

Called to the city

Nehemiah 2:17-18

¹⁷ 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." ¹⁸ 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. (NIV)

What, then, should the church do in the city? How should it address issues of health care, longevity and infant mortality, stress, environmental pollution, housing, economic development, advocacy, empowerment, stewardship of the city, relationship with God, and shalom with the neighbor? Let it follow the example of Nehemiah... Do not do things for people! Do not come into Jerusalem with all the king's workers, money, materials, and supplies and rebuild the walls for them. Instead say to them, "Let *us* rebuild the walls together," and join with the people as they collectively take charge of their own situation and rebuild the walls themselves. Only the people who are most affected by a problem can best deal with that problem. And they can best deal with that problem only when they work on it collectively.

True urban ministry will not occur when churches develop projects *for* the poor. True and effective urban ministry exists only when the city's churches work together *with* the poor to identify their needs and determine the actions other poor and the churches need to take together. Only out of such an atmosphere will ministry *by* the poor occur for their own development. That is the approach that empowers people – that enables them to deal effectively with their own problems. That is the role of *servant* leadership to which the church is called in the city. And that is the process which enables the urban communities of the poor and of the church to minister to each other and, consequently, to set each other free!

Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God City of Satan*

Point for Prayer:

Your story and education should empower you to join with the city to work for the common good. What social structures and issues are you called to in the city?