

MASTER THESIS

CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in
the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of
Hopelessness**

ANTHONY JENNINGS

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By

Anthony Jennings

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate
Faculty of Northwestern Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

Approved:

Dr. Samuel Galloza
Thesis Adviser

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
The Overwhelming Sense of Hopelessness of Inner-City living	
1.1 The Inner-City	5
1.1.1 The Origins of Inner-City Ghettos	6
1.1.2 Excluded Neighborhoods	8
1.2 Poverty and the Inner-City	10
1.2.1 The Dynamics of Poverty and Crime	11
1.2.2 Crime, Urban Poverty, and Social Science	13
1.2.1.1 The Word of God: Hope for the Incarcerated	14
CHAPTER 2 The Nature of the Hopelessness Problem	17
2.1 Risk Behavior and Hopelessness	18
2.2 Hopelessness; The Common Denominator to Risk Behavior	19
CHAPTER 3 The Most Dangerous Cities in America	22
3.1 America's Top 25 Most Dangerous Cities	25
CHAPTER 4 The Most Endangered Cities in America	27
4.1 Black Rage and God	27
4.2 Environmental Racism	29
4.3 Cities on Life Support	31
4.3.1 The Most Vulnerable People in America	32
4.3.2 The Most Fertile Soils in America	33
CHAPTER 5 The Word of God; Real Hope for the Hopeless	36
5.1 The Dividing Line	36
5.2 Beauty for Ashes	37

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

5.3 The Word of God Meets Needs	40
5.4 The Church; A Community of Reconciliation	43
5.4.1 The Church at Work	44
5.5 The Word of God; Hope for the Future	46
5.6 A City Called Heaven	48
LITERATURE CITED	49
LIST OF TABLES	
1.1 Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2009	51
2.1 Proportion of Respondents Agreeing with Hopelessness Statements	52
3.1 THE FBI'S 25 MOST DANGEROUS CITIES IN AMERICA FOR 2012	53
LIST OF FIGURES	
1.1 Street in Chester, Pennsylvania	54
APPENDICES	
A. THE FBI'S 25 MOST DANGEROUS CITIES IN AMERICA	55
B. NON-SCIENTIFIC SURVEY TO INNER-CITY RESIDENTS	56
C. NON-SCIENTIFIC SURVEY TO SUBURBANITE RESIDENTS	57

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

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Most of all, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whose life ministry, death, burial, and resurrection have provided the total and only reason possible that my thesis could be written. I thank and praise God for making me who I am, an African American male. I thank him for where I was born, in the inner-city ghetto of Chester, Pennsylvania. I thank him that I grew up poor, and for all that my childhood environment gave to me, because that is part of what has made me-me. It has made me the person that God has planned for me to be. God has sold everything he owned in the person of Jesus Christ just to buy that inner-city field in which I, that treasure was hidden (*Matthew 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. AV*). I am that one sheep that has wandered blindly from the 99 into dangerous paths, the one that the Good Shepherd left the 99 to retrieve (Matthew 18:12-14).

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

I give to God and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ all the praise, glory and all the credit for any and every bit of success I have had in my life, for every accomplishment and for the times I have fallen and have been helped back to my feet. I give honor and praise for the experiences that I have gained so that I might in turn be able to understand, love, and help bring hope to someone who remains trapped behind the spiritual prison bars of the inner-city walls, living in an atmosphere of hopelessness.

Anthony Jennings

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

ABSTRACT

According to Bollard (2003) and other researcher in my thesis, one of the most urgent problems facing American inner-city inhabitants is the feeling of hopelessness about the future while living in dangerous low-income neighborhoods. In too many cases, people living in poverty will come to believe that they are unable to take control of their lives and make things better for themselves. In too many instances, inner-City youth grow up to be adults and parents with their world view tainted with this ill-fated sense, thereby exponentially perpetuating a cycle of despair and defeat.

The expectation of death often comes at an early age in an inner-city environment of hopelessness. It becomes normal for teens growing up in poverty and around violence to question whether they will survive to adulthood. Researchers conclude that poverty and violence may destroy an adolescent's sense of safety, security, and hope, leaving little room for long-term aspirations and planning. Inner-city hopelessness is the expectation that highly desired outcomes will not occur, or that negative ones will occur, and nothing is going to change things for the better.

Although there have been many interventions put in place, both secular and spiritual, (some successful, some not), the Bible teaches that the things that will last forever are those spiritual characteristics which make up the souls of men and women. My thesis addresses the spiritual side of man which is too often neglected in a world system where most of the focus is on material and temporal realities, and where those intangible parts are generally discarded as insignificant. The Word of God (The Holy Bible) teaches that if the soul of man is fixed, the

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

natural parts will not help but to become healthy and whole: Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (AV).

My thesis illuminates both the spiritual and natural aspects of human existence, mainly in those areas of America that has been written off as incorrigible, or unsalvageable, (the inner-cities), and show that the application of the Word of God is not only needed, but is imperative to the health of the total being of men and women, our country and our existence on this planet.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lamentations 3:26; It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

My heart goes out to those who live in the inner-cities of our great country, those who have to move about daily within an atmosphere of hopelessness. Not all of them are enslaved by the paralyzing sense of hopelessness that breeds in that culture, but they who are the most vulnerable certainly are (the mentally ill, the homeless, those who are ensnared by drugs or those who are entrapped by joblessness). Seems a shame knowing that the earth is capable of producing more than enough goods to sustain life for everyone on the entire planet, yet we can see so much poverty, starvation, human exploitation and other sufferings creating an atmosphere of hopelessness in our country and around the world. The goal of my thesis is that some might be made aware of, and others may be reminded of a solution for this overwhelming sense of hopelessness through the most practical, profound and readily accessible source in all the earth; the Word of God, the Holy Bible.

The main reason for this special place in my heart for those trapped in, and in many cases oblivious to the spiritually toxic inner-city atmosphere is because I grew up in an inner-city environment in the city of Chester, Pennsylvania. My family was poor, and I grew up in an atmosphere of hopelessness all around me, living with a belief system which suggested that what I was seeing was normal. I did not have a happy childhood overall, but I can remember some happy times. My mother had thirteen children between two marriages. My natural father walked out on us while I, (the youngest of his children) was yet in my mother's womb.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

My step-father courted my mother, and eventually would marry her and there were seven additional children added to an already desperate situation. Times were very hard for us. My mother had an eighth grade education which was probably the norm for that time, while my step-father only had a third grade education.

So, emphasis was not placed on education in our ghetto household as much as it was on making sure there was enough income to keep the house heated, clothes on our backs, and food in our stomachs. Of the thirteen children, only three of us graduated high school. I was one of the ones that graduated. Some earned their GED's later in life. Two of my siblings, an uncle, and a cousin died from inner-city violence at young ages (these are the ones whom I can recall to date). Several siblings suffer alcohol or drug addictions. Two of my brothers and many cousins continuously pass through the revolving doors of the penal system. At least two of my sisters sons are in prison on murder charges. They were charged while in their teens.

I joined the U.S. Air Force the same year I graduated high school with the intention of taking advantage of the opportunity the military offered for a college education. Needless to say, the inner-city had not prepared me for life on the outside. So began a cruel growing up period for me. After a couple of years of hard partying, and drug and alcohol abuse, I came to the end of my rope, so to say, and it dawned on me that I would end up either in jail, in a mental institution, or a grave because of a lifestyle I had unconsciously drifted into due to the insidiousness of sin. It was at that point in my life that I discovered the Bible and the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. It was only then that my mind and soul began to heal from the wounds inflicted upon my psyche from years of the inner-city pounding. God lead me by his Holy Spirit into life as I never knew it could be.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Entering mainstream society after growing up in the inner-city ghetto was extremely problematic for me. I will describe it as living with an ever-present monster, ever lurking and waiting for me to make that one mistake so it could swallow me up and excrete me back to the “hood”. The stench of that atmosphere was ever present in the nostrils of my sub-conscience, always tugging at me, drawing me back to safety of that familiar, but unhealthy place. I know many who have escaped the jaws of inner-city hopelessness, and still bear the psycho-emotional scars to show for it. Many will tend to self-medicate in very unhealthy ways, but those who seem to have survived it best are they who have yielded their lives to God, thereby shaking off the need for self-medicating with drugs, alcohol, sex, food or whatever the poison of choice.

There are many research projects that shine light on the special problems which lead to inner-city hopelessness; that hopelessness which engulf the lives of its inhabitants. Some of the ones that I have used which have submitted their research, and some potential solutions are: The Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute’s (MTBI), “The Dynamics of Poverty and Crime”; the Department of Sociology and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University entitled “Crime, Urban Poverty and Social Science, (Lawrence D. Bobo). Also useful in this thesis are Reports such as, the Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project (MPIP), entitled “Youth, Suburban children at risk – 2007”, and Mark C. Purcell’s (2006) work entitled, “Surviving Inner-City War Zones-Trauma and Resiliency Among Suburban Youth Exposed to Community Violence.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Although these social scientist and theoreticians offer speculative hope for the inner-city condition it is my belief that the greatest collection of information that can be offered for the healing of the mind and soul, and which is able to elevate one from a life of poverty and hopelessness lay within the pages of the Holy Bible. Those who preach and write about the power of God, further illuminate this truth.

I have used as examples of successful applicators of the Word of God to inner-city hopelessness the ministries of two pastors, Bishop George Dallas McKinney, PhD and the Reverend Mark Gornik. The both have made monumental and meaningful changes in the lives of tens of thousands of inhabitants imprisoned by their inner-city environment of hopelessness, and have been instrumental in elevating many lives to a plane of hopefulness and success.

Bishop George Dallas McKinney, PhD (a black pastor), in his book “Cross the Line “and Reverend Mark Gornik (a white pastor), in his book, “To Live in Peace” describe experiences and insights they have gained from decades of dedicated Christian ministry in the predominantly black ghetto areas of San Diego, California, and Baltimore, Maryland respectively.

Yet, their documented successes are only two of the thousands who have made indelible marks on the lives of those lost and without Christ down through the centuries; those who have bought meaningful change to the lives of millions of would-be victims snatched from the jaws of Satan and the overwhelming sense of hopelessness of inner-city dwelling.

NOTE:

All Biblical Scripture are from the Kings James Authorized Version of the Bible.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

1.1 THE INNER-CITY

Isaiah 14:32 What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The term “inner-city” has been defined as “the parts of a city in or near its center, especially when they are associated with poverty, unemployment, sub-standard housing, etc.”

The term is often used in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Ireland as a euphemism for low income residential areas in the center of the city. Most social scientists consider the inner-city as the central area of a major city.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Inner+city?s=t>).

Additionally, in the United States the term connotes impoverished Black and/or Hispanic neighborhoods. **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inner_city**

Sociologists sometimes turn this euphemism into a formal designation, applying it to residential areas rather than to geographically more central commercial districts. In many European cities, the inner-city is considered the most prosperous part of the city where housing is expensive and where elites and high-income individuals dwell, and poverty and crime are associated more with the distant suburbs. Ironically, the Italian, Spanish, French and Swedish words for suburb often have a negative connotation similar to that of the English term *inner city*.

The American sociological usage of the term inner-city is rooted in the middle 20th century at a time when the automobile became affordable, and when forced busing came about. Then, many middle and high-income residents (who were mostly white) moved to suburbs to have larger lots and houses, and to escape the rising ensuing crime rate. The subsequent decrease in population and tax base caused many inner-city communities to fall into urban decay. Those

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

who remained (mainly African Americans) were left to live in an atmosphere of poverty, despair and a tremendous sense of hopelessness. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inner_city

Bishop George Dallas McKinney, PhD (2005) in his book, “The New Slave Master” reminds us that Satan is the real enemy of all of God’s creation, and he had a particular goal to exert his hellish influence over the African American community, and actually over any community he can. He states that for centuries Satan tore Africans away from their native lands and held them in the most vicious of circumstances. Bishop McKinney further explains that Satan’s strategy was simple; “keep us weak, alone, and in pain, so we would lack the focus and energy to search for God. And if we found Him, we would be so sick with rage and loathing we would reject His influence over us, no matter how tender and benevolent it might be”.¹

1.1.2 The Origins of Inner-City Ghettos

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

University of Minnesota Professor Allan Spear, who also served as a Minnesota Senator from 1972 to 2000 offers us more insight to the inner-city ghetto phenomenon in his essay entitled, "The Origins of the Urban Ghetto, 1870-1915". This essay provides a view into “the forces that relegated black people to a separate and subordinate status in urban life”.

Senator Sear writes:

Recent historians of ghetto life have viewed white hostility as the major force behind the racial polarization of urban society. Restrictions in housing and employment forced black people into separate communities where they had little

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

choice but to provide for themselves the facilities and services that the larger community denied them. This does not mean that Afro-Americans were merely passive figures. They worked actively and positively to create a viable social and cultural life of their own. The physical ghetto was the product of white racism, but the institutional ghetto was the creation of black civic leaders and entrepreneurs determined to make the black community a decent place to live...

A systematic pattern of housing discrimination confined him to the black section of the city even when he could afford property elsewhere. For instance, Sophonisba Breckinridge of Hull House noted that in Chicago in the early twentieth century the problem of the black family was "quite different from the white man and even that of the immigrant. With the Negro, the housing dilemma was found to be an acute problem, not only among the poor, as in the case of the Polish, Jewish or Italian immigrants, but also among the well-to-do..."

The Afro-American, unlike white ethnic minorities, lived constantly in the shadow of racial discrimination. Regardless of his economic status, regardless of his cultural preferences, he was isolated from whites in the Northern city. To understand Harlem or the South Side of Chicago, to fully comprehend the distinctive culture that developed there, it is necessary to examine the context of prejudice and discrimination within which the ghettos developed. And because the period 1870-1915 is crucial in the development of the ghetto – as every recent historian of the subject agrees – it is important to understand the racial attitudes of Northern whites during these formative years...

A systematic pattern of discrimination in housing, employment, municipal services, and police practices has characterized race relations in American cities for the past century and a half...

Social Darwinism and imperialism had assured racist ideologies of a receptive audience. Many Americans had come to regard non-whites as representatives of an earlier evolutionary state, people inherently unable to compete in the struggle for survival. At the same time the United States' acquisition of the Philippines and Puerto Rico was accompanied by the notion that it was the "white man's burden" to control the affairs of inferior peoples who were essentially incapable of governing themselves. ²

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Senator Spear continues to explain how that often both black and white workers were but pawns in the efforts of the economic and political elite to weaken any threat to their own hegemony. He asserts that “employers, real estate dealers, politicians, and newspaper editors fanned the flames of racial tension for their own gain.”³

It is my belief that these same tactics are still employed today in the way that some political talk radio and television personalities are being used as highly paid hate generators whose goal is to divide and conquer the masses, while those who are the puppeteers walk away with the plunder.

1.2.1 Excluded Neighborhoods

Isaiah 41:17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

As shown in his book, “To Live in Peace” (2002) Pastor and author, Reverend Mark Gornik, chose to live in the inner-city section of Baltimore, Maryland called Sandtown. He lived, worked and ministered as a neighbor and friend alongside Sandtown’s African American inhabitants, and insightfully wrote the following concerning the origin of the American inner-city:

The pre-history of the African-American inner city can be traced to America’s “original sin” of slavery and the violent European quest to create a “New World.” Often baptized in Christian ideology, this history set in motion subsequent manifestations of racial injustice and economic oppression that remain codified in various forms to this day...⁴

The pattern of residential segregation that created Sandtown was joined to the city’s growth and development. With neighborhoods near the industrial jobs in the center of the city reserved for white immigrants only, black Baltimoreans were

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

limited in neighborhood choices, and West Baltimore became a principal place to find housing. This was to the advantage of many urban, affluent whites in nearby neighborhoods such as Bolton Hill, who then had easy access to low-wage black domestic workers. With African Americans cordoned off in one part of the city, they could be, as Ryon points out, “restricted, controlled, watched over,” while still able to contribute to the rise of the privileged and prosperous in other select parts of the city. Sandtown’s families lived in overcrowded and substandard rental housing sharing apartments, while the new white immigrants had more available options. At its peak in the 1940’s, the population in Sandtown soared to an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 people.

While poverty was extensive, employment opportunities existed, though they were largely unequal in pay and advancement possibilities when compared to that of their white counterparts. For many, low pay meant long hours, as Ryon points out: “Work, the sheer volume of it, dominated most people’s lives”. Typically it took a combination of jobs to make ends meet, and blacks were still “last hired and first fired” in the low-paying and menial service sector and in the industrial-related work.

Local white-owned businesses would hire African Americans only for the most menial tasks. This combination of circumstances usually led to a subsistence existence. However, during the Depression, finding a job was considerably more difficult. Even domestic workers found themselves laid off... ⁵

But racial and social oppression never meant surrender and subordination. West Baltimore’s durable black churches were the centerpiece of civic leadership, mutual aid, and political protest. Community pressure led to, for example, the construction of a new building for Frederick Douglass High School. ⁶

When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, it marked a social and psychological breaking point for many inner-city neighborhoods, and this was certainly true in Sandtown. Until King’s death, there had been a growing sense of optimism in the community – and throughout black America- that the nation would achieve a greater level of justice and inclusion. But with King’s death such hopes seemed to die and be buried. The unrest that ensued in cities like Baltimore reflected a feeling of great loss and bitter frustration, a sense that change would be halted. Indeed, King’s death provided a marker for the beginning of the second period of inner-city development, a set of circumstances and forces that had been growing since WWII and that would change life in the city profoundly. In summary, the inner-city in the post-industrial period was not created by the character flaws of the people who live there or by the welfare system, but by the searing dynamics of economy, place and race. The result was a

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

community in economic depression, isolated and excluded from opportunity. Life in its fullness was more deeply diminished.⁷

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

1.2 Poverty and the Inner-City

Matthew 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

Since 1970 the number of people entering the poverty ranks in the United States has been gradually increasing as shown in Table 1.1. The American Community Survey (ACS) Briefs from 2009 to 2010 show that the national poverty rate increased from 14.3 percent to 15.3 percent, and the number of people in poverty increased from 42.9 million to 46.2 million during the same time period. The ACS also found that thirty-two states experienced an increase in the number and percentage of people in poverty between those same years. The percent of people with income below 125 percent of their poverty threshold increased from 18.9 percent in 2009 to 20.1 percent in 2010, and during the same time period, the percentage of people with income below 50 percent of their poverty threshold increased from 6.3 percent to 6.8 percent. The American Community Survey Briefs determined the poverty status by comparing annual income to a set of dollar values called poverty thresholds that vary by family size, number of children, and age of householder. If a family's before tax money income is less than the dollar value of their threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty. For people not living in families, poverty status is determined by comparing the individual's income to his or her poverty threshold. The poverty thresholds are updated annually to allow for changes in the cost of living using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). In 2010 the ACS analyzed poverty rates for large metropolitan areas with populations of 500,000 or more. This brief asserts that more than 80 percent of the U.S. population resides in one of the 366 metropolitan areas and about two-thirds of the total U.S. population lives in the largest areas.⁸

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

It is important here to point out that when Jesus began his earthly ministry he sent his disciples to those who were living along the streets and alleys of society, to those who were the most vulnerable of society. Luke 14:23, *“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*

1.2.1 The Dynamics of Poverty and Crime

Proverbs 6:30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry

The Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute (MTBI) performed a study in 2005 which showed that poverty and crime as two major maladies that plague inner-cities, and that there is an apparent direct correlation between the two. The study showed that people will generally resort to crime only if the costs of committing the crime are lower than the benefits gained. It suggests that those living in poverty have a much greater chance of committing serious crime than the general population.⁹

However; not everyone in America will agree that people who are living below the poverty level, which most people living in America’s inner-cities do, should be helped. A study published by the American Heritage Foundation (a so-called conservative think tank), entitled “Understanding Poverty in America” (2004) compared poverty in America (the wealthiest nation on the planet) with those of other nations and concluded the following:

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The living conditions of persons defined as poor by the government bear little resemblance to notions of “poverty” held by the general public. If poverty is defined as lacking adequate nutritious food for one’s family, a reasonably warm and dry apartment to live in, or a car with which to get to work when one is needed, then there are relatively few poor persons remaining in the United States. Real material hardship does occur, but it is limited in scope and severity. The typical American defined as “poor” by the government has a car, air conditioning, a refrigerator, a stove, a clothes washer and dryer, and a microwave. He has two color televisions, cable or satellite TV reception, a VCR or DVD player, and a stereo. He is able to obtain medical care. His home is in good repair and is not overcrowded. By his own report, his family is not hungry and he had sufficient funds in the past year to meet his family’s essential needs. While this individual’s life is not opulent, it is equally far from the popular images of dire poverty conveyed by the press, liberal activists, and politicians. But the living conditions of the average poor person should not be taken to mean that all poor Americans live without hardship. There is a wide range of living conditions among the poor. Roughly a third of poor households do face material hardships such as overcrowding, intermittent food shortages, or difficulty obtaining medical care. However, even these households would be judged to have high living standards in comparison to most other people in the world. Perhaps the best news is that the United States can readily reduce its remaining poverty, especially among children. The main causes of child poverty in the United States are low levels of parental work and high numbers of single-parent families. By increasing work and marriage, our nation can virtually eliminate remaining child poverty.¹⁰

It is my opinion that the American Heritage Foundation’s report strikes a Malthusian tone. It minimizes the rippling impact of poverty, and its speech is nebulous as to how to eliminate that which it agrees does exist (i.e., the solution to poverty, “increasing work and marriage”).

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The conclusion of the American Heritage Foundation report completely ignores causations that perpetuate poverty (such as corporate greed). It avoids addressing the crime-component of poverty which levy's a heavy financial burden on our states as we will see later. No real hands-on proposal is offered in their study. I would that those who submitted and embrace this study be left with the dirty hands, and clean hearts, rather than the other way around.

1.2.2 Crime, Urban Poverty, and Social Science

Mathew 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Incarceration is an ever-present reality in the inner-city, and is a by-product of the poverty and crime dynamic mentioned above by the MBTI. Bobo, L. (2009) explored how the popular "get tough on crime" campaigns has had a negligible positive effect, and even offers evidence of the opposite suggesting that imprisonment has grown to the point that it now produces the very social problem on which it feeds, and is creating the perfect storm. In his work he further argues that current rates of incarceration are criminogenic because the incarceration surge is not spread evenly across the American population, but falls in extreme disproportion on particular communities, low-income African American communities being affected the most profoundly.

As young people in inner-cities observe a high percentages of adult role models spending parts of their lives in prison the likelihood that they too will spend some time behind bars becomes their expectation. The evidence also suggests that high rates of incarceration

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

destabilize families, increase rates of delinquency, increase teenage pregnancy rates, foster anti-social behavior, damage frail social networks, and overall it weakens labor markets. ¹¹

Some solutions Bobo (2009) suggested toward alleviating the compounded problems caused by the “getting tough on crime” policies are, that society find other alternatives to mass incarceration, find viable options to pronouncement of very long sentences, and that we must begin to think carefully about policies that allow for easy technical revocations of probation or parole statuses.

1.2.2.1 The Word of God: Hope for the Incarcerated

1 Peter 3:18-20 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

For those who are incarcerated, faith-based prison programs, such as founder Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship have been extremely effective in changing lives of prison inmates through the application of the Word of God. This is done by simply presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ. To those who receive Christ, the sense of hopelessness tends to wane, empowering prisoners to lead crime-free lives while incarcerated, and after release. Johnson (2012) offers measurable proof to the success of these programs.

From 1997 to 2003, Mr. Johnson led an independent evaluation of the “InnerChange Freedom Initiative” (IFI) operated by Prison Fellowship at Carol Vance Unit near Houston, Texas. The program entailed consistent Christian fellowship attendance and participation while incarcerated, Bible study and Bible based counseling, and spiritual mentoring. Mr. Johnson’s

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

research revealed that graduates from the IFI program had significantly lower rates of in-prison arrests (17.3 %) than a matched group of prisoners (35 %) that did not participate in the program. IFI graduates also had significantly lower recidivism rates (8 %) than the matched group (20.3 %).

According to Prison Fellowship president Mark Earley, statistics show that two thirds of all inmates released are rearrested within three years of their release, and recidivism is increasing at a staggering rate. As part of the research, Mr. Johnson tracked IFI participants and the matched group for a minimum of two years following release from prison. The study concluded that program participation and the presence of faith-motivated mentors helped prisoners to adopt pro-social values through a process of spiritual development that was critical to helping prisoners remain crime-free after leaving prison. ¹²

Rehabilitation programs and incarceration do appear to lower the total crime rate to some degree; however, a study by the US Department of Justice showed that in 2003 it costs about \$25,000 to detain a person in a federal prison each year. It also costs about \$100,000 to build a new prison cell, and the prison population is growing more each year. Since it appears that detaining a prisoner might actually be a greater burden on society than the crime itself, the issue becomes one of balance. Ultimately, the ideal goal is to reduce crime to such a level that the total cost of controlling crime and the cost of the crime that remains is less than the total cost of crime under the status quo. ¹³

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

So, the aim of the study by the Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute was to explore a cost-effective way to lower criminality, thus lowering the cost of crime to society. The study concluded that the problem of crime is alleviated by either decreasing poverty or by increasing the severity of the punishment, (i.e., crime should decrease if one or the other intervention parameters are increased).

Naturally, the total elimination of poverty, crime and the consequential incarceration is virtually impossible; however, my thesis submits that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, an alternative solution (and in my mind the only real solution) can make a tremendous positive impact. I submit that the application of the Word of God will effect meaningful change in the lives of inner-city inhabitants dwelling in an atmosphere of hopelessness. Although there are many inner-city ministries making tremendous strides the need is obviously overwhelming and urgent, and more Christian ministry is still desperately needed. Thus, with the introduction of the living God into the lives of the-would be believer, poverty, crime and its presumed associated costs, and the resulting hopelessness can be impacted in a meaningful way. The new believer will afterwards go on to make an impact on their inner-city environment of hopelessness, creating a Godly chain reaction of hope throughout their culture.

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 The Nature of the Hopelessness Problem

Psalm 72:4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

A 2003 survey by University of Alabama's Institute for Social Science Research of inner-city life explored a theory that adolescents react to their uncertain futures by abandoning hope, which ultimately leads them to engage in high levels of risk behavior. The study tested this relationship using a survey of 2,468 inner-city adolescents from Mobile and Pritchard, Alabama asking questions about hopelessness, violent and aggressive behavior, substance use, sexual behavior, and accidental injury. Nearly 50% of males and 25% of females had moderate or severe feelings of hopelessness. These results suggested to the institute that effective prevention and intervention programs aimed at inner-city adolescents should target hopelessness by promoting skills that allow them to overcome the limitations of hopelessness. Table 2.1 is a sample of the survey results showing the "proportion of respondents agreeing with the hopelessness statements"¹⁴:

One of the greatest problems facing American inner-city inhabitants is the feeling of hopelessness about the future among adolescents living on the edge in low-income neighborhoods. Another tremendous problem is that people living in poverty sometimes will come to believe that they are unable to take control over their lives and make things better for themselves. It has been suggested that these beliefs are defining characteristics of the "underclass personality". Even more disturbing is the expectation of death at an early age.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The study performed by the University of Alabama's Institute for Social Science Research revealed that it seems common for teens growing up in poverty and around violence to question whether they will survive into adulthood. Such thinking undermines adolescent's sense of safety, security, and hope, leaving little room for long-term aspirations and planning. The results suggest that most youths succumb to the challenging or threatening circumstances they face; which is the essence of hopelessness.

The Institute for Social Science Research defines hopelessness as “an expectation that highly desired outcomes will not occur or that negative ones will occur, and that nothing is going to change things for the better”. Inner-city adolescents will generally deal with their feelings by abandoning long-term approaches to success in favor of things they can achieve in the short term. It is also suggested that youth living in impoverished and violent neighborhoods may conclude that they have neither the resources nor the likelihood of achieving lasting or socially approved outcomes. For them, socially unacceptable and risky alternatives may become highly attractive”.¹⁵

2.2 Risk Behavior and Hopelessness

According to the study performed at the University of Alabama, youth who end up hurting themselves or others tend to have a pessimistic, dark outlook on life. Many of these youths apparently see little sense in being careful for themselves or others if failure seems an inevitable part of their future. Other studies come to substantially similar conclusions. It is no surprise that hopelessness is associated with increased levels of violence among adolescents.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The research illuminated this reality by reporting levels of hopelessness among adolescents living in high-poverty neighborhoods in Mobile and Prichard, Alabama, and showed the prevalence of risk behaviors among youths with low levels of hopelessness compared to those with moderate or severe levels of hopelessness.

2.3 Hopelessness; The Common Denominator to Risk Behavior

According to studies performed on these inner-cities, hopelessness is associated with virtually every type of risk behavior, including violence, substance abuse, sexuality, and even accidental injury. And, it should be mentioned again that it demonstrates that while feelings of hopelessness are not universal among inner city adolescents, roughly 50% of young males and 25% of young females surveyed in the Mobile and Prichard, Alabama inner cities showed signs of high levels of hopelessness. This was notably higher than results reported in other inner-city studies performed during that time period.

Findings revealing that males experience more severe feelings of hopelessness than females was not surprising, given the greater tendency of males to attribute success to their personal abilities rather than to external factors; moreover, inner-city males tend to be more affected by racial discrimination and job loss than inner-city females creating greater roadblocks to success. Although the odds ratios for risk behaviors were generally comparable for males and females with low vs. high levels of hopelessness, they did differ significantly for several behaviors: drinking alcohol, getting drunk or high, and having a child. In each of these cases, males and females with low levels of hopelessness had similar prevalence rates; but among those with high levels of hopelessness, more so among males was significantly higher. Thus, hopelessness tends to affect males in more profound ways than females, leading to greater indulgence in their risk behaviors.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The implications of the results of these studies are substantial:

- First, public health can likely be improved dramatically if hopelessness among inner-city adolescents can be reduced. If, as some argue, hopelessness is tied to structural explanations (e.g. income inequality, racial discrimination, lack of good jobs, unequal criminal justice), then this goal of reducing hopelessness will require a fundamental restructuring of American society and be very difficult to achieve. However, if hopelessness is a cognitive style, (for instance reflecting the interpretation of inequality and life chances) then it can be more easily addressed through individual and group cognitive development and therapeutic interventions (*or Christian evangelism*).
- Second, intervention programs designed to reduce adolescent risk behaviors can produce desired outcomes only to the extent that they address hopelessness. For those who are hopeless about their futures, these assumptions are questionable. Thus, it is important that prevention and intervention programs also attempt to build skills that allow participants to better understand their cognitive–affective responses to adversity, or that provide them with the ability to take advantage of life opportunities that they encounter; both of these approaches may allow individual adolescents to overcome the limitations of hopelessness (*this too can include Christian evangelism*).
- Third, it is important to recognize that only a minority of inner-city adolescents experience high levels of hopelessness, and that programs designed to change the cognitive styles of individuals with low levels of hopelessness may not be successful in reducing risk behaviors; they, in fact, may benefit most from skill-building and efficacy-enhancing interventions. Thus, it is important to have available both these types of interventions and those designed to reduce feelings of hopelessness; and it is equally

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

important to assess the specific needs of the adolescent before enrolling him or her in a particular type of prevention or intervention program. ¹⁶

Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. Ideally, young person should be raised in a home where God is worshipped and honored as he requires. They should be raised in a home where they can be molded in the image of God so that image and glory of God can be replicated in the child’s life and those around them. They should be raised in a home where the child could be, from infancy saturated with Biblical principles; a home filled with an atmosphere of the fear of the Lord and a sense of awe and safety; a home where the child is molded for the future, a home that teaches Godly values, and a home where the child could witness examples of rejoicing, fellowship, and praise to the Lord. This type of home can, and does exist even within the inner-city walls, every day. However, what can be done with those who have not grown up with the benefit of Godly, or at least socially responsible parents as role models? What can be done for those who have been left bitter and enraged by the cruel lashes of their master’s (Satan) whip must not be ignored. What must be done to reach and offer a healing for those who have been severely wounded by life’s vicious blows; those who do not know about the benefit of a relationship with a loving Heavenly Father who they could call on, and who will answer in times of distress? What can be done to save those who have been left to believe that their world is one that is an inescapable atmosphere of hopelessness?

Psalms 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

CHAPTER THREE

3. The Most Dangerous Cities in America

Jonah 3:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.

According to Senator Spear, before the 1960's there had been no important historical studies of the inner-city ghettos. There had been many "perceptive treatments of ghetto life by authors such as St. Clair Drake and Horace Catton, Robert Weaver, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Roi Ottley, but not to the extent that their analyses were placed in historical context;" however, in the period 1965-1970 there were extensive works on the development of the inner-city black communities in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Other studies were beginning in 1970 that examined the origins of black ghettos in Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland and Baltimore.¹⁷

As I have mentioned before, I grew up in the inner-city of Chester, Pennsylvania, a city approximately four miles south of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I entered the U.S. Air Force in September of 1970 at the tender age of 19. I would simply tell people who didn't know of Chester that I was from Philadelphia rather than to try and explain that it's just a few miles south of it. During the time of my enlistment I met many other young African Americans from all over the country. Whenever I would meet someone from one of the big cities known for having large inner-city ghettos (such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Detroit, or Cleveland), we seemed to clique easily. It was as if we were a part of a special cohort among African Americans.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Other African Americans who were from non-inner-city places around the country, (such as middle to upper-class, or rural communities) seemed to look to at us in awe.

They seemed to enjoy listening to our tales of fighting in the streets, having playmates die too young of violent crime, fleeing rival gang members, or the police, and sometimes being picked up by the police for curfew violation or some other infraction. For one to say that they were from one of the major inner-city ghettos back then was like sporting a badge of honor, at least amongst my peers. It had never dawned on me that I was actually boasting about living in, and surviving one of the most dangerous cities in America. Even if the reality had hit me back then, what could I do about it? God is merciful. I had no control over what racial makeup or social status I would be born into, or at what location on the earth I was to touch down, but I do understand that in accordance with Romans 8:28, that God does not make mistakes, and that all things work together for good to them who love him, to them who are the called according to his purpose. All the same, inner-city ghettos seem to continue their proliferation throughout the country; and remain a breeding ground for all manner of social ills.

Today there are hundreds of inner-city communities identified, and under study throughout the country. Some of today's cities that are on the FBI's top 25 most dangerous in the nation were in the 1970's considered mere farm communities. Today's inner-cities such as Little Rock, Arkansas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; St. Louis, Missouri and San Bernardino, California top the list while cities like New York have dropped to the bottom of it. Yet they all share some very common, and some very harsh characteristics; high crime rates, high poverty levels, low employment and poor educational systems to mention a few.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Another important thing they have in common is their racial makeup. They are almost always (if not always) disproportionately over-populated by African Americans.

A&E, the United States and Canadian television channel which boasts of reaching more than 85 million homes has exploited, while at the same time drawn attention to the dangers, and hopelessness of the inner-city environment through its non-fiction investigative series “The First 48”. The station claims to be one of the most watched on cable programs along with its program, “After The First 48”. “The First 48 takes viewers behind the scenes of real-life investigations as it follows homicide detectives in the critical first 48 hours of murder investigations, giving viewers unprecedented access to crime scenes, interrogations and forensic processing”. Some of the most popular locations for the filming are at inner-city communities like Detroit, Michigan; Birmingham, Alabama; Miami, Florida, and Cleveland, Ohio. In almost every case presented by the “show” the perpetrators and the victims of the homicides are African American.

<http://www.aetv.com/the-first-48/about/>

According to figures from reports researched by the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 85% of the black victims of homicide are male and 51% are between the ages of 17 and 19. Across the nation, blacks accounted for 49% of all murder victims in 2005; black males accounted for 52%.

<http://www.phillytrib.com/newsarticles/item/5655-both-parties-ignore-inner-city-murder-rate.html>

While the A&E enjoys its applause, for excellence in TV programming of “The First 48”, many lives continue to hang in the balance. The viewer continues to vicariously

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

experience, and become numbed by these atrocities which seem so far away; while in reality, at least according to a 2007 study performed by the Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project (MPIP), they are spilling over into our suburbs, and flowing right up to our doorsteps.

3.1 America's Top 25 Most Dangerous Cities in

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

In December of 2012 the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) released their list of the top 25 most dangerous cities in America. This report shows that overall crime is down across the United States and is currently at a five-year low. The FBI compiles the data collection of crime in the US, which includes violent crimes, (i.e. murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and only includes cities that have at least 100,000 residents. In 2012, Flint, Michigan topped the list with 2,337 violent crimes per 100,000 people; 83 forcible rapes were included in this report. Detroit, Michigan came in second place on the list 2,137 violent crimes per 100,000 people, and 48.2 murders. The remainder of these cities is shown on Table 3.1, and listed in the order of violent crimes per 100,000 people in Appendix A.

<http://www.examiner.com/article/fbi-releases-top-25-most-dangerous-cities-america-list-for-2012>

NeighborhoodScout® has ranks the city in which I grew up, and which I will be returning to do ministry, Chester, Pennsylvania as 19th out of 100 most dangerous cities in America. NeighborhoodScout is a web-based organization founded in 2002 whose mission statement says that they are a “leading builder and source of location-based data and risk analysis information for corporate users nationwide”. However; this data is based on cities with 25,000 or more

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

people, and the number of violent crimes per 1,000 residents. NeighborhoodScout receives its data from the FBI's research.

<http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/neighborhoods/crime-rates/top100dangerous/>

Bishop George Dallas McKinney, PhD writes in his book entitled “The New Slave Master”, how in Ephesians 6:12 Paul reveals a mammoth spiritual struggle that we are engaged in that pits us “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” These forces have managed to sneak by those who have the responsibility of watching over us, and slither into our neighborhoods. What subsequently happened he describes as a serious war with an enemy who plays for keeps. He reminds us that lives (by the millions), both physical and spiritual, teeter in the balance, and Satan, the opposing general, is anxious to shove us over the edge into oblivion.

18

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

CHAPTER FOUR

The Most Endangered Cities in America

*Psalm 48:8 As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the LORD Almighty, in the city of
our God: God makes her secure forever.*

4.1 Black Rage and God

Bishop George Dallas McKinney (1997) stresses something that needs to be understood about so called “Black Rage”. He explains that ultimately, black rage, and most rage, is focused towards God. He describes it as a kind of prayer that when de-coded will sound something like the following:

God, why have you put me through this? If God wanted the black person’s life to be better, it would be. And the black person knows this. Although he’ll say he’s angry at whitey, he’s really mad at God. God had given him those parents. God was supposed to take care of him as a baby, a teen, or an adult, and he hadn’t.¹⁹

Bishop McKinney also says about black rage that when our black brothers and sisters begin to identify it, they will also believe their rage is huge, even too huge to be dealt with; however it should be a great comfort to tell them that even though they may be angry at God, he is big enough to absorb it, and his grace is big enough to cover it.

My thesis speaks to any inner-city ghetto environment throughout the country, but my heart goes out to the people of the inner-city place of my birth, and the place where there are still hundreds of un-saved family members, relatives and friends of mine; Chester, Pennsylvania. Chester is the oldest city in Pennsylvania, and the place where William Penn landed in 1744 when he founded Pennsylvania, the state which bears his name. It is located in Delaware county, whose population of 558,979 is 80 percent white.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

By contrast, the city of Chester's population is 75 percent African American. Although Delaware County's population grew by 8,000 between 2000 and 2010, Chester however, has lost 40 percent of its population since 1970. The population decline slowed to 7.8 percent from 2000 to 2010, the smallest decade decline since 1970 but, it has not stabilized as city officials had hoped based on earlier census estimates. Figure 1.1 shows a picture of a street in Chester, Pennsylvania where, even though many of the buildings are condemned people still live near, and children play around them. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester,_PA

It should also be mentioned that the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived in Chester, Pennsylvania while he was a student at Crozier Theological Seminary located just across from Crozier Chester Hospital, (where I was born). Dr. King resided in Chester from September 14, 1948 to May 8, 1951 when he graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Divinity. He would later return in the 1960's to lead two marches through downtown's "Avenue of the States". Even though I was a young child, I still remember the marches, but I was forbidden by my parents to attend for fear of violent out-breaks.

<http://activerain.com/blogsviw/2724817/did-you-know-martin-luther-king-jr-lived-in-chester-delaware-county-pa-for-three-years->

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

4.2 Environmental Racism

Along with having to deal with all the obstacles that inner-city brings, Chester, Pennsylvania inner-city residents have had to fight against blatant governmental discrimination in the most bizarre manner. One such case was taken on by a group that organized in Chester under the name “Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living” (CRCQL). In May 1996 CRCQL filed a complaint in the Federal District Court for Pennsylvania’s Eastern District accusing the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of discrimination for allowing disproportionate amounts of waste facilities in its black communities. This was the first lawsuit in the country which sued a state under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The basis of the lawsuit was; when an entity receives federal monies, each year they had to sign a waiver that states that their practices or policies do not discriminate, nor do they cause a discriminatory effect. The DEP has a "race-neutral" permitting policy; however, the US District Court found the department not guilty of racial discrimination in its permitting process. After an appeal, the 3rd Circuit Court of three federal judges ruled that the DEP did in fact practice environmental racism against Chester inner-city residents. The decision set a precedent for the nation. A community group has the right to enforce the civil rights statute and more importantly they do not have to prove intentional discrimination is at play. The CRCQL won the right to move forward in the courts to show that the DEP had practiced environmental racism in Chester.

<http://www.penweb.org/chester/>.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Chester has had its share of sociopolitical challenges, and the above is an example of how the inhabitants of inner-cities can be trivialized, and how their very serious concerns can be viewed by those responsible for caring for them as low priority. Massey (1993), “American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass” describes this inner-city phenomena as a form of apartheid.²⁰

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

4.3 Cities on Life Support

Ezra 9:9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

A study out of Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs produced a report entitled "Revitalizing Distressed Older Suburbs". The report focused on 4,066 predominantly minority suburbs in the year 2000. These suburbs were older, large industrial cities, communities that once were thriving but are now severely distressed and have limited capacities to respond to increasing needs. These 4,066 suburbs were scored on three indicators of distress; poverty, unemployment, and foreclosure rates. Out of the 4,066 suburbs, four case study cities were selected from those most-distressed suburbs that had majority nonwhite populations and older housing stock, and had lost population from 1980 to 2000, they are as follows:

East Cleveland, Ohio (population: 17,843), Inkster, Michigan (population: 25,369), Prichard, Alabama (population: 22,659), and Chester, Pennsylvania (population: 33,972). Chester is about midway between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, Delaware. It has been hit hard by recent recessions, foreclosures, and a continuing loss of black middle-class families.²¹

The need for job opportunities is enormous. An estimated 25 to 30 percent of the housing stock is substandard, and an estimated 29 percent is public or publicly subsidized, and based on the findings of NeighborhoodScout® in Chapter Three of this thesis, Chester is ranked second out of 100 "Most Dangerous Cities in America" of those cities with 25,000 or more people, and the number of violent crimes per 1,000 residents.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The Cleveland State University's study also asserts that Chester is an entitlement city, and it has been alleged that they sometimes mismanaged their block grant dollars. The Chester Housing Authority (CHA) had a history of mismanagement and corruption which led to HUD designating it a "troubled" authority in 1991. CHA has been operating under court receivership since 1994 as a result of a lawsuit brought by public housing residents asserting constructive abandonment, and claims that the units were uninhabitable due to disrepair. In 1995 an intervention was put into place to alleviate much of the troubles Chester faces. It is the governmental Chester Economic Development Authority (CEDA) which is meant to help enable Chester to implement effective management practices and to retain consistent long-term leadership. CEDA played a key role in recent riverfront development in Chester. Chester also benefitted from Pennsylvania state investments, legislation that offered tax abatements, and other incentives to develop its riverfront with a casino, soccer stadium, office building, and waterfront park. The state located a prison in Chester, a move that created approximately 400 jobs.

4.3.1 The Most Vulnerable People in America

Jonah 4:11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?

According to a 2007 study by the Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project (MPIP), the issue of poverty and crime in the vicinity of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (which includes Chester) seems to be growing into a much larger problem. A December 2006 report stated that for the first time in U.S. history, the number of suburban poor people now exceeds the number of urban poor, by at least a million persons. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2005, rates of poverty

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

rose faster for children than for the population as a whole. This is reflected in the Philadelphia metropolitan areas and is a national trend as cited in that research.

This report, which is the product of the MPIP collaboration with Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth focused particularly on indicators describing educational outcomes, teen births, and school violence capturing both city and suburban patterns.²²

The four indicators presented in this report demonstrate that the risks facing suburban youths are not confined only to those towns. They found significant levels of risk spread across dozens of suburban communities, not all of which have low-income populations. Many of the places with problems are located far from the inner ring adjacent to the region's urban core.

Teen mothers are at greater risk than their peers of dropping out of school. They are less likely to complete the education they need in order to get a well-paid job, and therefore more likely to become financially dependent on their families or on public assistance. Children born to adolescent girls are more likely to suffer from health and nutritional problems, are at greater risk of living in poverty, and are likely to achieve at lower-than-average levels in school.

If there is one place we expect children to be free from risk, it is at school. Media reports have made us increasingly aware that violence occurs in and around school buildings, and laws have been enacted around the nation to supply timely, accurate reporting of school-based crime.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

4.3.2 The Most Fertile Soils in America

Matthew 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

The “Church Angel” organization’s mission statement declares their dedication to expanding and maintaining the most comprehensive directory of churches in the nation. According to that organization, there are at least 105 Christian churches in Chester, Pennsylvania of various denominations, (i.e., Pentecostal, Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, etc.). That means that there are approximately 17 churches per square mile.

The average number of churches per denomination is about four with the largest number belonging to the Non-Denomination group, with 28 churches. Even with all those churches administering the Word of God to the community, Chester still maintains its “dangerous city” status, and still thousands of lives teeter in the balance. (www.churchangel.com)

Bishop George Dallas McKinney, PhD, who pastors a church in the inner-city of San Diego, California, wrote the following in his book, “Cross the Line (1997)” concerning the need for the Gospel in the inner-city:

Cities; the traffic, the buildings, the one-way streets that tie you in knots, the upscale apartments and town houses, the dingy and run-down hoods defined by red lines on banks and insurance company maps; cities. Far from being abandoned, our Lord seems to have a special place in his heart for them. Jesus lamented over the city Jerusalem. Matt. 23:37, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*”.

The Lord allowed Abraham to barter for the entire population of Sodom and Gomorrah for as few as ten righteous souls. Of

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

course, the Lord didn't find those souls, and he destroyed the cities... Throughout Scripture cities are mentioned prominently. The Lord commanded Paul to remain in Corinth, a very great city, because he had "many people there" (Acts 18:9-10). The obvious reason cities are important to the Lord is because they are population centers. For an evangelist eager to present the gospel to as many people as possible, while spending as little energy and resources as possible, they're made to order. It only stands to reason that the Lord would have more of his people in New York, New York, than in Gallup, New Mexico. But I believe there's another reason they hold such a special place in his heart. The city, by its very nature is a cafeteria of "need-satisfiers," blinds those living there to their need for Jesus. Therefore, in his eyes, they need him even more. You can sense it in his lament over Jerusalem. Our Lord speaks as an outsider.²³

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

CHAPTER FIVE

5 The Word of God: Real Hope for the Hopeless

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; Isaiah 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

5.1 The Dividing Line

In his book “Cross the Line” Bishop McKinney describes that line as a “deep dividing line” that separates the inner-city from the suburbs with many from both sides unwilling to venture to the other out of irrational fears. Bishop McKinney performed a “Non-Scientific survey” that he hoped would illuminate some viable reason for this fear and reluctance. He posed a question “With all the good reasons to leave the hood, why do you stay?” to those in the inner-city and recorded the elicited responses. Also, he asked a white friend who lived in the suburbs if he would apply the question, “With all the problems of the inner-city, why don’t we help the people living there?” A white neighbor of his administered the survey and recorded their responses. Some answers of the respondents can be seen on Appendix A and Appendix B.

Bishop McKinney interpreted the outcome of the survey as, with the inner-city results, the fear of the unfamiliar is what is keeping them in harm’s way. With the ones from the suburbs it is a case of apathy which keeps them from reaching out to their neighbors. Either way, he concludes that the two groups apart from not reaching out to one another are turning their backs on one another with each side believing he has a legitimate reason for doing so. This too is a design of Satan whose lie is the cement the hold the wall of separation intact.²⁴

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.2 Beauty for Ashes

LaVerne S. Stokes wrote the “Preface” to Reverend Gornik’s book, “To Live in Peace” (2002). She is an African American woman who lived in the inner-city section of Baltimore, Maryland called Sandtown during the time Reverend Gornik (a white pastor) moved into her community and began to minister to the people there. She had this to say about her experience with Reverend Gornik:

It was the first time we had ever seen white people move in. I wondered what it was they wanted. They rehabbed vacant houses and moved into them, hung out on the streets and attended community meetings, and spent time with the children of Sandtown, including my children. The kids talked about how wonderful they were, and when Pastor Mark and the Tibbels began a church together with families from the neighborhood, my kids asked me to go visit, which I did. One Sunday morning when we were getting ready to go to my old church, my kids said they wanted to go to New Song (Pastor Gornik’s church) instead because they liked learning about Jesus there. It wasn’t long before I joined New Song, and I have been a part of it ever since. Pastor Mark and the Tibbels showed a deep love for the community, my community, and became my neighbors. Together we began ministries to love our community and rebuild it, restore it to the health and vibrancy I had experienced as a little girl. This effort included creating programs in housing education, and health care, as well as programs in job development, economic development, and development of the arts. Inner-city neighborhoods do not need people to come and tell them what they need; we already know what we need. One of the best things about Pastor Mark is that he didn’t do that. Instead, he became a neighbor, one of us, and worked side by side with neighborhood folks as together we determined our agenda and carried it out. Mark Gornik is my friend and brother in Christ. He has labored to bring justice and peace to my community. He “loves” the city. And he exemplifies the commandment of “loving my neighbor as myself”, having been a voice for an oppressed people, having

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

worked to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, and having helped to bring in the resources needed to rebuild my community. Together with our neighbors we have worshipped and prayed and studied the Bible – all things which are, as you will see throughout this book, foundational in working for justice and joy in the inner-city and which undergird community development and sustain ministry.²⁵

People all over the world must hear the message of God, the good news of God's gift to the world and God's promises of divine protection, provision, and guidance, in this life and eternal life with him in the world to come through the redemptive work of his son Jesus Christ; St. John 3:16, ***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*** The key component of the message is "God so loved".

Based on almost 50 years of pastoring in the inner-city Bishop George Dallas McKinney says it in his own words like so:

In the case of a teacher, or with any other gift that includes working with those you want to save, loving your students drives you to understand how to instruct them. Instead of an enemy you have to force-feed, they become Christ's children. And, he has entrusted their spiritual nurture to you. The love this perspective produces causes you to look beyond the silly questions, beyond the confrontations, the frustration, and the anger. It drives you to come up with what it takes to get the job done. Oh, there are times when even the truly gifted give way to frustration or even anger. But, on the whole, their hearts burn for those they're ministering to. They have the true burden. So, when we ask ourselves what gifts we possess, we also must ask ourselves, do I truly love those to whom I've been called to minister?²⁶

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

As in the case of Rev. Gornik above, his inner-city neighbors were able to discern that there was genuine care and a love for them. Because of his white face, and different cultural propensities, he could not afford to show anything other than genuine love and concern. With love as the primary ingredient, Rev. Gornik was able to lead thousands of inner-city inhabitants of Sandtown from an atmosphere of hopelessness, to a saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and deliverance from a life of almost certain destruction. Even a household pet can discern whether someone cares for them, or are afraid of them, and a show of fear merely exposes hidden distrust. Jesus likewise showed genuine love for man whom he created as he walked among us; healing, feeding, delivering from demonic attacks, giving of himself in so many ways and forgiving sin. The world needs to know Jesus as he is extending his hand in friendship to every individual, and we who have tasted of his love and friendship have been appointed catalysts for that reconciliation.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.3 The Word of God; Healing for the Soul

Jeremiah 8:22 Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Tow (1994) in his book “Counseling Recipes Through 40 Years Pastoring” addresses the modern day stresses and strains that causes more and more to break down mentally and emotionally, producing a tremendous need for a new generation of counselors by the study of psychology and psychotherapy. He mentions that just a few generations ago, counseling courses were not taught in seminary, but more and more today psychological counseling is needed, particularly when we are dealing with inner-city inhabitants who are exposed to day to day violence and a plethora of other maladies. ²⁷

Purcell (2006) describes what happens to young people in this environment as suffering chronic “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” PTSD. In his study entitled “Surviving Inner-City War Zones: Trauma and Resilience Among Urban Youth Exposed to Community Violence” he shows that ten of twelve youth in Washington, D.C. inner-city areas met diagnostic criteria for PTSD, with eight of the Chronic PTSD Type, and two of the Acute Type. ²⁸ It goes without saying that unless effective intervention is ascribed, these disorders will carry on into adulthood and to coming generations perpetuating dangerous strong holds. But, the Word of God can cut through this atmosphere of hopelessness, and break strong holds when applied as attested to in 2 Corinthians 10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Dr. Tow (1994) points out that before there were degrees offered in psychology, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, psycho-theology, psychopathology and what not, there was only the Bible. After all he states, within the pages of the Bible God has placed cures for any and all human ailment, especially when it comes to the soul, the mind, the psyche; Dr. Tow writes:

But what is psychology? It is the study of the soul (psyche). Webster defines it as “the science of dealing with the mind and mental processes, feelings and desires.” It is the study of the inner man and its behavior. That being the case what better subject is there for a basic understanding of psychology than the study of theology? Calvin says, “True wisdom principally consists of two parts — the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. Which of these two branches of knowledge comes first, it is hard to determine. They are intimately bound together; for, our very existence is nothing but subsistence in God” (Book 1 Chapter 1, *Calvin’s Institutes Abridged* by T. Tow). But which text book is most reliable for our study of theology (which totally involves the study of man)? Dr. William Lyons Phelps, introducing *The Bible for Today* edited by John Stirling, says: “The Bible is not only a revelation of God. It is a revelation of human nature...”²⁸

Dr. Tow suggests that in order for one to counsel well he must read his Bible regularly and meditate on God’s Law day and night (Psalm 1). He also suggests that the counselor should read the Bible through at least once every year in order to counsel effectively.

There is not only healing for the sin-sick soul in the salvation that God has made available for us through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ at the cross, but there is also physical healing available.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

I have been to many church services and prayer meetings and have heard the testimonies of members of the body of Christ telling of physical healings after the laying on of hands by a believer, (*James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*)

I've also heard many testimonies of people who were healed from alcoholism, drug addiction, sex addiction, and many other psycho-emotional afflictions after conversion to Christianity and petitioning God for deliverance. And, I have experienced first-hand healing of my own body after petitioning God for his mercy. God has not only delivered me physically from the inner-city environment and, but has removed the sense of hopelessness that had been subconsciously guiding me down destructive paths. I can testify to the fact that God has also removed the sinking sense that things will never get better for me; or thoughts like, maybe my principal was right when he told me I could never do college work. I discovered a personal mantra early in my walk with Christ in the scripture Philippians 4:13 ("*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*"), and I ruminated on it all the way through to a Bachelor of Science degree - and now - to this Master of Theology degree.

The truth is that God as we are told through his Word, the Holy Bible, has always been able and willing to deliver his creation from their environments of hopelessness irrespective of their economic, geographical or cultural atmosphere.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.4 The Church; A Community of Reconciliation

Isaiah 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Gornik (2002) emphasizes that intercessory prayer (and fasting) is required if new alternatives are to flow into the “world of the inner-city”, as he sites Revelations 11:15 *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*). Again we are reminded by scripture in Psalms 24 that *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*, also in Colossians 1:16 *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

That also includes inner-city locations and its inhabitants. Reverend Gornik points out that by the power of intercessory prayer even a small number of people, firmly committed to seeing change can decisively affect the shape of the future takes. He also points out that Prayer is not the last hope for the inner-city; but the beginning of hope. He suggests that without a spirituality grounded in biblical faith, which has as its center the life of prayer, it is easy to lose faith and drown in an atmosphere of hopelessness. He states:

“The systemic and social forces of the city are simply overwhelming without the life of prayer and faith. Prayer is the cry from the depths to God, a plea that the world be different, that our children not die before their time, that our homes be decent, and that our hearts be made new”.²⁹

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.4.1 The Church at Work

Matthew 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

As was mentioned earlier, the city of Chester, Pennsylvania has approximately 17 churches per square mile. But there are other entities at work in Chester of which I believe if they were not in place Chester would be much worse off than it is, and like in the case of Abraham bargaining with God to spare the wicked cities if at least ten righteous could be found, inner-cities like Chester could face the similar horrible fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, but in a spiritual death sense. Christian outreach organizations such as “World Impact” whose mission statement simply says that they are “Planting Churches that Plant Churches” have made an indelible mark on inner-city communities, including Chester. World Impact is committed to facilitating church-planting movements by evangelizing, equipping and empowering the unchurched urban poor; whose purpose is also to honor and glorify God and to delight in him in the inner cities by knowing God and making him known. They sponsor field trips, skiing trips, summer camps, school retreats and community seminars. <http://worldimpact.org/>

In 1995 World Impact started a Christian elementary, and middle school, “Frederick Douglass Christian School” in Chester with the expressed purpose of equipping the inner-city children with the tools to build character, competence and confidence. Their goal is to minister to the whole needs of their students. They hire dedicated teachers and faculty minister from within the city and from without as part of their missionary work. They teach the Bible, pray in the classroom and present a “curriculum through the eyes of the Creator”.

http://worldimpact.org/WorldImpactBulletin_January_15_2009

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

The church must take the lead if the festering wounds of the inner-city are to be remediated, for statistics show that they are getting worse. It must begin by recognizing the greatest power that it possesses, namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ. McKinney (1997) points out that the elements of the gospel like love, forgiveness; purpose, protection, and strength are what the people in the inner-city are hungry to hear. He states the following:

Like people everywhere, they need to discover that Christ meets them at the point of their need. For the young mother trying desperately to work, feed her kids, and provide a roof over their heads, the Lord is her provision. For the parents of a murder victim, Christ is their comfort. For that drug user who seems to wander from one high to another, Jesus is a lamp unto his or her feet that guides, one day at a time, along the straight and narrow path.

Just as Jonah knew that going to the Ninevites and calling for their repentance was an act of love, I believe we show our love for the people to whom we are witnessing by learning enough about them to put the gospel in life-relevant terms.

I am convinced that true progress will only be made in the inner-city when people in sufficient numbers inside the wall come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and people from outside the wall come personally in sufficient numbers to make a difference. Only then will the wall be obliterated and the people truly set free in Jesus. ³⁰

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.5 The Word of God; Hope for the Future

Hope for the salvation of the inner-city lies with those of us who hold this truth about it. Instead of looking at the inner-city and its inhabitants as a social blight, we need to see through the eyes of the Spirit, through eyes with the compassion of Christ.

Instead of looking at the inner-city and the troubles that exist there with fear and distain we must remove ourselves for the victim-blaming mentality, and discover creative ways of reaching them.

Again we are reminded by Reverend Gornik of these things as he writes the following:

Having said this, I also want to point out that the source of collective inner-city struggle is not due in any way to personal failings, the force of nature, a lifestyle of sin, or any deficiencies in character or moral behavior. A lack of personal responsibility did not build the inner-city. Instead, a historically accurate understanding of the inner-city requires us to see inner-city neighborhoods as created by institutionalized racism, economic exclusion, and adverse political determinations. A theologically serious approach to the inner-city requires us also to draw on the biblical categories of injustice, structural sin, and the powers that be.

... “God’s command to do justice is grounded in his suffering love for the little ones of the world and in his longing to have a people which reflects and celebrates his own holiness.” Because human persons are created in God’s image, God is harmed whenever any of them are denied standing, sustenance, and dignity (Gen. 1:26-27; 5-1-3; 9:6; 1aCor. 11:7; James 3:9). Thus the wounding of the poor and vulnerable through oppression is not merely wrong, but is, as Woterstorff argues (showing that this is the position of Calvin) an assault on God (Prov. 14:31; Matt. 25:31-46).³¹

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

Reverend Gornik continues by quoting the prophet Jeremiah 29:7 with the admonition that we are to “seek the peace of the city”. This includes working to make practical improvements in the lives of families and the community. Jesus tells us in the “Sermon on the Mount” that it is a blessing to be a peacemaker. Reverend Gornik asserts that peacemaking is also a public responsibility which includes not only important things like voting (which is extremely important for the inner-city communities) but faithful engagement with the larger issues that affect daily life, including public health and public services. Christians (church communities) must get involved in finding ways to enhance life and to change neighborhood outcomes. To become a peacemaker of the city means that Christians are to be active participants, not spectators.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

5.6 A City Called Heaven

All things are possible with God, all things can be accomplished through prayer, and I believe that all the answers to life's most complex problems can be found tucked away within the pages of the Word of God, the Bible. Isaiah 65:17-25 gives us a glimpse of the "New City" which forms the peaceable home that fulfills God's promised justice for the poor, salvation for the humble, and the renewal of creation. A city called Heaven that will be filled one day with an innumerable quantity of the redeemed of Christ, the bride of Christ which are the wealthy, poor, whites, blacks, red, brown, yellow, people of the inner-city and people of the suburbs, (Revelations 7:9).

Isaiah 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. 24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

**The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City
Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness**

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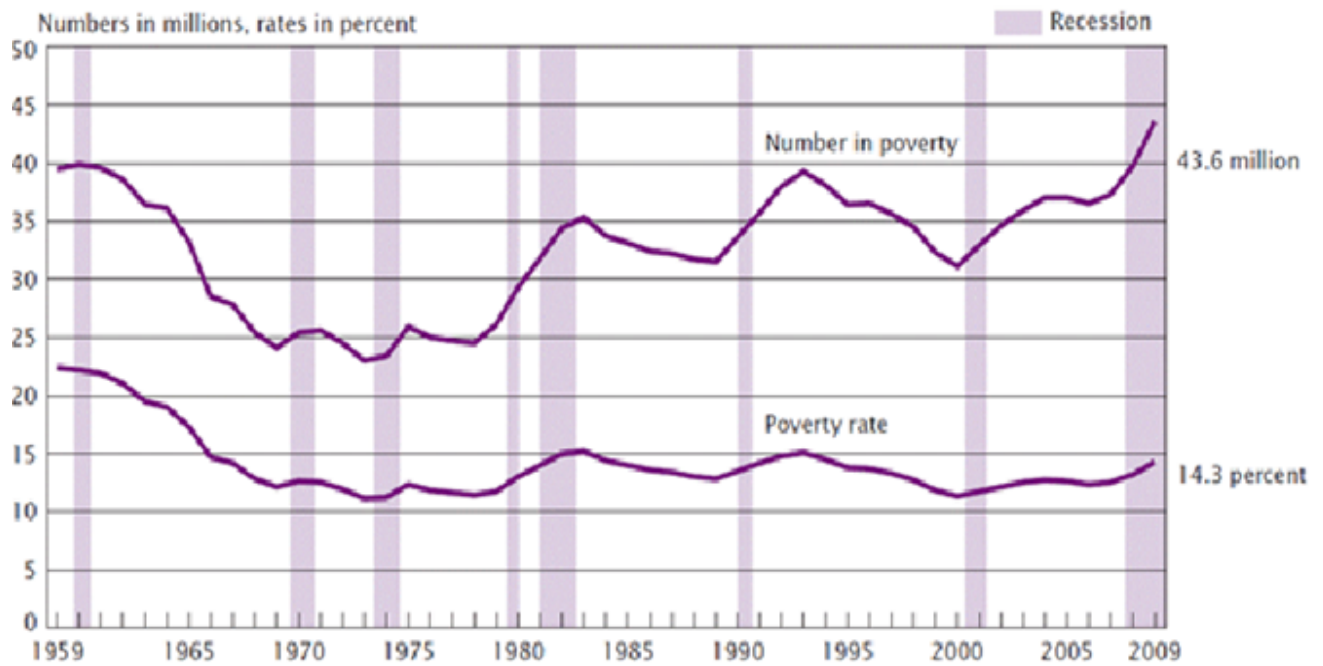
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The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

TABLE 1.1

Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2009



Note: The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

The Word of God Can Be Applied to Effect Meaningful Change in the Lives of Inner-City Inhabitants Dwelling in an Atmosphere of Hopelessness

TABLES 2.1

Proportion of Respondents Agreeing with Hopelessness Statements

Table 2.1 reports age-standardized means, standard errors, and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) separately for males and females for the six items that comprise the Brief Hopelessness Scale. For each item, males respond in a more hopeless way than females (all p's < 0.001). Although comparisons between the full Hopelessness Scale for Children and the six-item Brief Hopelessness Scale used here are risky, they do suggest substantial levels of hopelessness among low-income adolescents. (p. 149)

J.M. Bolland / Journal of Adolescence 26 (2003) 145–158

TABLE 2.1

Proportion of respondents agreeing with hopelessness statements

	Males				Females			
	Proportion	s.e.	95% CI	N	Proportion	s.e.	95% CI	N
1. All I see ahead of me are bad things, not good things*	0.348	0.017	0.315,0.382	1228	0.240	0.015	0.211, 0.268	1183
2. There's no use in really trying to get something I want because I probably won't get it*	0.416	0.019	0.379,0.452	1237	0.334	0.017	0.300, 0.368	1187
3. I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself*	0.350	0.017	0.317, 0.384	1239	0.234	0.014	0.206, 0.263	1192
4. I don't have good luck now and there's no reason to think I will when I get older*	0.358	0.017	0.324,0.392	1235	0.236	0.014	0.208, 0.264	1191
5. I never get what I want, so it's dumb to want anything*	0.392	0.018	0.356,0.427	1242	0.206	0.013	0.180,0.233	1196
6. I don't expect to live a very long life*	0.284	0.016	0.254,0.314	1230	0.202	0.013	0.176,0.228	1190

*Male-female differences: $p < 0.001$.