

## You Can't Love a City if You Don't Know a City, Part 1

"The city" is an emerging phrase that seems to be embraced by a growing number of Christians. I intentionally say they are embracing the phrase, because I do not think that all are actually embracing the city, but rather they are embracing the idea of embracing the city.

I think that the song "God of this City" by Bluetree (sung [here](#) by Chris Tomlin) is a great powerful song that gets at the longing-- Christians want to embrace, engage, serve, and reach cities. Fair enough. It is a good thing.

As one who grew up on Long Island outside NYC and planted my first church in Buffalo among the urban poor, I love the concept of "city reaching." Yet, I am convinced that you cannot love a city if you do not know a city.

Now, full disclosure, I am biased. I run a research firm and we do city research, so you should be aware of that. I run a research firm because I believe that we need to know so we can engage.

Over the next few weeks I plan to do a series on city KNOWING related to city REACHING. I will draw from several sources (and feel free to suggest other models as well). First, I will use some examples from the study we did in Austin, TX for the pastors and churches there. Second, I will draw some on some research I've done on San Diego and Baltimore. Third, I will point to some ethno-linguistic research on people groups in cities. Finally, I will actually walk through a report on church planting in the Washington, D.C./Baltimore corridor. These will be done concurrently rather than consequentially, because the church planting study is going to be released here at the blog for you to consider and discuss and I will have more posts about that than the others.

My hope is that this will generate some ideas about how you might do city research AND encourage you to learn more about your context to be faithful in God's mission there.

Read Part 2 of this series [here](#).

Read more from Ed [here](#).