
IN THE CITY, FOR THE CITY

The J Spencer and Ken Nall Memorial Lecture, Wesley UCA, Geelong, Sunday 19 June 2011
Dr Ross Langmead

LECTURE OUTLINE AND STUDY QUESTIONS

(The lecture can be downloaded from the resources page at www.rosslangmead.com.)

The church in the city has great possibilities for the future. The city's battle for its soul faces us. Biblical cities include both Babylon (symbolising evil) and Jerusalem (God's new city).

A theology of the city:

- The city is a place where God's love is expressed.
- But the city also embodies injustice, violence, poverty and exclusion.
- The city can be, and needs to be, transformed under God.
- The church is God's agent, in and for the city.

'In the City, for the City' means that the church's mission is to *be here* and then to *work for* the life of the city. It is to have presence and purpose. It is to be visible and to be visionary. It is a bunch of people and a bunch of programs. It will be found in the church gathered and the church dispersed. It will be in the Good News of Jesus, both announced and 'lived into'.

IN THE CITY

1. Moving into the neighbourhood
2. The significance of the centre
3. The significance of the margins
4. Welcoming worship
5. Community in the fragmented city
6. Inviting others to follow Jesus

FOR THE CITY

This is being salt more than light, making a difference to society around us. It is often in the shape of the church dispersed, as well as the church gathered. It's mission with a broader vision, with horizons lifted.

1. Hospitality in the big city
2. Commitment to the marginalised
3. Salt: Supporting Christian citizenship
4. Prophetic dialogue in the civic space
5. The sustainable city

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7).

TAKING IT FURTHER: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR STUDY GROUPS

These questions are just a guide to stimulate discussion. Feel free to use them as a jumping-off point to go where you like.

They could suit those who heard the Nall Lecture, those who get access to the lecture and read it all, or those who just see the summary and want to discuss issues of being in the city and for the city.

1. Most people can list the downsides of city life. What things do you enjoy—and even love—about life in the city, compared to a small town or country life?
2. You can't work towards a vision unless you can imagine it. Imagine you are visiting a healthy city which reflects what you consider to be God's reign. (It might be Geelong in twenty years!) The more you look, the more you notice one thing after another. As a group, list some of these things, making them as specific as possible.
3. Which of the six signs of being **in the city** do you think your church does best?
4. Which of those six signs do you think your church most needs to pay attention to?
5. Which of the five signs of being **for the city** do you think your church does best?
6. Which of those five signs do you think your church most needs to pay attention to?
7. What truth does Jeremiah 29:7 ('Seek the welfare of the city ...') have for today?