



A Theology as Big as the City: The Case for Natural Law

Raymond J. Bakke

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How does God see the city? What does Scripture have to say about urban ministry? These are the questions Ray Bakke has systematically addressed, beginning with Genesis and continuing through to Revelation. Here is a biblical theology that will constantly surprise and challenge as you get a glimpse of how big God's view of the city really is.

A Theology as Big as the City: The Case for Natural Law Details

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From Reader Review A Theology as Big as the City: The Case for Natural Law for online ebook

Chris says

Interesting book with many provocative thoughts on the city. Overall I think it is very good but he overstates his case often.

J.R. Woodward says

Bakke contends that if we are going to be faithful to the God of Scripture we must recognize the urbanization of the world and read the Bible with urban eyes so that we might discover a theology that meets the holistic needs of the city.

Bakke gives us a tour from Genesis to Revelation with urban eyes. Bakke starts with the Torah where we see Abraham praying for the city. He uses Moses and his mother to describe urban leadership. He examines the writings and the prophets from an urban perspective as well. He shows how proverbs and the Song of Solomon can be helpful to inner-city youth and how Ezra and Nehemiah are good examples of people concerned for the social welfare and buildings of the city. He shows the need for urban poets like the psalmist and the laments of Jeremiah as well as what cities should look like through Isaiah's vision (81-83). He talks about the major message of the Minor Prophets, Jeremiah's letter to urban families and thinking biblically about the family with the help of the prophet Ezekiel. In the last part of the book he looks at Jesus' heart for the city, the church at the city center in Antioch and Paul on his urban church-planting journey. He helps us see God's heart for the people and place of the city from Genesis to Revelation.

What I appreciate most about this book is the passion that oozes out on every page from a practitioner who loves the city. One line that is mentioned in a couple of different chapters that I will adopt into my own vocabulary is where he says, "Personally, I am committed to the vision of a local church and its pastors with two basic functions: pastor to the faithful and chaplain to the whole community" (80,81). I love this idea and have been partnering with God to see it embodied in my life. I also appreciate his wholistic approach to the Scripture, where he says, "God's agenda seeks the personal salvation of all persons and the social transformation of all places" (66), for this is indeed the whole church, the whole gospel for the whole city (66).

There are many wonderful biblical lessons throughout the book, but I really appreciated the last chapter when he reflected on all he has learned by sharing his ten values, which I want to remember and practice, so I will give a summary of each of them. 1) Creation and redemption. Spiritual transformation of people and social transformation of places. 2) Truth and love. Balancing the prophetic with grace and forgiveness. 3) Individuality and community. Balancing the individual with the community. 4) Local and global. Balancing the incarnation of Christ to a specific place and the cosmic Christ with the universal mandate. 5) Unity and diversity. Holding to the historic unity of the church while creating a climate for diverse worship and cultures. 6) Power and powerlessness. Balancing the voluntary setting aside of privilege while gaining things to help the poor. 7) Certainty and mystery. Seeking the Spirit to stay orthodox while recognizing the need for mystery. 8) Commission and commandment. The Great Commission and the Great Commandment. 9) Past and Future. Appreciating the past while looking toward the future. 10) Work and rest. A sustainable ministry requires a rhythm of work and rest (204-205). I plan to carry these simple ideas with me on my journey of

life.

Charlie says

Great resource for those considering inner-city ministry.

Peter Voorhees says

Dr. Bakke has the ability to tell a great story with unique perspective and insight. Many of the references he gives along with his understanding of scripture, gives the reader an accessible approach to the heart of God for the city. "God's kingdom agenda seeks the personal salvation of all persons and the social transformation of all places." It is an easy read with deep and profound impact for ministry and witness of the gospel in the city.

Todd Wilhelm says

This was a book that I found interesting not so much because of the subject, but because of the fact that the author, Ray Bakke, is well read and made use of numerous references to other's books. The quotes were very interesting and gave me new books to read!

"Early Christians penetrated the whole city, but not by claiming space for church buildings or programs of their own. They penetrated everybody else's space instead. This is an important lesson for me".
(Kindle Locations 1834-1835)

"In my last semester at Moody I had asked the professor of one of my least favorite classes if he could recommend a good liberal book on the scrolls. I sensed I was getting the "party line" in his course, and I was increasingly suspicious. Not only did he not mention such a book, but he said that to do so would dishonor the walls of our sacred school. Yet here I found a theological "liberal" (Burrows) who was willing to acknowledge that there were other points of view. His acknowledgment of his bias was the prod I needed. I can learn from anybody if I ask God to overcome my own bias."
(Kindle Locations 1191-1195)

"Christianity is no bootstrap, self-help religion. Barth was right; the virgin birth reminds us that salvation is God reaching down to us. Grace is an outside gift."
(Kindle Locations 1156-1157)

"Coming as I did from a Lutheran pietist background, I never felt comfortable with the Jesus of dispensationalist evangelicalism, but I didn't know why. My own search for the Jesus of the Gospels who could also be both personal Savior and Lord of my city began when I was a twenty-one-year-old, temporarily out of work but with a burning passion to find the truth about Jesus for myself. I wanted to learn as much as I could about the time, place and culture where Jesus lived and ministered, and then to read the Gospels with a fresh understanding of Jesus' message and model for ministry.

It was in my quest to learn about Jesus that I came to a revolutionary realization: my understanding and love for Jesus could withstand and even be enhanced by studying more than one point of view."
(Kindle Locations 1174-1179)

Josh Fern says

I read this when I first moved to Indy. It was eye opening and a primer for working and living in a downtown community. It's well written with plenty of anecdotes keeping the deep content rooted in practice.

Niki says

This is a fantastic book. Through reading this book, I rethought many of my former views and conceptions of the city and its many problems. This book explains well how that our cities are meant to be redeemed not forgotten.

Dustin says

Though peppered with liberal leaning and liberal associations, this book nonetheless has some good things to say. It examines all the passages in the Bible that have to do with the city. It's very helpful in regard to wanting to know whether urban ministry pops up in a certain section of the Bible.

Holly says

1. "If you can't tell me where the church has been, you have no business telling me where it ought to go."
 2. "God is not defiled by contact with the physical, even contaminated earth."
 3. "Moses, Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah...None of them were homeschooled."
 4. "To invent incidents which no one believes, in order to enforce lessons which no one wishes to learn, seems the height of absurdity."
 5. "Revival without discipleship is a dangerous thing."
 6. "A spirituality without joyful parties won't survive in the city."
 7. "The gospel is never advice, and it's never a program. It's news!"
 8. "History is not circular, it's not an accident, it's not even a conspiracy. It is moving toward a goal; the salvation of God's people."
 9. "Periodically every church...needs to sort through their own faith and culture issues so they know both how to live and what to die for should the need arise."
 10. "The Holy Spirit...works in every culture long before the name of Christ is known."
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Todd McKeever says

I enjoyed, but I always enjoy books by Bakke. I feel he has a good grasp on many things City.

Danny says

A challenging text for anyone who feels called to the cities of the world. A must read for church planters.
