

Distinctives of the Rurban Collision

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Dr. Martin Giese

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- The Current Situation:
- At the beginning of the 21st century many North American churches have become the scene of a "collision" of rural and urban cultures.
- Rurban church leaders must become cultural interpreters knowledgeable in three "languages": the Bible, rural, and urban.

- **Rural and urban are mindsets**, a set of socio-cultural values rooted in, and arising from either an agrarian or urban lifestyle.
 - A **rural church** is a church influenced from within by a dominant agrarian mindset and/or a significant agrarian memory.
 - An **urban** church is a church influenced from within by a dominant urban mindset.
 - A **"rurban"** church is a church in which both mindsets exist in sufficient strength to cause socio-cultural tension.

- **Agrarian Mindset - A way of perceiving (thinking, relating, and making decisions that arises from a lifestyle and livelihood directly dependent upon the land, and/or the extraction of Natural (God - created) resources.**
- Most people within this context are directly dependent in their livelihood upon resources not originating with people, and many factors influencing the extraction of those resources that are beyond human control!

- **Urban Mindset - A way of perceiving (thinking, relating, and making decisions) dependent upon a specialized and interdependent system of commerce that produces and provides goods, services and information.**
- Most urban people make their living by adding a specialized personal skill to this complex living system.

- There is a significant difference in cultural assumptions between these mindsets that ministry leaders must understand in order to be effective!

Rural

few people

Small institutions
of all types

Independence valued

General practitioner/"Jack
of all trades" orientation.

People often work alone.

Urban

Many people

Large institutions
of all types

Cooperation valued.

Specialist orientation.

People often work with
others.

Low verbal communication.

High verbal
communication.

Cooperation for survival

Cooperation for
achievement

Cooperation among equals
(everyone is a CEO)

Multilevel cooperation

"Single tier" management

Group decisions by informal consensus.

Homogeneity seldom attainable

Small churches (Medium size is "maximum size")

Multilevel management

Group decisions by formal process

Homogeneity often attainable

Large churches (Medium size is "minimum size")

Lifestyle Distinctives arising from context...

Rural

- Aloneness
- Independence
- Defensive pessimism

Urban

- The press of the crowd
- Interdependence
- “Offensive” optimism

Rural/Urban Authority/Management

- Everyone a CEO
- Single Tier Management
- Goal Setting Presumptuous
- Fewer CEO's
- Multi-level management
- Goal Setting Essential

Rural/Urban Work

- Pride in process
- Task oriented
- Seasonal cyclical
- measured by effort

Cost effectiveness =
conservation of money

- Pride in results
- Time oriented
- Continual systematic
- Measured by results

Cost effectiveness =
conservation of time

Achievement and Survival

Rural:

- Survival is success
- Achievement is considered a luxury (an unexpected bonus)

Urban:

- Achievement is success
- Survival is considered mediocrity and/or failure

View of resources

Rural:

- Resources limited
- Resources unpredictable
- Emphasis is placed upon the preservation of existing resources.

Urban:

- Resources readily available
- Resources predictable
- Emphasis is upon the investment of existing resources.

Rural/Urban Relating

- Values independence
- More intentional
- Maintains psychological distance
- Psychologically “open”
- Resists transparency
- Risks transparency
- Avoids confrontation
- More willing to confront

Rurban Decision Making

Rural

- By consensus
- cautious
- Motto: *“Haste makes waste.”*

Urban

- By formal process
- assertive
- Motto: *“He who hesitates is lost.”*

In Ministry decision making...

- Rural people normally will sacrifice time in order to save money.
- Urban people normally will sacrifice money in order to save time.
- Disagreement over which resource is more valuable significantly complicates rural decision making.

Independence -- Interdependence

- Encourage fellowship without forcing intimacy
- Model gentle transparency
- **Leadership strategy: Build Trust**

Q. In the year ahead what specific actions will you take to build and deepen trust in your ministry, your leadership team and among your people?

Autonomy -- Submission

A small, rural church behaves something like a family. An urban church operates more like a corporation. A rural church includes aspects of both – a “family cooperation?”

- Development of biblical relationships is the primary leadership task
- Neglect intimacy and relationships erode. Neglect complexity and productivity erodes. Effectiveness depends upon both.
- **Leadership Strategy: Build and “broker” relationships**

Leadership – Management

Single tier – Multiple tier

- **Leadership Strategy: Envision growth in Advance**
- Prepare people in advance for changes brought about by growth
- Practice “next level” thinking
- Don't force change. *(Allow time for the Spirit of God to prepare the hearts of people.)*

Goals -- presumptuous or essential?

- set grace based goals
- put a “net” under the “trapeze”
- use trial periods
- employ “opinion polls”
- affirm and reward incremental achievement
- **Leadership strategy: Clarify your mission**

Survival vs Accomplishment?

- **Leadership strategy: Honor the Heritage, Envision and Embrace the Future**
- Affirm survival
- Challenge people to strategic ministry
- Stay as long as God allows

Questions?