

Study Your City: Key Questions Missional Christians Should Be Asking About Their City

Over the last few years, the word “missional” has gained particular amounts of attention. However, defining missional can be a complicated process. For example, this week I had a conversation with an aspiring church planter who wants to plant a church in a bar in the southeast [as I did](#) a few years ago. He’s been reading, praying, and thinking about what a man on mission looks like. Let’s say you’re in this boat too: being convinced by Scripture and convicted by the Holy Spirit to step out, deeply burdened to see lost people in your neighborhood, bars, coffee shops, gyms, grocery stores, and schools meet Jesus. This means you have to think like a missionary—a **mindset that requires both studying the culture you find yourself in, as well as engaging with it.**

For starters, identifying the needs, the idols, and the history of the city must become part of your routine thinking. This is the prep work, and oftentimes the success of your ministry rides on it. That’s not to say that God can’t use you or accomplish his will or that all the pressure is you, but a call to lead is a call to prepare. A call to obediently make disciples as Jesus commands ([Matt. 28:18–20](#)) is also a command to focus on what’s in front of you. This part of the job can be really fun! Most of it can be done by using a concept already in your vocabulary. No, it’s not what some long word theologians constantly debate over—e.g. sublapsarianism, variegated nomism, or penal substitutionary atonement—rather, it is a simple, but often overlooked word: **intentional.**

KNOW PEOPLE TO REACH PEOPLE

All missionaries (and if you’re a Christian, you are a missionary) have got to be the most intentional people in the world. Asking questions, studying demographics, and making note of trends help make this possible! If you intimately know whom you want to reach, then you will be better set up to engage people effectively with the gospel of Jesus.

What are the goals, values, and beliefs of your city?

Here are just a few questions that we, as missional Christians, should be asking:

1. What’s happening in my city?
2. Who’s moving into my city?
3. What buildings are going up in my city?
4. What buildings are coming down in my city?
5. How many schools are there in my city?
6. How many people are here in my city?
7. What is the crime rate like in my city?
8. What are the goals of my city?
9. What are the values of my city?
10. What are the beliefs of my city?
11. What is the history of my city?

12. How long has my city been a city?
13. At what times and days does everything come alive in my city?
14. What do the people in my city love about my city?
15. What do people despise about my city?
16. What's the media saying about my city?
17. What do people in my city put their hope in?
18. Who's hurting in my city?
19. Who's succeeding and thriving in my city?

For everyday missionaries, the questions are endless.

Bank clerks, grocery store checkers, hair stylists, and property development workers can tell you so much of what you need to know about your city because they are in the city, working in the city, and up to date on what's going on in the city.

Perhaps if you don't know where to start, you should go get a trim and practice asking the person cutting your hair questions.

Dear Christian, are you studying your city?

Read the full story from Alex [here](#).