

Finding Hope in the Stewardship of Life
Finding Hope by Being a Compassionate Steward

This World is Not My Home

This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through
My treasure's are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world any more.

"This race we have distributed into two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil" (Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, XV.1).

"According to St. Augustine, who gave us the distinction between 'the two cities'...Scripture unfolds the history of two distinct groups of people, each having a distinct origin, development, characteristics, and destiny. These are two cities, or two societies. The earthly society has as its highest expression the city cultures of Babylon and ...Rome. The other is the church, comprised of God's elect. The former is destined to pass away. The latter is blessed by God and is to last forever" (James Montgomery Boice, *Two Cities, Two Loves*, p. 35)

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

"My daughter and her family live near Detroit, Michigan. Recently when I was there to visit, I noticed a rather intriguing plaque hanging on the wall of their home. It was a photograph with golden lettering on it. The photograph was any camera buff's dream—pine trees near the foreground framing the picture, a crystal clear lake mid-scene, and in the background a majestic snowcapped mountain against a cloudless sky. Across the plaque was inscribed the promise from Scripture:

'I know the plans I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.'

It is a magnificent Biblical promise that is engraved on the photograph of that plaque—in fact, one of my favorite promises of Scripture. But that promise was not made among pine trees and crystal clear lakes and snow-capped mountains. Instead, this promise was made in a city and given to an urban people of God" (Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan*, p. 145).

3 principles to help us steward the ministry opportunities in our city.

I. Regarding the Way You View the People of Your City, Be Careful Who You Listen To.

A. The problem in Jeremiah's day.

B. The challenge of false counsel is as old as man himself.

1. In the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1 - Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

2. The temptation of Christ – Matthew 4:1-11

3. Paul's warning.

2 Corinthians 11:3 - But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

4. Timothy's challenge.

2 Timothy 4:2-3 - preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

C. There are many opinions out there about how to relate to your city.

1. We ought to expect the city to accomplish the church's mission.

2. We are supposed to hate the people of the world.

1 John 2:15 - Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

3. We ought to become like the world in order to win the world.

II. Regarding the Way You Treat the People of Your City, Seek Their Peace and Welfare.

A. In Jeremiah's day -- take up residence among them.

1. Build houses and live in them – v. 5a

2. Plant gardens and eat their produce – 5b

3. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters – 6a

4. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters – 6b

B. In our day – look for ways to be a blessing, and bathe your efforts in prayer.

Jeremiah 29:7 - Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.

1. Taught in many places in the NT as well.

Matthew 5:16 - Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Philippians 2:15-16 - Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Titus 3:14 - Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

2. Your goal should be to have a positive, godly impact on every relationship the Lord has entrusted to you.

a. In your home.

b. In your extended family.

c. In your neighborhood.

d. At work.

e. In our community.

3. God has entrusted us with unusual opportunities and relationships to be especially effective.

a. City/county government.

b. Law enforcement

c. Our judicial system

d. Social service providers.

e. Media

f. Purdue University

III. Regarding the Way You Think about Your Ministry in the City, Remember You're Not Home Yet.

A. For the children of Israel, the exile would not last forever.

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

B. For you and me.

Hebrews 11:10 - ...looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.