

YOUR CITY FOR CHRIST:

How to Understand Your City

Your City for Christ: How to Understand Your City

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Part I: Why Gather Information

How Information Has Impacted World Evangelization

The use of accurate information to plan and evaluate the work of world evangelization is not new. Biblically and historically, men of God have looked at facts with eyes of faith to move ahead with the gospel. As far back as 1790, William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, became motivated to give his life to missions through the gathering of information. Carey had become stirred by what he learned of the tremendous needs, both physical and spiritual, of the people of the South Sea Islands. This awareness of human suffering and spiritual barrenness moved him to challenge his fellow ministers with a growing missionary vision.¹

Carey's vision ultimately launched the era of modern missions through the publishing of his 87 page book entitled An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens . Written when he was only 31 years of age, this book has been described by Deaville Walker, one of Carey's biographers, in the following way:

*This remarkable pamphlet was one of the greatest achievements of Carey's career, and an important landmark of modern missions. It was in every way unique. . . . Carey's pamphlet was a reasoned statement of Christian obligation, of **world needs, of existing opportunities, and practical proposals for the formation of a missionary society.** . . . So far as our knowledge goes, no one, through all the centuries of the Christian era, had made so **careful and systematic a survey of human needs and missionary opportunities** as that self-taught peasant, and even today we read with amazement the product of his indefatigable industry and heart passion.²*

Carey's vision, stirred by pertinent information, has continued to influence the evangelization of the world for the past 200 years.

DAWN

In the 1970's Vergil Gerber, Donald McGavran and others challenged Philippine denominational leaders to study data on the growth of their churches to see how far they'd come and to determine what still needed to be done to reach their country. Goals were set and the church began to experience multiplied growth. In 1984, evangelical leaders in Guatemala saw "a whole new wave of evangelism and church planting"³ after data concerning the past growth of the church had been gathered and analyzed, and growth goals for the future had been set.

¹ Montgomery, Jim; DAWN 2000; p.115

² Walker, Deaville F.; William Carey: Missionary Pioneer and Statesman; Chiacgo, IL; Moody Press; 1960; p. 49.

³ Op. Cit.; Montgomery; p. 122.

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Movements such as these, where information is gathered and used to develop goals and plans to reach a country, have occurred and are occurring throughout the world on a nationwide and regionwide basis. These movements have frequently been called DAWN movements (Disciple A Whole Nation). In Brazil, such a movement is developing under the name **Brasil 2010**.⁴ The long range goal of Brasil 2010 is that each person, in all of Brazil, in this generation in which we live, have the opportunity to make a conscious decision regarding Jesus Christ and be able to become part of an evangelical church within his community by the year 2010.

AD 2000 and the 10/40 Window

The vision for using information to plan for world evangelization has exploded into an international movement. After the style of Carey, "careful and systematic survey[s] of human needs and missionary opportunities" have been undertaken by twentieth century missiologists such as Ralph Winter, David Barrett, Patrick Johnstone, and others which have uncovered areas of great human misery and need for the gospel. In much of the world, churches and mission organizations are beginning to cooperate under the umbrella of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, which seeks to motivate focused evangelism and missions on the parts of the world most neglected. They have adopted as their motto "A church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000". They have a fourfold focus--Unreached people groups, Unreached Cities, Least Evangelized countries and the 10/40 window, and they are developing a worldwide research network to identify the areas of greatest need and to evaluate progress in reaching them.

To illustrate how this works, let us look at the way in which the concept of the 10/40 window was developed. In 1990, researchers George Otis Jr. and David Barrett were studying the world to try to identify locations in which spiritual and physical needs were the greatest. They examined data regarding percent of the population which was evangelical, presence of non-Christian religions, poverty and human suffering, etc. to try to locate areas where our enemy Satan maintained the strongest footholds in the world. They discovered that the vast majority of these needy peoples and places were located between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude extending from North Africa through Asia and to Japan, and this belt was thus labeled the 10/40 window. Specific news concerning this area began to be publicized throughout the evangelical church, and as a result the body of Christ worldwide has been motivated first to concentrate prayer, and then evangelistic and missions efforts, on reaching this area. This present focus on the 10/40 window has perhaps become the biggest single missions mobilization thrust in the history of Christianity.

Planning for Church Growth

This vision can be applied on the local level as well. As we gather information on the religious, spiritual, and physical state of our cities and neighborhoods, God can and will motivate and mobilize His church to reach out to the areas of greatest need. It should be our goal that the body of

⁴ For more information, contact Pr. Mário Scartezini, National Coordinator for Brasil 2010 at Caixa Postal 65; CEP 70359-970; Brasília - DF.

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Christ be incarnate in every location, and cultural, ethnic, and social grouping. Thus, the purpose of this book is to set forth the basic steps in gathering necessary information, determining what yet needs to be done, and establishing criteria so that we will know when we have accomplished the task of *Reaching our Cities for Christ*.

Biblical Basis for Information Gathering

Before studying the mechanics of information gathering for reaching our cities, we must first take a look at what the Bible has to say about the gathering and use of information and how this fits into God's plan for His Church in the world.

The census of the people

One type of information necessary for effective evangelism is a clear picture of what has already been accomplished. How many people have already heard the gospel? How many have responded positively? How many organized churches are there, and where are they? This type of information gathering is seen in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament it took the form of formal censuses of the people, and in the New Testament we see several specific references to the number of people who heard the gospel message and how many were added to the fold.

In terms of censuses of the people in the Old Testament, we find no less than nine references to five different censuses. Of all of these times that such information was gathered about the people Israel, only once was it condemned by God. In fact, on at least three occasions it was specifically ordered by God. In Ex. 30:12 and again 38:25 we find reference to the first formal census of the people of Israel. God ordered this census in order to raise the funds and supplies necessary for the building of the Tabernacle. In Numbers 1:2, the census was taken again at God's request in order to establish the size of the potential fighting force of the people of Israel, "Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one." (Numbers 1:2).⁵ After the Israelites sinned in not trusting God to give them victory to possess the promised land, God allowed them roam 40 years in the desert. Then a second census for this same purpose was taken, as God commanded, "Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families--all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel." (Numbers 26:2)

In addition to these censuses ordered by God, there are two other references to censuses in the Old Testament which God blessed. The first occurred when Solomon was about to build the temple. In 2 Chronicles 2:17-18, He ordered a census of the aliens present in Israel in order to evaluate the available work force and assign workers to the various jobs necessary for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. The second occurred in the time of King Joash in 2 Kings 12:4, when Joash collected a tax based on the census in order to raise funds for the repairing of the Temple.

There was one census in the Old Testament that was condemned by God. This occurred when King

⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

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David counted the fighting men of Israel, as recorded in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. God punished David for having done this by sending a plague that killed 70,000 men. There are several possible explanations as to why this census angered God. The most plausible are that David was motivated by pride in the vast empire he had succeeded in building, and/or that he was trusting in his own human power and resources to be able to muster a fighting force large enough to defend his kingdom if attacked.⁶ In either case, that of his own pride or trusting in men instead of God, it appears that the basic problem was one of motivation. David did not perform this census in order to glorify God and build His kingdom. On all other occasions, the taking of a census was natural and endorsed by God because the motive behind the gathering of information was to make the work of building God's kingdom on earth more efficient. Anyone involved in research and data gathering today should also examine his heart to be sure that it is right before God. Is all information being gathered in order to give honor and glory to God? Is our sole motive in collecting data to make us more effective in building God's kingdom on Earth and reaching the world for Christ?

In the New Testament we find several references to the number of people who heard and responded to the Gospel message. In the life and ministry of Jesus, we have several mentions of the size of the crowds to which he ministered, as in the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand. The number of disciples who followed Him is also clearly stated, depending on the level of intimacy and contact. For example, we have the twelve in Mark 3:14-19, the seventy (or 72 depending on your translation) in Luke 10, the 120 who were gathered in Acts 1:15, and the 500 to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:6.

The growth of the young church as described by Dr. Luke in Acts is also documented in a way that shows an interest in having complete information. In Acts 2, Peter's first sermon is described as exposing people from fifteen different cultures to the Gospel, and we are told that about 3,000 of them were added to the church that day. In Acts 4:4 we see that the number of men in the church grew to 5,000. In Acts 6:7 we see the word of God spreading to the priests, and that a large number of the residents of Jerusalem became obedient to the faith.

These biblical examples show us that it is reasonable to desire a clear picture of the status of the church and its evangelistic ministries. Such information can help us to know the size of the army that God wants to lead into battle for the souls of men. It can show us the places that the kingdom has not yet been established so we can plan our strategies under His direction. Without such vital information, our evangelistic thrust to reach the world will be weakened.

Spying out the land

A second type of information-gathering that was practiced by the people of God in order to carry out His will was that of studying the enemy, his strongholds, and the context in which their confrontation would take place.

The most well-known of these is the spying out of the promised land before the Israelite invasion.

⁶ NIV Study Bible; Zondervan Bible Publishers; Grand Rapids, MI; 1985; note to 2 Samuel 24:1; p. 461.

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This was done twice. On the first occasion, the spies were sent out by Moses at the Lord's command, as described in Numbers 13. This is the famed account of the spies from ten of the tribes giving a report which instilled fear in the people. As a result, no Israelite adult who was alive at that time was allowed to enter the promised land, except for Joshua and Caleb.

What spared Joshua and Caleb? They were the only men who looked at the information through eyes of faith. They, too, acknowledged that the people of the promised land were big and strong, with fortified cities, but they didn't let this knowledge stand in the way of trusting God:

Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." (Numbers 14:6-9)

What happened to the Israelites so long ago is also a pitfall for us today. One who possesses important information about God's global cause has a responsibility to present that information in a way which will promote the cause of Christ. He must interpret the data in light of the plans for the world that God has revealed in Scripture and in a way that will inspire the Body of Christ to get on with the work that God has given us to do. We can never forget that God is much bigger than any problem we can uncover. When we discover situations which seem impossible, that information should lead us before the throne of grace to discover God's solution. As Joshua and Caleb said, "If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land. . ." One of the most serious errors a researcher can commit is to use his information to disappoint or discourage the people of God.

Forty years later, when it came time to send out the next spy mission to the promised land, things were different:

Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." (Joshua 2:23-24)

First we see that Joshua received the report of the spies alone, as the leader of the people. This may be a good procedure for us today as well. The implications of such information should perhaps be interpreted and then presented to people by their leaders, instead of being distributed broadly in its raw form. Some believers may not have the background and spiritual maturity to interpret such information in light of God's plans for our city and the world. Secondly, we see that even though the people, cities and land were the same, these spies reported that God had already prepared the way for Israel to take the land. They were looking through eyes of faith.

Many people have likened the taking of the promised land of the book of Joshua to the

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evangelization of the world which is occurring today. As we see Joshua leading the people of Israel to take over the promised land, people group by people group and city by city, so are we to be about the business of taking the world and our cities for Jesus Christ. Joshua used good information about his targets in order to fine-tune his strategies. Yet Joshua 7:2 and other passages emphasize that neither Joshua nor Moses regarded such information as sufficient in and of itself. Together with this information they needed a knowledge of God's will and plans for the people, and a willingness to obey God's laws. As can be seen in Joshua 7, even when the information showed that it would be easy to take Ai, the Israelite army was routed because there was sin in the camp. Knowledge and holiness go hand in hand throughout the Scriptures in making us effective servants of the Lord.

Nehemiah was another man of God who did extensive data gathering regarding the context surrounding his task before carrying out the work of God. We see that he did much of his data gathering in secret in order to not reveal his purposes prematurely. He first prepared his argument and plan of attack.

By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

(Nehemiah 2:13-18)

We see here Nehemiah gathering all of his information and then presenting it to the people in a way which motivated them to begin the work that God had put on his heart. They did the work with enthusiasm and, even in the face of great difficulties and opposition, completed the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days. This is a valuable example of how a godly leader should gather and use information for God's purposes.

Finally, in the New Testament we have no specific reference to the gathering of contextual information for use in evangelism. However, we do have an excellent example of how Paul studied the context in which he was evangelizing and used this information to tailor his message to be more effective in communicating the Gospel. This example is found in Acts 17, when Paul was

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preaching in Athens:

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23)

Paul understood the culture and religion of the people he was evangelizing well enough to be able to find a link, or "bridge" as some have called it, into their system to connect them to the Gospel. This type of understanding is still needed today to effectively communicate the Gospel in the cultural mosaic of our cities, and it only comes as we take the time to study and seek information that will be useful for this purpose.

An Additional Biblical Note: The Relationship between Wisdom and Knowledge (i.e. information or facts)

For those who would consider the Biblical narratives quoted above insufficient motivation for collecting good information about their neighborhoods, cities, and even nations, a brief look at some of the wisdom literature may be convincing.

The Scriptures teach us that we should seek wisdom. We read, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5). When Solomon responded to God's offer to receive whatever he wanted by requesting wisdom and knowledge to lead his people, he won the favor and approval of the Lord:

God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have." (2 Chron. 1:11-12)

In fact, God was so pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge that He gave him wealth, riches, and honor as well. It thus is interesting to look at the relationship that knowledge has to the wisdom of God, since another way to describe the gaining of knowledge is the gathering and analyzing of information.

What is the relationship between wisdom and knowledge in the book of Proverbs? Wisdom is mentioned in 96 verses of Proverbs, an average of about three times per chapter. Of these 96 citations, 13 of the verses also refer to knowledge. Scripture therefore links the acquisition of knowledge to the gaining of wisdom. Knowledge itself is also a prominent theme in Proverbs and is mentioned 35 times, an average of about one time per chapter. Of these 35 citations, nine describe knowledge in contrast to foolishness. Indeed, it is seen as foolish to not seek and use knowledge, as

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demonstrated in the following examples:

Stay away from a foolish man,
for you will not find knowledge on his lips.
(Proverbs 14:7)

The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the hearts of fools.
(Proverbs 15:7)

Other examples of the relationship between wisdom and knowledge indicate that it is wise to value knowledge:

Wise men store up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.
(Proverbs 10:14)

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.
(Proverbs 15:2)

It is also wise to seek after knowledge:

The discerning heart seeks knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.
(Proverbs 15:14)

The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge;
the ears of the wise seek it out.
(Proverbs 18:15)

It is prudent to act on the basis of knowledge:

"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence;
I possess knowledge and discretion.
(Proverbs 8:12)

Every prudent man acts out of knowledge,
but a fool exposes his folly.
(Proverbs 13:16)

The simple inherit folly,
but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
(Proverbs 14:18)

Finally, it is useless to waste what you have learned on one who will not listen to or use it:

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Do not speak to a fool,
for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.
(Proverbs 23:9)

Knowledge and understanding are essential to the building of the Church and her victory against the forces of the enemy.

We are in a war, a spiritual war against Satan, the enemy of our souls. Jesus said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16). In reference to the ways that Satan attacks the body of Christ, Paul cautions believers to beware, ". . . in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes." (2 Corinthians. 2:11). In order to be "shrewd" and "not unaware," we need to be "aware." We need good information. Although Satan works in the spiritual realm, there are physical manifestations of the results of his workings, just as there are of God's works and attributes. Paul makes this clear by saying:

. . . since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

This does not negate our need to ask the Lord to reveal what He wants us to know about the enemy through spiritual discernment, but we need to uncover the information that is available to us through natural means as well.

Proverbs 24 emphasizes the need for good information and guidance in order to wage war. And what war could be more important than our war against Satan? It is the only war with eternal significance.

By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding it is established;
through knowledge its rooms are filled
with rare and beautiful treasures.

A wise man has great power,
and a man of knowledge increases strength;
for waging war you need guidance,
and for victory many advisers.

(Proverbs 24:3-6)

As we attempt to push back the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of God, we need good information to be most effective. Proverbs 18:13 in the Living Bible puts it clearly. "What a shame -- yes, how stupid! -- to decide before knowing the facts."

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Practical Benefits/Results of Understanding Your City

We have seen how the gathering of information has influenced world evangelization and how it is supported biblically. Now, what specific benefits can be expected when we gather information pertinent to the reaching of a city for Christ?

Focusing prayer ministries

The most important, and probably the most immediate, benefit to be experienced will be that of having the information necessary to direct our prayer energies where they will count the most. Prayer is our primary weapon against Satan and his hosts. In a spiritual war, we need to use spiritual weapons. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 teaches:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Besides prayer, these spiritual weapons include humility, confession of sins, and repentance. Satan can gain a foothold when sin is committed, as this gives him the right to control certain geographical areas, social or ethnic groups, and organizations. We need to gather information that will reveal these strongholds to the church so that Satan's position can be weakened and "demolished" and the kingdom of God can be built up in its place.

As illustrated earlier through the 10/40 Window, the strongholds of Satan are discovered not only by looking at where the church is and where it is not, but also by discovering where non-Christian religions are entrenched, where there is much human suffering, and where sin is more prevalent. This type of information should, first of all, move the church through prayer to beseech God to change unholy situations that are discovered. Then, the body of Christ should move on to other actions that will transform our cities from havens of darkness into bastions of the kingdom of light.

Developing evangelistic strategies

As illustrated by the evangelistic methods of Paul in Athens (Acts 17), the more we know about the life, history, religion and culture of a people we intend to evangelize, the more effective we can be in communicating the saving message of the Gospel to them. Our evangelistic efforts will benefit from such information because we will be able to start with the felt needs of people and show how Jesus can meet those needs. We will also be able to avoid many errors in communication, because even within the same culture, there are many differences between the way Christians and non-Christians think. For example, one of us had the experience recently of being interviewed by a reporter for a well-known news magazine in Brazil about the growth of the evangelical church here. I quickly discovered that I could not give simple answers to the questions I was being asked. I had to begin with the very basics, and spent about 30 minutes just trying to explain the differences between denominations and why they do not necessarily lead to division and competition. The

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concept of one body of Christ, which all evangelicals affirm, was very foreign to this reporter's experience. It has often occurred that a Christian thought he had communicated clearly, only to later discover that what the person had understood was not at all what he had intended to say.

Planning church planting efforts, both socio-culturally and geographically

It is not enough to simply tear down the strongholds of Satan. God has given us the mandate to build up His kingdom in all the world. In order for this to happen, the church of Jesus Christ must be implanted in every city neighborhood and in every identifiable social class and ethnic grouping. How can we know where these new churches need to be planted and among which people? If we simply continue to plant churches where an opportunity arises, we will reach many needy people, but we will not be able to tell if we have completed the task or even how much is yet to be done.

As the Gospel spreads more and more throughout Brazil, the necessity of good information about the location of existing churches and where new churches are needed will become more apparent. In a country as responsive as Brazil is at present, those people that are easiest to reach will in fact be those that are won and integrated into the churches. As these people are included in the fold, there will remain pockets of more resistant peoples who will need special, intensive evangelistic and church planting efforts. We need to seek out and begin to develop strategies to reach these people while there is still an openness to the Gospel. "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." (John 9:4)

Part II: What Types of Information to Gather

The Importance of a Commitment to Having Accurate Information

Anyone who has been involved in military operations knows the importance of accurate and up-to-date intelligence information. As world-renowned evangelical researcher Bob Waymire says, "Having accurate, up-to-date information doesn't guarantee success, but you can't get there without it."⁷

In order to be sure that information is accurate, there is a need to double check and verify the data from as many sources as possible. This requires a commitment to work hard and carefully until we are as sure as possible that we have the best picture attainable of the status of the church and of the context in which it needs to grow. In order for this picture to be up-to-date, it is necessary to periodically redo a large part of the research, which implies an on-going commitment of people and resources to the task of gathering and analyzing information pertinent to our evangelistic mandate.

As Dr. Donald McGavran, the great missiologist and founder of the church growth movement stated,

⁷ Waymire, Bob; The Information Strategy Manual, p. ii.

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The importance of finding the facts cannot be overstated. There is much lack of growth because earnest Christians, devoted pastors, and veteran missionaries have not seen the facts concerning the growth of their churches.⁸

How the enemy uses exaggerations to demotivate

In almost any organization, there is a natural tendency to estimate the figures in a way that favors the one doing the estimating. This is not usually a purposeful or deliberate shading of the figures, but an optimistic outlook fed by rumors and half-truths that paint an incomplete picture. The picture is then subconsciously completed by the mind of whoever is interpreting or presenting the information.

This phenomenon is especially common in the church, where we always want to put the work of God in the best light. We ourselves fall prey to the tendency to describe the virtues, rather than the failures, of a survey project we have undertaken. We have also, more than once, heard pastors say that they had twice the number of people in their services than were actually present (and, in fact, than could physically have been accommodated by the number of pews). Many people have reported exaggerated numbers for the evangelical population of Brazil based on hearsay and rumors of what the census bureau was going to declare but never did.

The hosts of wickedness must revel when the church becomes blinded to reality through careless estimates and unfortunate exaggerations. Unrealistically high estimates are just what the enemy needs to whisper in our ears that we have accomplished a lot and deserve a little break. Just hearing of the possibility that Brazil has become reached with the Gospel has resulted in a much-reduced sense of urgency in evangelism. We even know of missionaries who have been called home because their mission saw such figures and decided that they were no longer needed here. When there are still approximately 130,000,000 Brazilians who don't know Jesus, it can't be time to stop. We must take advantage of every opportunity to continue our efforts to reach all peoples within this nation for Jesus.

Good information is built up over time

It takes time to develop the information base needed to accurately assess the growth of the church in a country, region or city. First of all, there needs to be a wide-spread commitment among the churches and Christian leadership to the need for good information. In order for this commitment to develop, leaders need to see the benefits of having this information available. When we began to research the growth of the church in Brazil seven years ago, few published studies were available to pastors to help them put their own experiences in context and think strategically about future church planting. But subsequent studies, both by denominational boards as well as non-sectarian sources such as ISER (The Higher Institute of Religious Studies), have stimulated an interest and appreciation in what accurate information can offer to the church at large, and to local churches in particular.

⁸ McGavran, Donald; Understanding Church Growth; p. 120.

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For these reasons, it is often necessary to start with case studies and small models of research on local churches or small neighborhoods. In this way, people will begin to see how such information can be useful to them and their particular ministries. They will then also be more willing to cooperate in the gathering and dissemination of that information.

Once the full picture of a city has been obtained (i.e. its existing churches as well as its people still needing to be reached), and the factors (both physical and spiritual) affecting the growth of the church have been identified, it will be necessary to develop an on-going procedure for data gathering, analysis and dissemination. Depending on the size of your city or region, this could be a standing committee of your pastors' council or a separate information resource center funded by contributions from the participating churches. Often it has been found that a periodical or newsletter is helpful in communicating progress in reaching a city. This motivates people to continue praying for the city, evangelizing and planting churches, and to teach and explain the principles gleaned from the data gathered and analyzed in that city.

Extraneous Information can be counter-productive

One of the most common pitfalls that people fall into when beginning to gather information for evangelism and the growth of the church is to try to gather too much information, much of which has little bearing on the growth of the church and the completion of our evangelistic mandate. We always want to know as much as possible, but the enemy can use this desire to cause us to know a lot about a small part of the body of Christ and nothing about the rest.

Much research painstakingly finds out all the facts about some congregation or denomination. This wastes much time. Most facts have little to do with the growth of the church. The skillful researcher therefore avoids gathering information which has little bearing on growth.⁹

Until we have a good basic picture of the entire church in our entire city, we need to refrain from getting bogged down gathering all of the facts we possibly can. We have seen dedicated pastors in several cities set out to get an accurate picture of the church in their cities, only to never complete the job. The reason is usually because they ignored this principle. Later on in this book we will discuss what information is necessary for a basic picture, what is necessary for a more detailed analysis, and we will provide sample surveys for use in both cases.

Knowing the Church (Assessing the Army)

The most basic information required of any city is the status of its existing church. One reason this is fundamental is that it enables us, by comparison, to discover where the church still needs to be planted. Another important reason is that it reveals the size of our army. How many Christians are there in the city? How many of them are actively attending and participating in their churches? Without this type of information it will be virtually impossible to plan our evangelistic tasks.

⁹ McGavran, p. 118.

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One thing that needs to be made clear before discussing the specific aspects of different kinds of data and how it is gathered is the way in which terminology is chosen and used. Common words such as "pastor," "church" and "church member" often mean different things in different denominational contexts and church traditions. One common reason that communication breaks down when people of different denominations work together is that there are misunderstandings due to terminology. What one church calls a "pastor" another calls an "elder", and another a "leader." What one church calls a "congregation" another calls a "preaching point," and another yet an "outreach." In order to avoid such confusion, we always need to document the definitions we are using for any terms about which we are gathering data.

How many churches are there and where are they located?

First we must discover what, in the opinion of the leaders of our Christian community, constitutes an organized church. Is there a minimum number of members? Does it have to have a building? Is elected leadership necessary? Once this definition is decided upon, every organized church and church in the process of being established in the city should be listed. This may be easier said than done, as many small, independent churches are not found on any lists, and you will need to go out looking for them. Your search may be complicated by the existence of groups of believers which use rented facilities (such as schools, theaters, etc.) that are registered to other business or social organizations in the city. This occurs frequently, for example, among the new and ethnic churches of the city of São Paulo, where land and property prices are high and it is more feasible to rent than to build.

In order to be able to project the future growth of the churches, it is necessary to count the total number of churches in the city and in each neighborhood for several years. If possible, this information should be compiled for each of the last ten years and every five years as far back as practicable. In some cities this information will not be available for the past, although the more organized denominations will have this data in their files. It may be possible to make projections only after you have compiled some basic data for at least two different years.

In addition to the geographical location of the churches, each church should also be categorized by the primary ethnic group of its members and the specific social groupings to which they belong. This information will be essential in discovering the unreached people groups which still exist in your city. Often these groups lie just around the corner and yet may remain unknown to you.

Church Membership and attendance

Once the churches are located, several important pieces of information are needed. First of all, how many people actively participate in each church? The most accurate measure of participation is attendance at the regular Sunday services. Many churches, however, never count the attendance and will tend to estimate (always high) if asked to give a figure for attendance. Therefore, it may be necessary to organize a certain Sunday when all of the churches in the city will count their attendees

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on the same day. In order to do this, trained researchers will have to be sent to visit and count at the churches which are not participating in the information gathering project. The benefit of doing this on the same day is that the duplicates, that is people who go to a number of different churches, will not be counted more than once, and a fairly accurate picture of the active Christian community will be obtained.

Another useful piece of information will be the number of official members of each church. Both the active members and the inactive members should be included, and preferably counted separately. The "total Christian community" associated with each church should also be ascertained. The size of the total Christian community differs from membership figures in that the children and dependents who are living in the home of the members are also included here.

The number of leaders should also be included in any detailed evaluation of the church in your city. The number of ordained pastors and the number of lay leaders should be compiled, along with the number of these leaders who give full-time and part-time service to their ministry. Functions are more important than titles in this search, as some denominations are more inclined to give a position an official name or status than others.

As with the number of churches, the participation figures are also needed for several years in order to get more than just a snapshot of the church as it is today. It is always helpful to be able to look at the past and see where the church has been. This enables us to make more accurate predictions about where it may be going in the next few years, especially if things continue as they have been. Many churches will be motivated to set goals and plan for better growth when they see where they will end up in a few years without good planning. This type of historical evaluation may truly only be possible for a few churches which have kept good data over the years. But their example can be turned into case studies which will help reveal the factors that affect the growth of other churches in your city. They can also serve as models of the benefits of keeping good records that will motivate other churches to do the same.

Ministries to the community in activity

One last area of interest, in terms of understanding the body of Christ in a city, is the ministries that are actively seeking to reach out with the love of Jesus Christ to the community. Of interest will be prayer, evangelistic, and social types of ministries. They will also include both church-based and para-church ministries. Besides registering the type of ministry, the target group of each ministry, in both social and ethnic terms, should be recorded. The results of such ministries, especially in terms of conversions and churches planted, should also be compiled in order to help identify the most effective methods of outreach being used in your city. This information will be very instructive for the rest of the body of Christ as others seek to become more effectively involved in reaching the city for Christ.

Ethno/Social (demographic) Information (Assessing the Context)

Besides specific knowledge about the church in your city, it is extremely important to have a clear picture of the community at large. This will be especially important in evaluating progress toward reaching the entire city for Christ. As the city becomes more and more reached, the cultural, social and ethnic mix of the church will more and more resemble that of the city as a whole.

What ethnic groups exist?

In today's complicated world we find a great deal of migration, the movement of people from one city, and even from one nation, to another. This has resulted in our cities becoming cultural mosaics. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ, which instructs us to ". . . make disciples of all nations . . ." (ethnic groupings) included each of these groups. Therefore, we need to identify, quantify and locate each different ethnic group within our city. Once this is done, this information can be combined with the information about the existing churches to determine the extent to which each group has, first of all, been exposed to the Gospel and, secondly, been reached, so that it can evangelize the rest of its group. Until this second level (i.e. the church is of such strength and size that it is able to evangelize the remainder of its people), the members of the group are considered an unreached people, according to current missiological definitions.¹⁰

When the time comes for more detailed, in-depth research, it is important to discover what evangelistic methods are most effective among each group. How does new information get communicated and evaluated? Who are the decision makers and trend setters? In some groups, if we can discover the key people to evangelize, and these people accept Christ, the rest of the group becomes very open to hearing the Gospel. One example in Brazil is that of evangelizing families. It is commonly agreed that if the husband (father) comes into the church, the rest of the family is very likely to follow, more likely than if the wife (mother) is converted first. Knowing such information can help in designing evangelistic efforts that will target those people who are most likely to open the door to reaching the rest of the group.

What are the main social groupings?

In addition to the ethnic groupings, the people in our cities are also divided into many and various social groupings. Sometimes these differences are virtually unnoticeable. However, in most places there are several social groupings that simply don't mix with the rest. Some examples would be gypsies, poor slum dwellers (called favelados in Brazil), or the rich, politically involved elite. These groups must also be identified in order to be sure we are evangelistically targeting every group that would not hear the Gospel through natural communication with others in the city which are already being, or have been, reached.

There can exist social groupings in which the members do not necessary live near one another but have enough in common that they might easily identify with each other. Some of these groups may

¹⁰ Johnstone, Patrick; Operation World; p. 655.

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even be a significant force within the social structure of your city. And although they may or may not be the logical targets for the planting of new churches, discovering the existence of such groups and what brings them together can become valuable information in the planning of evangelistic strategies. Examples of such groups might be occupational clusters such as health care workers or university professors, and the teenage drug culture.

How is the population distributed geographically?

The population density of the various parts of your city is another factor that can relate to the variations we find in the growth of the church. Often the poorer neighborhoods are the most densely populated, but not always. In any event, it is helpful to have a good handle on where greater and lesser absolute numbers of people can be found, as well as where the different social and ethnic groups are concentrated.

Spiritual Mapping (Assessing the Spiritual Environment)

Spiritual mapping is a new and growing discipline among evangelicals. Spiritual mapping can be defined as: "An attempt to see our [city] as it really is, not as it appears to be."¹¹ As was discussed above in the Biblical basis for information gathering, the visible is often only a reflection of the invisible. Dr. C. Peter Wagner explains this as follows:

*An important assumption behind spiritual mapping is that reality is more than appears on the surface. The visible things of our daily life--trees, people, cities, stars, governments, animals, professions, art, behavior patterns--are commonplace and taken for granted. However, behind many visible aspects of the world around us may be spiritual forces, invisible areas of reality that may have more ultimate significance than the visible.*¹²

Therefore, spiritual mapping is the gathering of information in the visible realm that may help us understand what lies beneath the surface in the invisible realm. In actuality, all of the types of information described above regarding the church and its context are part of spiritual mapping, because they all can help us understand the spiritual truths behind physical appearances.

Many people would like to see spiritual mapping as a mystical, esoteric, almost spiritistic type of activity. This has resulted in much controversy over the validity of spiritual mapping as an evangelistic and missiological stratagem. In reality, spiritual mapping is not as mystical as some would lead us to believe, as George Otis, Jr. explains:

While spiritual mapping may be a means whereby we can see beneath the surface of the material world, however, it is not magic. It is subjective only in that it is a skill that is born out of right relationship with God and a love for his world. It is objective in that it can be verified (or discredited) by history, sociological observation and God's word.

¹¹ Wagner, C. Peter; Breaking Strongholds in Your City; p. 14.

¹² Ibid.; p. 49.

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*Demystified, spiritual mapping is a heavy schedule of hard, disciplined work. Those who are not up to community networking, rigorous research and long hours before God in prayer, need not apply.*¹³

Some would wish to believe that spiritual mapping is necessarily a quick and simple process that anyone can apply to his church, neighborhood or city. The danger in such an assumption is that having partial information can at times be misleading and can cause us to jump to wrong conclusions. Spiritual mapping is a long process that requires a lot of time, effort and resources to be done correctly.

The demands of the process need to be considered carefully when deciding upon the size of an area to be studied.

*After receiving a clear word from the Lord to proceed, the first step in launching your spiritual mapping campaign is to determine how much territory you are going to cover. It is important to keep in mind here that the dimensions of your task (measured in terms of geography and population) will have a direct bearing on the length of time it will take to complete the study. . . . On average, it will take a competent, part-time team between two and three years to finish a modest sized project (for example, a large neighborhood or a medium town). Larger tasks require longer time frames.*¹⁴

Because of the considerations described by Otis, spiritual mapping in Brazil may only be feasible when undertaken on a city-wide basis, or in neighborhoods of larger cities, with no more than perhaps 150,000 inhabitants.

Spiritual mapping can help us to understand the invisible aspects of both the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. We can better perceive where and how God is blessing a city with His holy presence (Romans 1:19-20), and we can see where Satan has built up strongholds that need to be torn down (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). Spiritual mapping can help us understand the ways in which Satan has blinded the people from hearing the gospel so that we can fight against his evil actions in prayer. Harold Caballeros of Guatemala defines spiritual mapping as follows:

*It is God's revelation about the spiritual situation of the world in which we live. It is a vision that goes beyond our natural senses and, by the Holy Spirit, reveals the spiritual hosts of darkness to us.*¹⁵

Well known intercessor and teacher Cindy Jacobs says,

In my opinion, it is the researching of a city to discover any inroads Satan has made, which

¹³ Otis, George, Jr.; Spiritual Mapping Field Guide; p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid.; p. 19

¹⁵ Wagner, Breaking Strongholds...; p. 125.

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*prevent the spread of the gospel and the evangelization of a city for Christ.*¹⁶

And Victor Lorenzo of Argentina describes it as follows:

*As I see it, spiritual mapping combines research, divine revelation, and confirmatory evidence in order to provide complete and exact data concerning the identity, strategies and methods employed by spiritual forces of darkness to influence the people and churches in a given region.*¹⁷

As the above definitions show, spiritual mapping can be an important tool for helping us to reach our cities for Christ. As George Otis, Jr. puts it,

*. . .the only legitimate purpose for spiritual mapping is the coordination and enhancement of evangelistic initiatives.*¹⁸

It is an unfortunate fact that oftentimes the people interested in and doing spiritual mapping are not in any way connected with those doing the evangelism and church planting. If we are going to encourage spiritual mapping in our city, we must also be committed to a detailed analysis of the results for the enhancement of our evangelistic efforts.

Because of the complexity of the subject, an exhaustive explanation of all of the possible types of information that can be gathered will not be included here. However, a brief description of each category of data (besides the information already described above) will be attempted. To supplement, a list of key questions to ask about your city while doing spiritual mapping will be included in the appendix.

Historical Information

Many cities were founded by people with sinful motives. Sometimes the founders of a city or members of its governmental systems kill previous leaders or expel them from their land in order to gain power and position. Such situations often result in curses and undealt with sin that can have long lasting affects upon the spiritual climate of the city.

Other cities have a history of corrupt leadership, either political, economic, or both, that has exploited the common people for its own gain. This can result in an attitude of hate or distrust toward leadership in general, which can hinder the growth of the church in the city. Sometimes there have been certain types of sinful business practices, or the prevalence of industries that do not please God. For example, the charming coastal town of Paratí, Rio de Janeiro was founded in the sixteenth century as a platform for greedy adventurers looking for gold and gems in Minas Gerais. At its peak, it hosted the trading of slaves, tobacco, and especially pinga, a potent sugarcane liquor. One million kilograms of gold and 100 kilograms of precious stones passed through Paratí, which is

¹⁶ Ibid.; p. 77.

¹⁷ Ibid.; p. 177.

¹⁸ Otis, OpCit.; p. 14.

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why the town was, and still is, surrounded by forts. To this day, more than three hundred years later, Paratí is still known as the cachaça (or pinga) capital of Brazil, and indeed of the world. Infamy of this kind can give Satan an opportunity to work in our communities. Examples of sinful businesses can include contraband, drugs, gambling, prostitution, pornography, etc. Such information must be brought to light in order to uncover sin which is used by the enemy to blind people to the truth of the Gospel.

It is very interesting to compare historical findings of the sort mentioned above with the present locations (or absence) of churches, and to see if there are any correlations. For example, was there a major historical event or cultic ceremony in a section of the city that has fewer churches than the rest? Try to discover if there is any relationship between the ethnic groups that are harder to reach with the gospel and past discrimination or other historical events that could have produced strong feelings directed against the church of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the church was actually involved in these unholy actions of the past and needs to humbly repent before this people group. A classic example of this principle would be the support the church gave to slavery in the United States that Satan has used to this day to cause a certain resistance to the Gospel, especially among young black males. Many times North American Indians are not interested in Christianity because it is the religion of the white men who took their land. Many feel that the difficulties in reaching the Muslim world to this day are at least in part due to the violence practiced in the name of Christ during the Crusades of the Middle Ages.

The relationship of a city to other neighboring cities and to the rest of a country can also give us insight into spiritual realities. Does the city play a major role in the life of the country or region? Are there any treaties or alliances that the city has made, and have any of these been broken? Have wars or bloodshed been part of the city's history?

In terms of more recent history, it is important to identify what are the traditional values and virtues of a city. Perhaps a strong work ethic or solid family structures have been stabilizing influences in the community. Perhaps the government or the business community has traditionally looked after the people in a responsible way. Is there any sign of these traditional values breaking down or changing? For example, in many parts of the world the family is losing its influence. This type of information can be invaluable in assessing the ways in which the enemy is currently attacking society and thus useful for the development of effective evangelistic strategies.

Organizations operating in the city

Many times organizations that operate in a city and which hold much power can become concerned that their influence will be weakened if people turn to Christ. This is especially true of non-Christian religions. What religions are active in your city? These need to be a target of our prayers and our evangelistic efforts. Also, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:20, ". . . the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons. . ." These demons do not want to give up this worship. In fact, Satan's great fall from heaven occurred because he desired worship that was only meant for God (Isaiah

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14:11-17). And again, in his temptation of Christ, Satan tried to get Jesus to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:9). Therefore, besides the human leaders of non-Christian religions who will be concerned about the loss of followers to the Christian churches, the demons behind these religious organizations will offer resistance on a spiritual plane as well.

Another type of organization that will be of interest are the cults and secret societies which operate in our cities. Such organizations frequently have practices involving satanic rituals which attempt to invoke the power of Satan in a city, business or other situation for the personal gain and power of its participants. Other organizations may promote secular humanistic efforts which go against the cause of Christ, such as abortion, for example. In any case, their existence, stated purposes, and realm of activity should be known, as well as their secret or undercover activities. In addition, other organizations such as trade or professional unions which may have other, more hidden, agendas can come into this category as well.

Finally, some organizations, often even with government funds, may erect monuments or "beautify" a city by providing art work and/or culturally significant murals, etc. Although this may appear to be simply a benevolent gesture, there can be, at times, hidden dedications to Satan or other wicked entities which were made in exchange for prosperity or other material and spiritual blessings. It is important to study the art work, monuments, statues, and even physical arrangements of important buildings in a city. These can be types of idols behind which demons will hide to get the glory and worship that only God deserves.

Spiritual climates

The ultimate objective of spiritual mapping is to enable the church of Jesus to discern the spiritual realities and truths behind visible manifestations in our cities. There is much disagreement in the church today about the validity of the concept of territorial spirits. Many feel that their existence cannot be substantiated from Scripture, while others think it is obvious. It is not within the scope of this book to discuss this question in depth. However, we feel that the fact that there is demonic opposition to the work of evangelism is sufficient reason to study spiritual factors. We desire to better discern the ways the enemy may be working in our city. "For we are not unaware of his schemes." (2 Corinthians 2:11). Disagreements over the form that the demonic presence may take, whether it be territorial spirits, demonic opposition, possession, or oppression, etc., can be used by Satan to cause the body of Christ to stray from the real work of evangelism that needs to be done.

God can speak through the power of the Holy Spirit to anyone He pleases. The contributions of a person who claims to have a direct revelation from God about a certain strategy of Satan to oppose the spread of the Gospel can be a valuable addition to the work of spiritual mapping, and should be heard. However, such words need to be verified and confirmed through other sources as well. Leaders responsible for the gathering and analyzing of spiritual mapping data need to create channels for these people who may have the gift of discernment or receive words of knowledge from the Lord to share their insights. This information must then be considered in light of Scripture

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and the other information being collected.

A word of caution to those who have the gift of discernment or who receive words of knowledge from the Lord: just because God shows you a problem to be dealt with does not mean that you are necessarily part of the solution. God has given different gifts to different people in the body, and those with gifts of leadership should be in positions to lead the people forward. Your gift was given from God for use in the context of His body. If you lose patience and go out from under the authority that God has placed over you, you run a great risk of not producing spiritual fruit, and perhaps worse yet, of suffering spiritual attack from the enemy. Pray for your leaders, that God will open their hearts to hear you and to lead His people. Don't push or challenge their authority.

Available Tools

We have been able to give only a basic summary of the types of information that would be useful to gather in order to more effectively evangelize your city. There are other sources available for those who would desire to go further and deeper in their evaluations.

On the local church or denominational level, *The Church Growth Survey Handbook*, by Bob Waymire and C. Peter Wagner, published in Brazil by Editora Sepal, gives an excellent description of the information that would be useful for the institution of the church itself. It also teaches the user how to analyze the data that is gathered and how to develop analyses and graphs to better understand the data and explain its findings.

For a city as a whole, we have included in Appendix 2 sample surveys for basic research and in Appendix 3 one for a more in-depth study of a city, including both information on the church and on the context.

Finally, as mentioned above, we have included in Appendix 1 a listing of questions for spiritual mapping taken from the last chapter of C. Peter Wagner's book, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*. These questions, for the most part, can be applied to your local church, neighborhood, city, or region of a country, but have been worded for use with a city in this appendix. These are specific questions you will want to try to answer about the area you are studying in spiritual mapping.

Part III: How to Get the Information

Characteristics of a Spiritual Mapper or Researcher

The first step in gathering information about your city is to get help. The job is too big for only one person, and God says different things through different people. Different people have different gifts as well. One person may be good at organizing the workers to get the job done, another good at

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library research, and another still at analyzing the data and perceiving its implications for evangelism. It is also a very good idea to have several people or work groups deal with the information independently to see if they come to the same conclusions. This is a way to be sure that God is speaking to the church, because He often confirms His direction through various parts of the body of Christ.

When seeking the people that should participate in a research or spiritual mapping project, the spiritual maturity of the people needs to be considered. These people will be gathering information and interpreting that information in order to direct the work of the body of Christ in your church and in your city. They should always work under the authority of the church leaders. But since their work will be influencing the body of Christ, they will also be exercising leadership within that body. Therefore many of the requirements for spiritual leadership should hold for these people as well:

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:6-9)

This point is important, not only because the quality of the people affects the quality of the work, but also because these people could be subject to a stricter judgment from God. James 3:1, which refers to teachers, can also apply to researchers who will teach with the results of their work:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

In addition, as this work is a direct affront on the strongholds of Satan, it can be expected that the enemy will counter attack these people and their families. They need a certain level of spiritual maturity to resist these satanic attacks. Finally, without living a holy life, the researcher will have little authority to speak, even though his results may be quite valid and applicable.

George Otis, Jr. sets forth several characteristics of a good spiritual mapper which we feel can apply to all type of spiritual information gathering. To explain his reasons for delineating these characteristics, he says,

While much has been written in recent years about the qualities of a good counselor, missionary or church administrator, there is virtually no literature on the subject of what it takes to be a good spiritual mapper. Given this dearth of information, we developed this chapter to help give research team captains at least some idea as to what kind of people they ought to look for.¹⁹

¹⁹ Otis; Spiritual Mapping Field Guide; pp. 21-23.

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A summary of these attributes follows:

Right Motive: Once again, the motivating force behind all spiritual mapping activity should be evangelism. . .

Servant Attitude: Spiritual mappers should be team players whose ambition is to serve one another, the larger body of Christ, and the lost whose circumstances they are investigating. Those individuals who are not open and humble, who like to maintain the illusion that they are part of some exclusive unit that is "in the know," need to be screened out and dropped from the team.

Accountability: Those who are eager to poke their noses into the heart of darkness but are unwilling to submit to leadership oversight are a danger to themselves, their teammates, and possibly the cause of Christ. . . . Accountable team members are covered team members.

Spiritual Balance: Given the fact that Satan is a known liar and deceiver, anyone who would endeavor to research his kingdom needs to have command over their spiritual equilibrium. Spiritual mappers who are overly mystical are in danger of projecting imaginary phantoms onto the canvas of reality. Those who are overly conservative are liable to miss seeing real dragons. . . .

Good Work Habits: . . . Like any other worthwhile kingdom endeavor, spiritual mapping demands diligent, resourceful and honest people.²⁰

Organizing for the task

Types of Jobs to be done

Although, the way that the division of labor works out in each situation will vary greatly, especially depending upon the people available and their specific gifts and skills, there are several areas that will always need to be covered. Depending upon the size of the undertaking, one person could perhaps do two jobs, but it would be best to seek a different person for each of these areas so as to not overload any one person. In most cases, it is expected that the workers will not be able to commit full time to this work, but will probably maintain other jobs and/or ministries while undertaking projects involving research and information gathering.

Project Coordination:

Every project needs someone who will coordinate the activities of the others. It is important that the person in charge have a good hold on the vision and purposes of the research project. He needs to

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 21-22.

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be able to communicate to the other workers the reasons for the work and to be able to apply this knowledge in setting priorities for information gathering. He will also have to be able to communicate clearly with the other evangelical leaders of the community in order to develop support and cooperation for the project. Finally, he will have to lead the effort to show the implications and applications of the results of the research to the church at large.

Library Research:

A large portion of the information needed for developing strategies for reaching cities is already available in libraries, government records, and community archives. These sources need to be exhausted so that the research team can spend its valuable time on gathering new information that has not yet been developed and at validating the information that already exists.

Your team member working in this area needs to be a person who likes to read and study books. He or she needs to be able to exhaustively search down detailed paths of information sources and glean that which is useful to the cause of Christ. At times the most useful information may have been gathered for other purposes, and therefore creativity and resourcefulness are needed to be able to find this information. This person needs to be able to tabulate the data found and provide summaries that will be used by the rest of the group to tie in with the other information collected.

Field and Telephone Research:

In order to gather new information, it is necessary to have a lot of contact with people. These contacts may be by telephone or by personal visits, using formal surveys or doing less formal interviews with the people that are being sought out. In any event, the person who works in this area needs to be a "people person." It is also important to be articulate in order to adequately explain to those that are contacted the purpose of the interview or survey, and to ask and rephrase questions in order to get useful answers.

It is also good for this person to be a keen observer and good judge of character so that he can evaluate the sincerity of the respondent. Many people give answers without sufficient thought just to finish an interview more quickly, rather than being careful to give accurate information. Others may exaggerate to make their work look more successful. The researcher should be sufficiently astute, both culturally and socially, to be able to perceive these situations and make note for further verification of the information.

Computer Data Input and Analysis:

Although every aspect of the research on a city can be done by hand, the computer is an excellent tool for organizing and analyzing large amounts of data. The person on the research team who works in this area needs to be familiar with database and spreadsheet analysis. It is also very valuable to be well-versed in computer graphics and mapping so as to be able to better communicate

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the results of the research project.

The computer operator needs to understand the limitations of computer analysis. Some people enjoy working with their computers so much, and they find so much satisfaction from the good-looking outputs they can obtain, that they waste many precious hours working on a small aspect of the project that will be of little benefit to the overall thrust in the final analysis. He must be willing to take correction and adapt in accordance with the needs of the project's leadership. He should always be willing to submit any graph or map that will be used for communicating the information to the evaluation of someone who is not part of the project, since the tendency is to try to communicate so much information in one figure that the main message ends up being lost or diffused. In summary, the computer operator cannot be such a technocrat that he is unable to fit his work into the bigger picture.

Communications and Publications

All of the work of gathering and analyzing information about a city is useless unless the people who can make a difference in that city, namely the church of Jesus Christ, receives and understands the implications of the information and makes appropriate changes and adjustments to their ministry activities accordingly. Therefore, a key person in the whole research process is the person who will be responsible for communicating this information to those who will put it to use. This person needs to know how to communicate detailed information in a clear and simple manner. He or she needs to be capable in written as well as verbal communication.

It may be necessary to develop only written reports for a short-term project, but a monthly periodical will be also useful for a more long-term project of reaching a city for Christ. In either case, the person in charge of communications must be able to integrate good explanations with clear, simple graphics in order to explain the results in a way that the non-technical person will understand.

Intercessory Prayer Support:

As in any redemptive ministry, prayer protection is a necessary element. The project of gathering information needs to be bathed in prayer. Committed intercessors need to be kept informed of achievements through regular communication in order to accompany progress in the spiritual realm.

In addition, the intercessors should ask God to reveal answers to the questions the project is trying to investigate, especially the spiritual questions related to spiritual mapping listed in the appendix. The intercessors need to be balanced, spending much time in prayer. They must also spend time in God's word and with God's people in order to avoid over-subjective interpretations of spiritual impressions. They should be trained to journal what they believe God is saying so that they can clearly present their feelings, and so that their findings can be evaluated by the project leadership.

Research and Spiritual Mapping Teams

Several different ways of organizing research work groups have been attempted. George Otis, Jr., for example, recommends three units: the archival unit for library research, the mobile unit for field research, and the intercessory unit. Harold Caballeros of Guatemala, on the other hand, recommends organization into teams based on the type of information sought rather than on the location in which the information may be found. Caballeros suggests,

To do the job, we divide ourselves into three teams, each being assigned to one of the three areas of research...the three working teams are assigned respectively to research historical factors, physical factors, and spiritual factors.²¹

The spiritual mapping questions included in the appendix are organized according to the three divisions suggested by Caballeros.

Likewise, a number of different opinions regarding the sharing or separating of data exist. Caballeros affirms that it is best to have each team work separately so to not bias other teams by their findings:

The teams are not allowed to communicate with each other. This provides us with an information cross-check from each of the three areas, enabling us to receive confirmation, which adds credibility to our results.

Otis, however, believes there is value in sharing findings. He affirms,

In addition to the clear benefits of collaborative interaction. . . and stimulation. . . , there are also advantages to maintaining one set of data files. . . . In addition to the expense of maintaining dual computer and/or hard file systems, if the team is not in routine communication with itself, there is a good chance that certain materials--and even certain people--will be harvested twice.

It is interesting to note that, besides the practical aspect of dividing up the work to be done, both Otis and Caballeros point out the importance of having the data confirmed from various sources in order to validate it. Caballeros emphasize this by saying,

When we have completed the research on all three factors, we turn it over to a mature group of leaders and intercessors to evaluate the information. . . . We have found that research on each of the three factors will confirm and complement the work of the other two if we are accurately hearing what the Spirit is saying to us.²²

Finally, one tendency to be avoided is that of reporting our findings too soon. We need to be patient and wait for the Lord to confirm the results in our hearts and in those of our spiritual leaders. Otherwise we may jump to conclusions that the enemy will use to lead us astray and make our work

²¹ C. Peter Wagner; Breaking Strongholds . . .; p. 139.

²² *Ibid.*; p. 144.

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ineffective, thus discrediting the work of research. Therefore, whatever structure you choose to organize the work in your city, build in several levels of redundancy, cross-checks, and evaluation by mature Christian leaders.

How Much Information to Gather

As alluded to above, it is usually more useful to divide the research of a city into first, a basic study, and then a more in-depth study. There are several reasons for these two stages. First of all, the benefits of doing the research usually need to be demonstrated in order to generate enough support and assistance to do a thorough study. Secondly, if an attempt is made at the beginning to gather too much information, the initial study will be unnecessarily complicated and take too long. Beginning with simpler, more basic studies, will allow you to correct weaknesses in surveys and make adjustments to data analysis programs before investing huge quantities of time and money in less than effective ways. A third and related reason is that with a basic survey of the church and the context, enough information can be assembled for the churches to begin to redirect some of its intercessory, church planting and evangelistic efforts. If all of the information possible had to be gathered before beginning to apply any of the results to the reaching of the city, time would be lost during which people could be hearing the Gospel.

The basic study should include general information such as location and attendance or membership for every church in the city. In addition there should be an in-depth study of several growing churches as models. In terms of the context, the population in each of the neighborhoods of the city should be known, as well as the size and location of each significant ethnic and social grouping. This information should reveal enough unreached pockets to show the need for creating evangelistic strategies which include church planting in order to reach the city. A sample survey of churches for this stage is included in the appendix.

The in-depth study can include much more information on specific churches and ministries in order to uncover the evangelistic strategies and methods that have been most effective in the city at both the local church and collective level. It should also include historical and cultural information in order to better understand the people to be reached. In contextual terms, it can offer a more complete picture of the ethnic and social distribution of the city, as well as highlight governmental activities, plans for city growth and development, etc. Finally, the questions on spiritual mapping included in the appendix should be used to uncover additional information to direct intercessory, evangelistic and spiritual warfare ministries.

Once these two stages of research have been completed, the church of the city should develop an ongoing project to reach the entire city for Christ. Once such a project is in place, there is a need for concurrent research to maintain the information up-to-date. Also, there will be a need for periodic studies to evaluate the progress of the project to reach the city against the goals that the church has agreed upon.

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Where to Find the Information

Previously Published Information

As mentioned above, much useful information is already available, especially contextual information. Population figures by neighborhood, ethnic group and social class are normally kept by the census bureau, the city planning commission and the mayor's office. Another possible source of such information is the Chamber of Commerce, or other trade or business associations. Many times the information that is collected for sales and business decisions can be applied to the expansion of God's kingdom as well. At times these data are published in book form and can be purchased at a reasonable price. Other times, special texts may only be available for use within a reference room, and you will need to copy those data that are of interest. We have found the staff of the library of the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geology and Statistics) to be cooperative in helping us find data about the nation of Brazil, as well as its regions and municipalities. It is very important to clearly indicate the source of any information copied so as to be able to return later to get more data and/or to validate the information with other references.

Depending on the size of the divisions being studied, it is also possible to get some information through computer modem bulletin board services. For example, the Brazilian census bureau has made much of its data (down to the municipality level) available "on line." This has made it very convenient to telephone in and perform an inquiry on any town or city as to the population, number of evangelicals, ethnic mix, etc. Although such data must be verified afterwards, it is a very good starting point and can help a research team plan and prioritize additional data gathering activities.

Another excellent source of information, especially contextual information, is public or university libraries. Many libraries maintain in their stacks all the known books and publications that pertain to the history of their city or region. They also may have historical files of maps that will show how a city has grown and changed over the years. This information could prove useful, especially in the spiritual mapping of the city.

Newspapers and magazines are another good place to look for information about a city. These are frequently available in libraries, but can also be found in the offices of local newspaper and magazine publishers. They may have a file of past publications, occasionally even indexed by subject to facilitate your study. A word of caution is necessary here concerning the reliability of media figures. The numbers cited in such publications are almost always secondary sources (i.e. they have been quoted to reporters by others who actually did the counting or even others who just heard the numbers somewhere), and it is necessary to seek out the original source before accepting any quantitative data as fact. A good example is the reporting of the number of participants at the 1993 March for Jesus in São Paulo cited in the periodical O Diário Popular on June 13, 1993. This newspaper reported a crowd of 20,000. March organizers, however, evaluated the size of the crowd to be more than ten times that number. Media bias, as well as personal and ministry bias (i.e. the tendency to under or over estimate based on personal preferences) must always be considered in

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trying to ascertain the truth. We must also always try to understand the logic and methodology that was used to produce a number we wish to quote, and we must be willing to verify this methodology before we use the number for our own planning.

Museums are full of historical facts which help explain the way in which a city was founded and grew. They also often provide us with a good understanding of the cultural peculiarities of a city or region, which help us discern how to best present the Gospel there.

Finally, in addition to secular sources, many denominations have information on the location and membership of each of their churches. This information is usually held at the national headquarters, but is sometimes also available on the local or regional level. Some denominations even publish an annual listing of their local churches, which can be invaluable in beginning the basic study of the church in a city.

It must be remembered here that many denominational figures are simply estimates and not really the results of actually counting the number of people present and participating in their churches. One indication that the numbers are estimates and not actual data is to look for round numbers. For example in a recent publication, one Brazilian denomination was listed as having 5,000 churches and 1,000,000 members while another was listed as having 4,492 churches and 720,703 members.²³ It is likely that the first set of figures is an estimate and the second an actual counting. Another potential problem with published church membership figures is that there are often people who jump around between two, three or four different churches, and they can be counted on the roll as members of each. For these and other reasons, it is imperative that we get out and generate our own information in order to verify and fill in any holes in the published data we find.

Getting your own information

In order to have a complete picture of the church in your city, it is necessary to visit as many churches as possible. It is preferable to visit during a service to make notes on the type of people present, the type of program offered, and to count the actual number of people in attendance. It is important to make your own count of the number of people present, because our experience shows that even the pastor can mistakenly estimate up to twice the true size. A visit should also be paid to the pastor, if possible, on a day other than Sunday. A local pastor is usually so occupied with church affairs, and with the many people who want to talk to him, that he will not be able to give you his full attention on a Sunday. In addition to the pastors, it is good to visit the leaders of all significant para-church ministries in a city as well.

Before visiting or interviewing a church, pastor or evangelical leader, several preparatory steps need to be carried out. First of all, a survey questionnaire needs to be prepared that an interviewer can fill out during a visit. This questionnaire should have its items worded clearly so that there is no doubt as to its intent, and it should leave room for the interviewer to make adequate notes. Every survey must be field tested beforehand with a sample group of people similar to the people to be

²³ Johnstone, Patrick; *Operation World*; p. 128.

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interviewed. This step cannot be skipped, because it is here that many key areas of potential confusion and misinterpretation will be discovered. The questionnaire should be revised and retested until it is easy to use and does not require detailed interpretation by the interviewer. During this test period, the average time required to complete the interview should be measured in order to be able to state the time that will be necessary when scheduling the interview. There should be a basic questionnaire for all churches and also a more detailed questionnaire for follow-up visits to potential model churches. It is also important to have a standardized form available to use while visiting worship services in order to maintain uniformity among your various field researchers.

All field researchers need to be trained in the techniques of making observations and performing an interview. Good training should enable researchers to understand their mission and organize their work. A summary of tips for field researchers suggested by Roy Wingerd in the Dawn Research Handbook is as follows:

Work in Teams: Whenever possible, send field researchers out in teams of two. During the interview, one can be asking questions while the other is recording the responses. This will also enhance understanding if there is any unclear point afterwards.

Find the Leader: Seek to find the head pastor or director of the ministry. If he cannot be found or is unavailable, try to find another key person who would know the information you are looking for. If no one can be found, find out the what leader's schedule is. Come back another day.

Be Prompt: Whenever possible, make appointments with the pastor ahead of time. Always be prompt to an appointment. Don't take the chance of making the person you are interviewing impatient because you made him wait.

Introduce the Survey: Always be polite. Introduce yourself, explain what you are doing and present the pastor with a letter of introduction. Explain that you need his help to understand what God is doing in your city and in his church or ministry so this can be a blessing to others.

Ask the Questions Systematically: Be familiar with the questionnaire. Always ask the questions in the same order. Never disagree with the pastor's answers. Show that you are interested and understand perhaps by nodding your head and restating what you have heard.

Maintain the Focus: NEVER get into discussions or arguments about doctrine, theology, politics or strategies. You are there to learn from this leader not to teach him. Do not let the leader go off on a tangent when answering the questions.

Record the Responses Accurately: Record all responses correctly on the questionnaire. Return to questions that were skipped. Ask him to clarify answers that you did not understand.

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Write answers clearly. Repeat answers as you are writing them down. Do not allow the person to fill out the form for you as this may bias the results. Make sure you write down the date of the interview and the name of the person you interviewed.

Get New Contacts: Ask the pastor or leader for the names and locations of other churches or ministries in his area that you may not have yet found. Also ask for other contacts in his church or ministry who you could contact for more information and details. These people will be good contacts for a more in-depth study of his work.²⁴

Most of the points summarized above are universally agreed upon by professionals involved in survey research. They are necessary in order to obtain valid information from different people when a variety of people do the interviewing. The purpose is to reduce the variations which may result from the personalities of the interviewers and to not allow the interviewer or his methods to influence the responses given. A person who cannot adhere to these rules should not be sent out to do field research. One of the benefits of sending out teams of two is to ensure that these rules are followed.

At times surveys are sent out by mail or in magazines or periodicals. Sometimes they are distributed in meetings where a variety of different opinions can be obtained with a much smaller time investment. Such surveys can be of benefit in discovering the opinions and felt needs of the people present or of those who receive the periodical, but they usually are not valid enough to represent the population as a whole. The return rate of a survey included in a magazine is rarely more than 5%. It may reach 10 or 15% if a gift is offered to those who return the survey. If surveys are distributed in a meeting or group gathering, the response is usually less than 20% if respondents are asked to turn in the completed survey at a later time, but it may grow to as much as 80 or 90% if time is given in the meeting to fill in the survey and it is collected immediately. In any event, the lower the response rate, the greater the tendency will be to receive responses from people who are very interested in the results, which means that you are hearing from only a certain type of person. This will bias the conclusions. Therefore it is essential, in this type of broad survey, that questions be included which will help you identify the kind of respondent you have attracted. These questions can include age, sex, denomination or theological persuasion, position, etc. By understanding your respondent, you can, in part, discover the type of bias that has been created and interpret the results accordingly. As applied to the development of evangelistic strategies for a city, such surveys can be helpful in identifying subjects, situations or other areas to be studied in greater detail.

Door-to-door surveys are very useful for local churches to be able to develop evangelistic strategies for the neighborhood in which they are located. They can uncover information on the ethnic and social mix of their neighborhood as well as the age brackets and felt needs of the people who live in the area. Local churches should be encouraged to do such studies and to give copies of their results

²⁴ Wingerd, Roy; DAWN Research Handbook; p. 51. These points are adapted rather than quoted verbatim, because Roy Wingerd's treatment is in reference to interviewing denominational leaders as part of a nationwide survey instead of local church pastors as part of a citywide survey.

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to the city research committee for comparison with other areas.

In addition to their being given to the field researchers, the survey questions should also be made available to the intercessory prayer support group. The intercessors will take these questions before the throne of grace, and at times they may receive impressions from the Lord as to where to more efficiently find the answers. Their prayers should also be sought as a protective covering for the field workers who are out making contacts and interviewing church leaders. The enemy will do all he can to cause problems in finding the right people, break down communication, and disrupt the work in many other ways.

Dealing with Different Churches

In any movement which involves different churches, denominations with diverse doctrinal positions, varying organizational structures, and dissimilar philosophies of ministries, there are bound to be difficulties in communication and, at times, open resistance to cooperation. Many times this resistance is due to a past history of competition, or even open criticism between different groups. Other times it may be due to the fear of losing members to other churches if the church leadership should openly support other churches.

One way to minimize these problems is to request letters of presentation from leaders from a variety of different denominational affiliations. The research project could have a letter of endorsement from a board of reference made up of representative leaders, or it could be written by a representative of the interdenominational pastors' council of the city and signed by the leaders of such a council. These letters should be presented by the field researchers at first contact with a pastor or leader.

It is also helpful to emphasize in all communications that the research effort is being undertaken as a service to the local churches of the city. It should be made clear that all results will be available for the churches to use, and that the primary purpose of the project is to help the churches be more effective in their efforts to reach their city. It should also be made clear that no negative examples will be specifically cited without the consent of the church in question.

As the project progresses and specific models can be published showing the utility of the results and how they can help the growth of the church, credibility will be increased and more people will be willing to participate. For this reason, it is best to perform a basic study first and publish the results promptly. This will result in more assistance and greater participation in future, more in-depth studies.

However, it would be unrealistic to imagine that full 100% participation will be obtained in any citywide project. There will always be churches that will not provide you with their information. We have met church leaders who believe that it would be sinful for them and their churches to cooperate in a city-wide effort, as this would mean fellowshipping with others who teach things that

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are "false." Therefore, the size of non-participating churches will have to be estimated based on a visit to a service, or simply an educated guess. If we wait for 100% participation, the project will stagnate. Good projections can be made about the whole church if hard data is available for 70-80% of the church.

Final tips for Uncovering More Data

As has been mentioned, a complete list of existing churches does not exist for most cities. This is becoming more and more true as new denominations and independent churches multiply rapidly. Therefore, a good research project will have to include time and talent to seek out these hidden churches as well. One of the best sources of information about new fledgling churches is asking the local pastors. They usually know something about the new churches that are near their own or that their members may venture out to visit. Be sure to ask them about small churches that meet in homes, garages, and tents or warehouses, as many times these churches will not be registered in any official way and will only be found through word of mouth.

There are several government sources that have, at times, proven useful for finding new churches as well. Most churches, when they are established, will apply for legal recognition in order to open a bank account. The local office that handles the registration of such organizations should have lists available coded by the types of organization. Also, churches will usually apply for an official status which will exempt them from paying income taxes, and they will therefore be registered as such by the internal revenue office.

After exhausting all of these channels, it will probably still be necessary to walk the streets to look for signs that reveal the locations of churches to catch a few that might have been missed. It is also good to plan to patrol the neighborhoods on a Sunday night (or even on a Sunday morning, or a weekday night, depending upon the customs of your neighborhood) to look for the locations of religious meetings based on the comings and goings of people and the sound of praise music. Many gathering places do not have signs indicating they are churches. Any that are found which are not on the list should be noted for further investigation.

If nothing more is done in a research project than to locate all of the evangelical churches in a city, this will be a great contribution to the growth of the church in that city. At least the Body of Christ will be able to see where churches exist and where they do not, so that plans can be made to plant new churches to fill the gaps. However, because of the dynamic situation of the church in most cities, it will be necessary to redo this type of study every couple of years. Many new churches will open their doors and then close within six months. If we keep them on our lists, we will give a false impression of the size of the church. It is also helpful to do a monthly check of the listings of new organizations recognized by the government in order to add new churches to our lists.

Once the churches are located, it is still important to get an accurate picture of the size of each one. Many churches will claim that they have no data to offer about their membership and participation.

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We have discovered several tricks which have proven useful in discovering information about the size of local churches, especially of the traditional denominations, in Brazil. One method is to examine the records of official assemblies. Most churches have regular assemblies on an annual basis, or at least every other year. The minutes of these assemblies need to be registered in a *Cartório*, and they almost always start out with a statement of the number of members and the number of those members who were present at the assembly in order to establish a quorum to do the business at hand. The total number of members may or may not be useful, depending on how well the church maintains membership records. The number of people present, however, will surely be a reasonable measure of those who are committed enough to the church to want to take part in its decision-making processes.

Another place to find information about the number of people committed to a local church is to find the treasurer of the congregation. Treasurers usually keep records of how many people contribute each month to the work of the church through tithes and offerings. Sunday school departments also often maintain records of the number of people registered for each class and class attendance. Any of these figures can be useful to the overall city research, and more helpful still to the leadership of the local church in which they were gathered as it plans for its future growth and development.

Part IV: Putting the Information to Use Analysis, Interpretation and Communication

Once the data has been assembled, it must be analyzed. Bob Waymire has said that, "The analysis process is a powerful tool in unlocking the hidden secrets and potential of information."²⁵ This analysis is hard work. It must be done in a detailed and meticulous manner so as to uncover relationships between the facts that will point to reasons and trends. It must be done in an attitude of prayer, asking God to give His insight as well. It is important to seek out those people with analytical minds to work on this phase of the project, and we must remember that these may not be the same people as the field or library researchers who gathered the data in the first place.

With reference to the importance of data analysis, Donald McGavran says,

Statistical knowledge is not enough. To know the structure is interesting, but is important only as it leads on to understanding why the church and its homogeneous units have grown, plateaued, and occasionally diminished. The goal of church growth studies is not merely to assemble correct facts as to the quantity of growth. It is not sufficient to see the structure clearly--though this must be done. The goal is through evaluation of the facts to understand the dynamics of church growth. Only as, on the basis of assured growth facts, we see the reasons for increase, the factors which God used to multiply His church, and the condition under which the church has spread or remained stationary, do we understand church

²⁵ Waymire, Bob; Information Strategy Manual; p. 8-2.

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*growth.*²⁶

The two main questions that our data analysis should try to answer are: "Why are things the way they are now?" and "Where are things going?" We need to have a good idea of why the church and the city are in the condition they are. Why has the church grown in this place or among this group of people and not in another place? Why is there a concentration of poverty here and wealth there?

As for where things are going, we need to be able to project how many evangelicals there will be in a city if things continue as they have been for the next 5 or 10 years. We need to see population growth trends so that plans can be made to plant new churches where the people will be. This type of analysis is usually the most powerful in motivating the church to action.

Guidelines and Precautions for the Analyst

The most important rule in data analysis and interpretation is to not let your preconceived ideas influence the results. As Roy Wingerd writes,

*Good analysis begins by earnestly seeking the truth. Pray for a clear mind, free of preconceived ideas and conclusions.*²⁷

If the facts don't prove it, don't report it. This does not mean that you cannot start out with any assumptions. What it does mean is that we need to be brutally honest when we attempt to prove our assumptions. For example, if we feel that a certain type of evangelistic program is most effective in helping churches grow, that assumption will need to be tested against the actual growth statistics of the church where it is applied, as well as in comparison with other similar churches that do not use the same method.

A second and equally important rule of interpretation is that no interpretation we derive can conflict with the record or principles of Scripture. If the data is not supported, nor refuted Biblically, it can be kept, but with caution. If it disagrees with scripture, it must be discarded as an attempt by the enemy to mislead us.

One of the most important rules regarding the presentation of analyses and interpretations is that they must be presented in an attitude of humility. Many researchers and spiritual mappers lose the hearing and respect of people who can transform their results into practice because they are too dogmatic in their presentation, only to later be proved wrong. If an arrogant member of our research team is rightly refuted even on a minor point, the whole research project can lose credibility. While we may be quite confident of our results, we must always be aware that new information can modify them and give us new insight.

Another danger to be avoided is that of making sweeping conclusions and statements about a whole group that may apply to only a small sample. This is a very common error that will easily discredit a

²⁶ McGavran, Donald, A.; Understanding Church Growth; pp. 123-124 (or 91-92 in 3rd edition)

²⁷ Wingerd, Roy, The DAWN Research Handbook; p. 71.

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research project, because as soon as one exception is found, the principle is no longer valid. Conclusions should always be worded as follows: "A study several churches seems to indicate that (this factor) is important, but this needs to be confirmed on a broader scale."

When using data to draw conclusions, data with a greater level of confidence should be considered first. The confidence of data depends on several factors. The first is the integrity of the source. This depends on the honesty and reliability of the person who gave the information. If the person has any vested interests which may influence his judgment, the data should be checked for confirmation by other sources. We also need to look at the past reliability of data from this person, when good cross checks were available. This leads to the next test of the reliability of data. If two or more sources are providing the same information, the level of confidence increases tremendously. Care must be taken here to be sure that all of the people interviewed are not quoting the same source. Finally, data which is most relevant to the specific questions being asked should be given priority treatment.

There is a tendency on the part of researchers (especially those who particularly appreciate detail work) to want to communicate everything they know and to investigate every possible nuance of the data they gather. The danger in this is that it can present a confusing message to those who would benefit most from an uncomplicated presentation of facts. Keep things simple. When providing interpretations on data relating to the growth of the church in our cities, it is necessary to avoid abstract statements and vague inferences. The results must be presented in a practical, straightforward way that will give direction to the work of prayer and evangelism in your city.

When presenting data to the church at large, it is important to not emphasize negative results. This will reduce the level of trust that churches will have in the research effort, because they will always wonder if they will be the next example to be torn apart. Instead, present the positive examples and factors for growth. When illustrating non-growth, try to emphasize the positive examples of churches that are growing in similar circumstances, and hopefully those who are not growing will see the difference and make corrections.

Some common errors in the data analysis process listed by Roy Wingerd include:

Premature end to data gathering: discontinuing the data-gathering process before sufficient information has been gathered to gain a complete understanding. For example, filling in missing data from a church or organization with unreliable estimates instead of leaving blanks and seeking reliable information at a later time.

Erroneous information: basing analysis on inaccurate, outdated, or unreliable information. . . . When this happens, the analysis cannot be trusted. For example, making statements or conclusions based on opinions or inflated data.

Selective observation: over-looking information about churches that do not fit general

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patterns or conclusions that have already been made. Consequently, analysis is clouded by preconceived ideas. For example, excluding certain data without having solid reasons (e.g. "We cannot include data from that church because everyone knows they keep poor records.").

Made-up information: making up data or explanations to account for information that does not fit general patterns or conclusions. This causes you to miss keen insights and possible alternatives are left undiscovered. For example, giving negative labels to churches that do not fit a pattern (e.g. "The only way that denomination grows is by 'sheep stealing'").

Overgeneralization: making general conclusions about the whole church or the city based on information that may be true about only a small sample. For example, suggesting that a method will work everywhere just because it seemed to work in a few situations or among a certain people group.

Illogical reasoning: reasons for growth or non-growth that are not logical, or explanations of cause and effect relationships that are not really supported by the data.

Ego involvement: giving undue credit to a church for good growth, or placing unbalanced blame on the city and context for non-growth of the church. This destroys the integrity of the analysis. For example, stating conclusions that justify pride or excuse poor stewardship and ineffective methods.

Spiritualization: only giving supernatural reasons for the growth or non-growth of the Church. All growth must be attributed to the Lord working through His Church; many obstacles may be attributed to the enemy. However, these reasons may prevent us from learning from our strengths and weaknesses.²⁸

Tools for use in Analysis

To best interpret the data, maps and graphs should be prepared to illustrate the information and facilitate understanding. These should be prepared after performing certain basic calculations have been performed on the data gathered about the church and the context. It is very important that these tools be used, because even the most astute observer cannot clearly see trends and implications by only looking at a table of numbers. As Dr. McGavran says,

Columns of figures giving the membership of any church and its homogeneous units contain locked-up knowledge. By careful study the figures can be forced to reveal their secrets, but the process is tedious. When, however, each set of figures is transformed into a graph of growth, the secrets leap out at the reader. Those who would want to understand church growth should construct line graphs showing at a glance what has transpired. They can then ask why it

²⁸ Adapted from: Wingerd, Roy; The DAWN Research Handbook; pp. 74-75.

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*happened.*²⁹

It is best to have someone who is familiar with the graphic analysis of trends and rates to help with this step, although it is, in fact, fairly straight forward. For those who want a basic explanation of the mechanics of doing these calculations and drawing the graphs, we recommend again The Church Growth Survey Handbook. Although the calculations and graphs in that text are more directed at the study of one local church or one denomination, they can be easily applied to a group of churches in a city or neighborhood as well.

A list of the specific numbers that should be calculated from the data is detailed below. One should be able to calculate these quantities from the data generated by a basic study, and they can later be verified through the more in-depth study of the city. Many of them can also be calculated for a local church. This will be very useful to local church leaders as they plan for growth, and it can also produce case studies for the city-wide research project from which other churches can learn.

I.. The **Annual Growth Rate** should be calculated for each of the last ten years for members, attendance, number of churches and pastors, if possible. Doing this for each year will help show if the growth rate is increasing, decreasing or remaining the same.

II.. The **Average Annual Growth Rate** should also be calculated for the last 10 years and for the first and second five-year periods as well.

III.. Combining the data on number of churches with that of membership and attendance, the **Average Members per Church** and **Average Attendance per Church** can be calculated. These numbers are very useful in determining the potential for growth of the existing churches without planting new ones. Those churches in formation, often referred to as congregations, should be included in this calculation.

IV.. The **Church to Pastor Ratio** can also be calculated to give an idea of the need for trained leadership.

V.. The **Population to Church Ratio** should be calculated for each neighborhood or subdivision in order to locate the areas in greatest need of church planting projects.

VI.. The **Percentage of the Population which Attends Church** and the **Percentage of the Population which is Church Members** should also be calculated.

VII.. **Projections** for the number of church members, church attendees, and number of churches should be calculated for 5 and 10 years. This will show where the church is headed.³⁰

There are also many other numbers which can be calculated which may be of interest, but these are fundamental.

Once the calculations are complete, graphs and maps should be prepared to illustrate the results in a more easily digestible form. All of these graphics can be prepared by hand, but when available, the

²⁹ McGavran, Donald A.; Understanding Church Growth; p.95. (3rd edition)

³⁰ Adapted from: Wingerd. Roy; The DAWN Research Handbook; p. 77.

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use of a good computer graphics package will make the graphs more readable and attractive. There are also excellent computer analytical mapping programs available that will produce professional quality maps to better illustrate the data. A veteran publisher once told us that, whatever else we did to economize and streamline the work of research, never, NEVER "scrimp" on the graphics. They are the key to communicating data. Whether done by computer or by hand, it is important that the graphs and maps be well done and simple to read and understand. They are essential to effectively communicating the results of your studies and hard work. The following is a list of the basic maps and graphs which should be prepared:

VIII.. Make line graphs of the actual growth of the members, attendance, and number of churches over the last 10 years. This should be done for the whole city and each neighborhood and subdivision under study, as well as for local churches as comparative models.

IX.. Make bar graphs of the annual growth rates of members, attendance, and number of churches over the past 10 years.

X.. Make a bar graph comparing the average annual growth rates of the individual churches and denominations for the 10 and 5-year periods calculated.

XI.. Prepare maps showing the locations of the individual churches for the entire city, if not too many to fit on one map, or for each neighborhood if the city is large (i.e. 500,000 residents or more).

XII.. Prepare a map showing the population to church ratio for each neighborhood to show clearly the areas in greatest need of church planting.

Most of these calculations and graphs can be prepared separately for local churches, different denominations, and even specific neighborhoods. Then by comparing the results along with information on the life, program and philosophy of ministry of each group, factors that influence the growth of the church in your city can be revealed.

The results of these calculations and the graphs and maps should be studied by the church leadership, along with any more subjective information gathered through observation, prayer, and spiritual mapping. Reading a written explanation prepared by the research working group of the implications of each of the graphs and maps may be a helpful way to start these discussions. It is helpful to make observations about the trends that the data is showing. For example, one can point out any marked changes in the growth patterns in any particular year, or one can look to see if the growth rates increase or decrease in any certain neighborhood or denomination. Remember that such explanations need to be concise and practical in order to be of help.

Transforming the Results into Action

Once reviewing the information, the leadership will need to prayerfully seek insight as to its meaning. Is there any historical factor that can be correlated with the growth of the church? Are there any spiritual or institutional factors? Was there a citywide crusade or other evangelistic program

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during the last 10 years, and if so, did it significantly affect the growth of the church? Are we satisfied with the current trends and where the church will be in 5 or 10 years? If not, what changes need to be made? What goals should be set? Are there any regions or ethnic or social groups which seem to be neglected by the existing churches? Who can target them?

After the leadership of the pastors' council or other representative leadership studies the results, it is time to schedule a citywide pastors' gathering. As many of the pastors and top leadership of the churches and para-church ministries of the city as possible should be present. The purpose of the meeting will be to disclose the results of the research project. Once presented with the facts, it is hoped that the pastors of the city will be moved to give their support to a movement of prayer, evangelism and church planting to reach the city.

It is very important that there be a balance between the work of spiritual warfare through prayer against the revealed strongholds of Satan and the establishment of new churches. If we concentrate on expelling the kingdom of darkness from our city without planting the kingdom of light in its place, the enemy will only entrench himself stronger than before. Therefore the churches in the city need to be prepared to receive and disciple the converts who will arise from the movement of prayer and evangelism. On the other hand, if plans are made to evangelize without dealing with the sins of the city in humble confession, seeking reconciliation between hurt parties, the expression of community lived out in our churches will be shallow, and the task of sharing the liberating news of Jesus with those who remain spiritually blinded (II Corinthians 3:3-4) will seem arduous and ineffective.

Many feel that special spiritual authority resides with the pastors of the city. Peter Wagner calls them the city's "spiritual gatekeepers."

There is no substitute for the unity of the pastors of the city as a foundation for effective spiritual warfare. The reason for this is that the pastors are the spiritual gatekeepers of the city. This is not to disparage numbers of gifted lay leaders and full-time Christian workers who are not pastors. But it is to point out that in a given city the highest spiritual authority has been delegated to pastors. If we don't know this, Satan certainly does and he does his best to keep pastors from getting together, especially to pray. . . . Joel says, "Gather the elders...into the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord" (Joel 1:14).³¹

In the very least, it can be said that the pastors, to a great extent, control the actions and activities of the body of Christ in a city because of their position of leadership. If they do not commit themselves to reaching the city, the church will not act. If they do not set the example by praying, the church will not be committed to an on-going prayer movement.

Prayer is the Key

The importance of prayer as the foundation of any movement to reach our cities for Christ cannot be

³¹ "C. Peter Wagner; Warfare Prayer; pp. 167-168.

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overemphasized. Prayer should be organized on several different levels throughout the city. As mentioned above, the most fundamental level is that of the pastors of a city praying together. It is recommended that at least every month the pastors of the city meet together in prayer. In neighborhoods or sub-divisions they could meet monthly, except for the week that they meet with the larger group representing the whole city. In some places, a pastoral prayer day or weekend retreat/consultation has been effective in kicking off a long-term prayer movement.³²

Once the pastors are united in their vision for praying for the city, the next step could be to organize a city-wide prayer gathering, often called a "Concert of Prayer." This type of meeting can be very useful in generating interest in the movement to reach an entire city for Christ. It also provides an opportunity to pass on the vision for the way local church prayer meetings can uphold a city-wide movement as a part of their regular agendas. An alternate idea, proposed by the pastors of one of the neighborhoods in São Paulo, is to organize a highly-visible public event such as a neighborhood March for Jesus in which to demonstrate the united vision that the pastors now share. Whatever the sequence, the planning of city-wide prayer and praise gatherings will do much to demonstrate in a public way the unity that the pastors have gained through focused prayer.

As the pastors of the churches become committed to the goal of reaching the city, they can also be encouraged to dedicate a small part of their weekly worship services to the support of the movement. Perhaps a special request can be shared and then the congregation be instructed to divide into groups of 2 or 3 persons to lift up that need before the throne of grace. In order for this to be a viable activity, it is important to communicate regularly with the churches regarding the progress of the movement and its specific prayer requests.

One other method that has proved successful in concentrating prayer energy where it is needed in the city has been through neighborhood prayer cells. Edgardo Silvoso of Harvest Evangelism has promoted this method in several cities in Argentina with great success, and he is now in the process of expanding this ministry into Brazil.³³ These prayer cells are each assigned a certain neighborhood block in which they will begin to pray for the residents. They will ask the needs of the people and take them before God together. As they see God answer prayer, the non-Christian neighbors will want to know the source of this power, and the Gospel can be shared.

The above are only a few ideas for supporting a city-wide movement in prayer. These and other ideas are presented in greater detail in the first volume of the series "Your City for Christ" entitled Ponha os Guerreiros em Marcha: Como Gerar um Movimento de Oração; by Lourenço and Estafânia Kraft and Neuza Itioka; published by Editora Sepal, April 1994.

Keeping Up-to-date

³² Bryant, David; Prayer Pacesetters Sourcebook; pp. 104-109.

³³ Silvoso, Edgardo; "How to Reach a City for Christ"; Tape 7-8 of the Series How to Reach Cities for Christ; Institute in Basic Life Principles; Oak Brook, IL; 1992.

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A City-wide Information Newsletter:

In order to promote better communication among the churches involved in the movement, to motivate the churches to action, to communicate new information gathered which will have an impact on the movement, and to provide information for prayer, a monthly or quarterly newsletter is useful. There are frequently people in journalism and publishing in our churches who can help produce such a publication. In cases where funds are not available to print copies for a wider distribution, it is possible to produce a copy of the newsletter in a format that can be sent to participating churches, and then each church can make copies for its members for distribution during a Sunday service.

Periodic Evaluations:

Once a research project has been executed in a city, and the results put to use by the leadership in establishing goals to reach their city, periodic evaluations of the progress of the church toward reaching the goals will be necessary. The participating churches can be instructed to send in annual reports to update their information. However, it will always be necessary to go after the information from those who forget to submit the reports. This often happens when there are changes in leadership. A new leader may not have been involved in the planning of the original project and may therefore not recognize the commitment his church made. There will also be new churches and denominations coming on the scene which will need to be contacted and brought on board. Finally, there will be changes in the very demographics of the community which will need to be monitored.

It is important that any goals that the church has established be reviewed every year or two in light of the progress that has been made. Adjustments may be necessary. Goals should never be so set in concrete that they cannot be modified. If progress was greater than expected, the goals can be increased, recognizing that God has blessed with more than we imagined possible. If no adjustments are made, the tendency will be to feel no challenge and there will be little motivation to keep going. If the progress has been less than expected, the goals can be adjusted downward. If not, after a few years, the goals will become so abstract a dream that they will lose their meaning and will no longer help us to focus the work of the church.

Establishing an Evangelical Information Center:

One of the best ways to keep up momentum, to creatively manage the new information that will flow in as more churches become committed to the movement, and to plan and execute the periodic evaluations mentioned above, is to establish an information center. This could be a room in a church somewhere in the city where a computer and telephone are available and where the research work group or committee will meet occasionally to plan their work. If a center of this type is not established, the tendency will be for the information to become lost and those in leadership will not be able to access it when they need to. Depending on the size of the city, full-time workers may or may not be called for. This center should be under the authority of the pastors' council or

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association of evangelicals of the city and must submit to the leadership of this group.

Analyzing Trends--Being Prepared

As time goes on, the reliability of the information that is gathered will increase. More people will begin to see the importance of the research and will offer their cooperation. In addition, a greater portion of the information will be that which was specifically generated for and by the movement, and our confidence in it will grow. Also, as good techniques for collecting information are implemented, the methods used for generating analyses will be more consistent. This will make it even more possible to look at the variations in the data over time and project where things are going. As such trends are perceived, the church can be more prepared to meet the challenges that are coming. For example, if it is known that approximately 15 new churches will be established in the next year, the church can already begin training or recruiting the 15 new pastors to lead these churches, with each denomination, neighborhood, etc. assuming its part. This type of preparation will be important in making sure that a movement to reach a city will not stagnate. It will help us have all of the infrastructure and resources in place that are necessary for its continuance until the entire city is reached.

Part V: Take Your City for Christ

When is a city reached and how can we know?

It has been emphasized throughout this book that research, spiritual mapping, and data gathering in general, only make sense as they support evangelism. Matthew 28:19-20 says,

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This passage makes it clear that it is not just the speaking of the Word of God that is our aim. Reaching people means making disciples, which includes baptizing and teaching them. This is only done in the context of the local church. Therefore, it is our understanding that a city will be won only when there are enough strong, strategically placed local churches doing the work of making disciples in that city. To put it another way, in order to consider a city reached, there need to be effective churches that are within easy access to everyone living in that city. These churches must be physically positioned so that everyone can get to at least one of them. They also need to be culturally and socially acceptable so that the non-Christians around them will feel comfortable with the type of people there. Finally, they need to be churches that are growing in a healthy, balanced way, reaching out in evangelism and social ministries to the hurting of the city, and baptizing and teaching the new converts by incorporating them into their fold.

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Each generation is responsible to win it's generation

It may even be that your city was once reached in this way. If that's the case, you need to make sure that it continues to be reached today. Society changes. People move around. The number and distribution of churches in your city 20 years ago may not be adequate to cover your city today. We need only to look at parts of Europe and North Africa (Tunisia is a good example) to recognize the need for constant renewal and expansion. These areas were completely saturated with the Gospel in the second and third centuries; some now have less than one in every thousand inhabitants who would call themselves Christians and most of those foreigners. We need to seek God to protect us from a similar demise of the church in our cities. We must be fervent about reaching our own generation, and responsible in setting up standards and structures that may prove useful to those who follow.

Balanced growth is long-term growth

Although the major emphasis of this book has been on the evangelization of our cities, we cannot overlook the fact that in order to sustain the growth of our churches, we need to be balanced. We need to meet the physical, emotional, and social needs, first of our members, and then of the world around us. We need to train leaders as well as evangelists. We need to look inward while looking outward. One of the essential aspects of staying well and balanced is to be aggressive in discovering ways that God can use us to channel His blessing to the world around us, both near and far.

This is the Great Commission. Christ has given us the authority which was given Him, and we have been instructed to reach the nations. With His strength and by His Spirit, let us reach our cities for Christ!

Appendix 1: QUESTIONS FOR SPIRITUAL MAPPING

These questions are taken from C. Peter Wagner's book on spiritual mapping called, Breaking Strongholds in Your City; Regal Press; 1993, pages 225-230.

Appendix 2: Surveys for Basic Information

The following two surveys are offered as possible models for use in gathering the basic information necessary for effective planning to reach a city. The first, "Basic survey for an Evangelical Church or Organization," should be applied to every known church, or evangelical ministry in the city. The second, "Basic Contextual Data for a City/Neighborhood" is intended to be used only once for each city or for each neighborhood of a larger city.

These surveys should be performed by trained researchers. It is not recommended that they be mailed or left with the leaders to fill out and return as the data will be incomplete and less accurate.

A computer program is being prepared to register and analyze the data from these surveys and should be ready in the near future. If you are interested in the program write Sepal, Research Department, Caixa Postal 7540, 01064-970; São Paulo, SP.

Basic Survey for an Evangelical Church or Organization

Name of the Church or Organization: _____
Street Address: _____
Neighborhood: _____
City: _____; State: _____; ZIP: _____
Telephone: _____; FAX: _____; Email: _____

Mailing Address (if different): _____
Neighborhood: _____
City: _____; State: _____; ZIP: _____

Type of Ministry (choose one): Church; Parachurch; School; Other _____
Denominational Affiliation: _____
Type of Church Tradition: Traditional Denomination; Pentecostal Denomination;
 Independent Traditional; Independent Pentecostal;
 Other (Please Specify) _____

If not a church, what is the primary ministry focus? Evangelism in your city;
 Missions or Evangelism outside your city; Social Ministry
Primary language used: _____; Secondary Language (if any): _____
Date the church first began to meet regularly for Sunday worship (or date normal activities began for parachurch organizations or schools): _____

The Leader:

Name of the Primary Leader: _____
Is he an ordained pastor? Yes; No; Is he Full or Part-time?
Total number of Pastors: _____ Full Time; _____ Part-time
Other leader for more information: _____; Telephone: _____

The Building:

The meeting place: Your own building; Rented facilities
Type of facility: Commercial building; Church building; A home; A tent
 Open Air; Other (please specify): _____
Current Capacity: { _____ people seated } + { _____ people standing } = { _____ Total }

Participation:

What is the official membership of your church/organization? _____
What is the average attendance at a Sunday worship service? _____ adults; _____ children
What is the average Sunday school attendance? _____ adults; _____ children

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How many new churches is your church now planting? _____ (list addresses on back)

Others:

Please list any other churches in your neighborhood that may not be known to us:

Signature of Researcher: _____ ; Date: _____

Basic Contextual Data for a City/Neighborhood

Basic Information:

Name of City: _____ ; State: _____

Name of neighborhood or subdivision: _____

Area: _____ km²

Population: _____ inhabitants;

Average Annual Growth Rate: _____ % (from 19____ to 19____)

Population Breakdowns (in numbers of people)

Sex: _____ Males; _____ Females

Age Groups:	0 - 6 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	7 -19 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	20-29 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	30-49 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	40-49 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	50-59 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	60-69 years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total
	70+ years	_____ Males;	_____ Females;	_____ Total

Note: If information is unavailable in these specific age divisions; change the specific ages for the "Age Groups" as necessary.

Marital Status:

Number of Single people	_____
Number of Married people	_____
Number of Divorced people	_____

Ethnic Groups:

Number of Caucasians	_____
Number of Mulattos	_____
Number of Blacks	_____
Number of Indians	_____
Number of Asians	_____

Others:

Number of _____	(specify) _____
Number of _____	(specify) _____
Number of _____	(specify) _____

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Number of _____ (specify) _____

Religion (according to government census, etc.):

- Number of Catholics _____
- Number of Traditional Evangelicals _____
- Number of Pentecostals _____
- Number of Spiritists (Kardecista or de Mesa) _____
- Number of Spiritists (Xango or Umbanda) _____
- Number of _____ (specify) _____
- Number of _____ (specify) _____
- Number with no religious affiliation _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ ; *Date:* _____

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The 10/40 Window

