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### **Book Review I Urbanity**

The book, *the Urbanity of the Bible: Rediscovering the urban nature of the Bible* by Sean Benesh is a mission-centered book that views the Bible in an urban context. Very rarely is the entirety of The Bible, its teachings, or its stories explained solely from an urban context. In Benesh's book the city, missiology and the church are consistently the topics and the main point of every section of the book. Benesh's targeted audience is not only pastors, and theological students but everyone who desires to have a conversation on the theology of the city.

Benesh's writing uses social analysis to provide a theological framework for understanding the connection between the church and the city. The theology framework that connected to Triune God and city as example, according to Benesh, "We are not told how many persons, and we have nothing approaching a complete doctrine of the Trinity, but it is implied that more than one person is involved. Not only that, but us reveals community. The triune God lives in community with himself. "We do not have to go far in the Bible to find a teaching about the nature of God as a community. We are created in God's image."<sup>1</sup> Although the Bible is often thought of in a rural context this book brings to knowledge the impact and importance of the urban story of the Bible. Since the beginning, the world has been moving forward toward urbanization. This movement has been fast and has brought about the need for theological

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<sup>1</sup> Sean Benesh, *"The Urbanity of the Bible: Rediscovering the Urban Nature of the Bible"*, Urban Ministry in the 21st Century Book 4, Urban Loft Publishers. Kindle Edition), 25.

reflection about cities. Whether one focuses on globalization, immigration, or urban development an undeniably large impact is made on Missio Dei. Ministries, church planting, and mission organizations all are outlets in response to the need to create transformative communities.

Understanding the urbanity of the Bible forms a stronger connection between the modern world to its ancient history. Sean Benesh can impactfully explain the urban connection of the bible in thirteen clear and well throughout chapters.

From the beginning, humankind had an urban trajectory. In chapter one, the triune God and the city. it is revealed that urbanization was brought by God. According to Benesh, “In the beginning was the triune God who was in community with himself in the Godhead. As humans were created in the image of God, we were made relational beings to enjoy community with not only God but with one another. This then is the foundation for the urban trajectory of humanity as well as Scripture. We were meant to live in cities.”<sup>2</sup> As Adam and Eve were human beings that were made in the image of God, humans continue to engage in urbanization. The divine urban planner as Benesh refers to has been planning and building cities since the beginning. A pivotal biblical theme that is expressed and introduced in chapter one is the revelation that the city does not equal darkness. According to the author, historically cities and aspects of city life have been connected to negativity and darkness.

In chapter three, city of darkness, city of light, the author expresses that it is wrong to view the city as evil. Cities portray a high concentration of people within a small area and God created people in His likeness. Beginning in Genesis Benesh provides examples of how quickly the early cities were formed and how quickly the process of urbanization came about.

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<sup>2</sup>Sean Benesh, “*The Urbanity of the Bible: Rediscovering the Urban Nature of the Bible*”, Urban Ministry in the 21st Century Book 4, Urban Loft Publishers. Kindle Edition), 31.

In chapter thirteen, the expansion of the church and translation of the gospel, Benesh states, “Each new city and each new circumstance that the church was birthed in was cause for reflection and then catalyzed for Christian to figure out what their new identities in Christ meant.”<sup>3</sup> Reflection and formation are major biblical themes that contribute to theological understanding and implementation. Hebrew 11:10, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.” (KJV), and verse 16, “But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (KJV). Benesh encourages the reader to reflect on the urban context starting from Genesis to the creation story. The term that Benesh uses that is most effective in linking urban theology with the trajectory of mankind is the term divine Urban Planner. Therefore, he assesses that God does not create a plan to restore man to Edenic conditions but in a sense has an urban renewal plan. Mainly Benesh can correlate the not often spoken idea, that there is an urban aspect to creation.

In some instances, Benesh’s arguments may seem to not give enough value to evangelism and mission work. As his writings focus on the historical and connecting aspects of the city and the church. However, I find that the book provides ample explanations and reflections on urban theology to form an impact on the relevance of the urbanity of the Bible. The methods and processes provided for reflecting and planning mission work are necessary for urban theological implementation.

The book informs on the process of urban theological reflection and formation and impacts urban theological implementation. The beginning addresses the question of what they know about the city. What they understand about the city indeed is that cities have been misrepresented. They have been presented as places that lack blessings, light, and compassion.

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<sup>3</sup>Sean Benesh, “*The Urbanity of the Bible: Rediscovering the Urban Nature of the Bible*” ,181.

Secondly, we are made to reflect on the question of, why did people disregard the city for so long? The author goes into detail about many ways in which the city has been seen in a negative light. Looking at these two points the author can transform and change the focus of what was once understood about urban life and transition to faith. He searches to teach on urban missions using the pastoral cycle as a guide. He states, “The church in the city can be guided by a theology that affirms God’s hand in the formation of cities and inherent common grace but at the same time recognizes that at times, much of what is broken is the result of individual and systemic sin.”<sup>4</sup> In many ways, the author expresses that the church has a mission to complete. The mission of the urban church is to provide a place of peace, grace, and community in urban, rural, and/or suburban settings.

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<sup>4</sup> Sean Benesh, “*The Urbanity of the Bible: Rediscovering the Urban Nature of the Bible*”, Urban Ministry in the 21st Century Book 4, Urban Loft Publishers. Kindle Edition), 175.