



**T**heresa, a girl from my ministry route in Lancaster City, lived with her Dad and another woman and her two daughters, trying to be a family unit. Mom was often away working, leaving Dad to watch over the girls. Sometimes the girls mentioned that there was no food in the house. Twice the Children and Youth Services came to follow up on a report someone had filed.

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*“Many have made this sad but true statement, ‘children trying to raise children.’”*

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Later, as I followed the girls into their house, the thought came to me again, “How dismal!” I noticed the clutter that lined the walls of almost every room, the scent of old cigarette smoke, and who knows what else that lingered in the air. Dad sat there like a statue and barely acknowledged me as I tried to say, “Hello” to him. It seemed like such a depressing atmosphere.

As we walked out, something happened that has stuck with me ever since that day. Before she walked out the door, Theresa stood beside her Dad and shouted into his ear, “I LOVE YOU, DAD!” and promptly gave him a hug and a kiss. She meant it. Even though that same man has not been there for her most of her life, she was still willing to love him. Somehow, as I witnessed that act, I saw it as a crude example of what Jesus has done for me. He loved me when I was unlovable. These children in my class are growing up in homes and situations a lot different than mine. They are not being taught all the same things that I was taught growing up. But it is not their fault and it does not need to stay that way. I want them to know about and be shown the love of Jesus. I want them to experi-

ence His love and mercy for themselves. I want to do everything I can, while I am a part of their lives, to make sure that happens.

One Tuesday about two months ago, Theresa did not come to class. We looked for her to see if everything was alright. We discovered that she had gone to school the previous day with slits on her wrists. Social services quickly removed her from her home and we have not seen her since. We don't know if she tried to end her misery or if she was just releasing all the hurts that had built up in her life. Whatever the motive, she is gone now and we will probably never see her again.

This is just a snapshot of life in the inner city.

70% of the 300 million people living in the United States live in urban areas. America's cities have become one of the needy mission fields of our day. Statistics have proven that the world population is gravitating to urban areas and by 2015 it is expected that 79% of the people of the world will live in urban areas.

With the population of our own nation's cities growing larger every year we must ask the question, “Who will go to America? Who will reach our own cities?”

The vast majority of missionaries go overseas to the foreign land, but very few are willing to spend their lives reaching our own people in urban America. Why is that? Maybe we have lost the burden for our cities? Maybe we have deemed them too hard to reach or maybe we have just become stagnant. Can it be



that we have lost the vision for the souls in our own neighborhoods?

Let us take a look statistically at the condition of urban America and pray that God will reignite the fire in your hearts for your neighbors.

**Teen Pregnancies** - The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the industrialized world. One third of the girls become pregnant before the age

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*“America is crying out.  
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of twenty. Statistics state that 750,000 teens get pregnant every year. 81% of these are unmarried. Many of these will give birth to illegitimate children, and the majority will grow up in a one parent home. Many have made this sad but true statement, “children trying to raise children.”

Our observation is that these teens are following the pattern set forth for them by the culture in which they live. This is all they know to do. Many girls look forward to the day when they can have their own children and start collecting their own welfare check.

America is crying out. It is not a loud, audible cry, but a silent cry. If we do not slow down to listen for it we will miss it.

*The silent cry: “I want someone to accept me so I can be secure. I need someone to love me.”*

**Gangs** - In 1996 the FBI reported that violent street gangs are active in 94% of the cities in the United States. These gangs consist of over 400,000 members. More worrisome than the actual number of street gangs, however, is their rate of growth. From 1991 to 1996 there was a 60% increase in gang memberships. And that was 13 years ago! Based on survey results, it is estimated that, in 2002, youth gangs were active in more than 2,300 cities in America. It is also estimated that approximately 731,500 gang members and 21,500 gangs were active in the United States in 2002.

Gang members are normally between the ages of 14 and 24. Most have not performed well at school, and many have dropped out. Very often they have close relatives who have been in gangs. Typically, the most deeply involved gang members have histories of being without

adult supervision for extended periods of time and on a daily basis since they were very young. These young people turn to gangs in search of acceptance, companionship, recognition, and a feeling of belonging.

*The silent cry: “I want to have a purpose for my life. I need a place where I can belong and be accepted.”*

**Broken Homes** - The United States today has the highest divorce rate in the entire world. Half of all first marriages in this country end in divorce. The mortality rate of second marriages is even higher. Adding to the problem is the fact that half of all divorces involve children. Researchers tell us that throughout the 1990's more than a million children became the innocent victims of divorce each year.

With such disturbing trends, it can hardly come as a surprise that juvenile crime has become the most frightening reality of modern life. Since 1986 the number of ten- to seventeen-year-olds treated for knife and gunshot wounds in one hospital in the nation's capital increased 1,740%. This is an increase our minds cannot comprehend. All in all, the fastest growing segment of the criminal population is children under eighteen years of age.

*The silent cry: “I need someone to love me. I want someone to accept me so I can be secure. I need to have a purpose for my life.”*

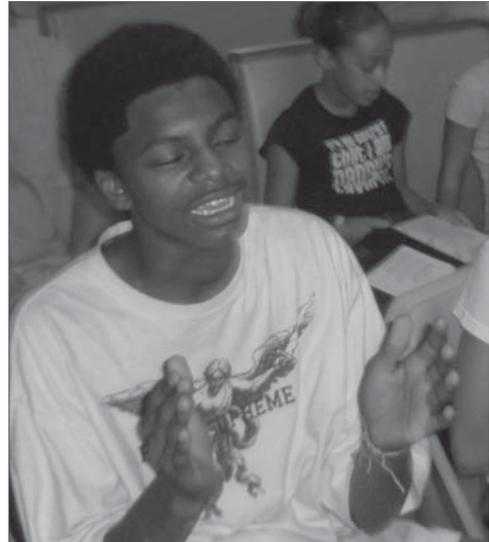


There are many more statistics that we could look at but I hope these have given you a burden for the sad state of our nation's cities. Each one of these statistics is a life, a soul that Satan has in his grasp. But God has a beautiful plan for each one of these lives, a plan of changed lives, godly homes, healed wounds, and

Yes, praise God, there is hope!

*“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears” (Psalms 18:6).*

The cry of the city is real. God’s heart is burning to bring souls to Him. Just this year, God has allowed us to reap a dozen souls for Him in the city of Lancaster. I believe this is just the beginning. We need to lift up His name in all the earth!



lives full of joy and praise! Have you heard the silent cry coming out of America? The people are searching, searching for something to fill their empty hearts. They need something to make their lives meaningful, they are looking for purpose, they are looking for Jesus.

### **IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR URBAN AMERICA?**

The Bible speaks about a city church of a long time ago. This church was part of a city of 500,000 people. History records that these people were very worldly. Many people in this city were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and effeminate, abusers of themselves, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. And some of these city people were pulled out of their life style and accepted into the church the Bible calls the Church of God (1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1). How can that be? Because the Bible also says, *“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor 6:11).

The Corinthian Church was not without its trials, yet it was blessed by God and prospered. But Corinth was not the only city church in the Bible, there was Ephesus which had 300,000 people, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Rome. According to Nelson’s dictionary of the Bible (page 834) there were less than ten Jewish men in the entire city of Philippi! For Paul to go there shows his heart for the pagans as well as his own people.

The cities of America are a battle field. We need to put on the armor of God and share with the lost of the city that Jesus has come that they might have life! The needs are all around us. We see them on every street and at every corner. It is time we lift up our own cities to the throne room of God and pour our hearts and lives out for them.

*“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:14-15).*

*“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).*

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10).*

—Jared Barker