

CHILD EVANGELISM—INNER CITY CONTEXT
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How do I learn Black Culture?

1. Visit two different Black churches on two different Sundays and reflect upon what basic spiritual values are stressed. What themes do you notice in the prayers and music and sermon? What authority does the Black pastor occupy in the church? What is his style of preaching and the kind of audience involvement? How is the choir different from White choirs? How emotional are the members? How dense is the seating, and what does this suggest?
2. Observe Black Entertainment Television (BET) briefly to gain an idea of current social values of the teen generation.
3. Listen to Black rap music for social, moral and any spiritual values. What are the cultural values promoted? How does the Gospel speak to those values? Are they the values of middle-class Blacks, or the very poor?
4. Read or scan *Ebony* or *Jet* magazines to discover the cultural icons of the Black community. Pay close attention to the values exploited by advertisers. Do those values seem to reflect inner city, or middle-class Blacks?
5. While this may not be safe, you might consider sitting with your partner in the center of a housing project and simply observe for an hour how people behave. Try to identify and explain behavior that doesn't "fit" your expectations. Try to identify similar patterns of behavior. Try to find contrasting behaviors. Try to be open and objective as to how these behaviors might be explained¹.
6. Read a local Black newspaper, noting also the advertisements. What values are emphasized? What attitudes do the editors convey?
7. Various cults are present in the projects, the strongest of which may be the Jehovah-Witnesses. You may read about them, and even visit their Kingdom Hall. Why would Blacks be attracted? Why would they be vulnerable? Very possibly, you may encounter those who have been exposed to their doctrines.
8. Develop deeper relationships with Blacks, and after you have established some mutual trust, ask them to answer questions that you have about their culture, and be ready to answer theirs.

African American background

1. Family makeup. Here is a short profile: 86 percent of Black mothers under 30 were unwed when they conceived their first child in the interval of 1990-94, compared to 43 percent 60 years previous², forty-five percent of all Black families have no husband present³, and 26% of Blacks are officially in the poverty range⁴. Since 1995 the majority of the US prison population is Black, while Blacks are 13 percent of the total population⁵.
 - a. Probably 95+ percent of children in Chattanooga housing projects come from

female head-of-household homes, with no resident father. Women often rule the children with an iron hand, and understandably so, with all the dangers of the inner-city. The extended family is extremely important and is a strength of the culture. Often the grandmother or great-grandmother is the one actually raising the children. There is also respect for age.

- b. With the lack of a father figure, understanding the love of the Heavenly Father may be difficult. Some boys want to hug or sit close to an adult male, just to have a little of the lost father.
- c. While it may be considered racist to identify certain sins with the inner city, my observations over a period of ten years of working in Chattanooga, TN housing projects lead me to conclude that these strongholds exist: drugs, pride, lust, immorality, drunkenness, gluttony, confusion and slothfulness. This certainly does not mean that everyone, or that necessarily that most of the people there are involved in them. With the exception perhaps of hopelessness, these are certainly strongholds in the larger White culture as well. Our sins may or may not be the same, but most of us have besetting sins, and pride is worse than the other sins mentioned above. Approaching people in genuine humility as a fellow sinner is probably the best way to gain a hearing.

2. Prior evangelization. Few churches seem to be involved in any systematic evangelization of the major housing projects. But the Jehovah-Witnesses certainly are faithfully at their doors. Probably the majority of Black churches do not have a regular evangelistic outreach--certainly to the housing projects.

3. The fear of God is still strongly present in the Black culture, but this appears to be waning. We need to talk about hell with the children, because hell exists (Matt. 10:28) and it would be a serious omission not to talk about such a disastrous possibility. It also contrasts the great salvation that we freely offer as ambassadors of Christ. "We are therefore Christ's **ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God," (2 Cor. 5:20, NIV).

4. Socially. Deep friendships are rare in the projects, because of distrust, so you have the opportunity to develop them. However, it's probably realistic to consider each encounter with an adult on the street in the projects as your last, since meeting to talk meaningfully again is very rare, particularly if they were convicted the first time. So say everything God shows you to say then!

Evangelizing Inner City Children

1. Love is the universal language. When they see it, the kids will respond. Don't be surprised if children want to be closer physically than you expect. This is normal. They may also want to feel straight hair, etc. Don't be overly friendly to Blacks, since phoniness can be spotted. Love and be your friendly self.

- a. One way to express love is to bring a basketball with you and play some informal games with the kids and teens who are around. You'll get to know each other better and it will be something in common. The children will get to know you and the adults will come to recognize you. If possible, come a week or two in

advance of your 5-Day clubs, to begin to establish rapport and to learn some names and advertise the meetings.

- b. Open your heart to the lost of any ethnic background. God is not partial (Acts 10:34-35). Honestly recognize and repent of any sense of racial superiority.
2. Children are easily the most receptive persons in the housing projects—the younger they are, the more receptive. They especially want to have a Bible, so try to carry with you copies of the NIV New Testament or complete NIV Bible (available from The International Bible Society (<http://www.IBSDirect.com>)). If they appear too young to know how to read, tell them that they can have the Bible if they can read, all by themselves, a random paragraph that you select.
3. Try to have a female on your team, which will make you less threatening, and so that women can relate to the mothers who will perhaps help you. Even better is to have a Black on your team. Blacks often distrust Whites, and vice-versa.
4. Introduce yourself to the mothers and let them know what you're doing. Conduct evangelism in the open, so that adults can see everything. Address adult Blacks who are older as “Mr.,” “Mrs.” Or “Sister,” which can be used of an elderly lady. Ask permission to use a first name of an older person, and then it doesn't hurt to say, “Miss Reba,” or “Mister John.” African Americans are very careful about name titles and receiving proper respect, including the Christians.
5. If you take a child to a fast food restaurant, etc., make sure that the parent gives permission, and that there are at least two disciplers and kids present, if possible.
6. Make discipleship the objective (Matt. 28:19—“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. . .” NIV). This means returning to visit. Honest friendship is craved, particularly in the projects, where distrust of neighbors is common. Ask God for a discerning spirit to identify those with whom to develop a deeper relationship. Try to identify needs that you believe God would have you try to meet in the disciple's life. Giving birth is the easy part—training the child is the more costly part.
7. Getting the disciple into a church is crucial and my experience is that this is very difficult to start or sustain. Identify the location and pastors' names of evangelical churches in the area and point them out, or bring them to your church. However, Black churches may not appreciate your simply handing them a list of people for them to contact—giving them the responsibility for discipleship, which may not happen. A personal relationship with the Black pastor helps. The church is the garden of discipleship and the first goal of discipleship is serious membership in a good church.
8. Remember that the Gospel is the only real hope that anyone has, including those in the inner-city, because God alone can change people from the *inside* (2 Cor. 5:17). When people are in darkness, God sends evangelists to bring light (Rom. 1:21; Acts 26:17-18; 1 John 1:5; Rom. 13:12). Programs may or may not work. The Spirit does. When discipling those who profess Christ, you might consider a study such as the book of Proverbs and the book of Psalms. Try to monitor the disciple's Bible reading and church attendance, since the Word can penetrate when

our words cannot. Topics such as marriage, raising children, prophecy, assurance of salvation, developing strong relationships, and the biblical work ethic may excite interest, depending upon the age of the disciple.

9. Child Evangelism Fellowship 5-Day Clubs. As mentioned above, try bringing a basketball 45 minutes before the club and shoot some hoops with the kids in the area, or among yourselves. It creates a common bond.
 - a. Use a light plastic tarp (such as can be purchased at Walmart) for children to sit on, since there is so much broken glass. You may have to double it.
 - b. Expect to have to go and find the children when you meet each day. Expect them
 - c. to test your patience. **Be firm, but friendly.** Make them “freeze” before handouts are given. **Don’t offer anything but Jesus when giving a salvation invitation (no literature, etc.)** Send them home with a good tract, such as the International Bible Society’s “Am I a Sinner?” or the “Four Steps Up” tract from Open Door Press or the “May I ask you a question?” tract from EvanTell (<http://www.evantell.org/>). Give out New Testaments. An NIV New Testament from the International Bible Society [800-524-1588] currently costs about \$.50 each, in case lots, and is just a little more costly than some tracts. It also contains the plan of salvation. This might be given on the final day of the club, at least to those who *already* have received Christ.
 - d. Keep the records of the name and address and phone number of the host family, for next year’s 5-Day Club, and give it to the CEF office.
 - e. Keep a computer file of the name and contact information of those you hope to disciple after the 5-Day Club.

Spiritual Warfare

1. Easily overlooked is building strong relationships *within* your ministry team. Get to know the others on your team--pray for each other daily, have some meals together. Talk about the victories and defeats. “Watch and pray” while your partner is talking with someone about God. Go at least in two’s, if possible.
2. Once people in the projects know that you are serving God, they will often protect you.
3. Take a prayer-walk around the housing project with your team. Just observe and pray about needs as they appear to you. You may well need to fast as a Team.
 - a. Bind evil spirits, particularly before evangelistic campaigns, and pray for good weather. I’ve seen God allow no cancellations of outdoor films due to rain during a rainy summer. Any Christian has authority over Satan through the Name of Christ. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you,” James 4:7, NIV. “The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, **even the demons** submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven,” (Luke 10:17-18, NIV). The power of Jesus is greater than any demon (Eph. 1:19b-20).
 - b. Pray that the Lord will deliver you from the evil one (Matt. 6:13). Put on the full

armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). The evil one cannot touch us (1 John 5:18-19, 12 Thess. 3:3, 1 John 2:14).

4. Don't be surprised if you are attacked with a sense of hopelessness and discouragement. Satan does not want us disturbing his strongholds, and he will do whatever he can to discourage.
5. Be prepared to deal with many who think that they can earn their way into heaven by a combination of faith in God, good deeds and church attendance. The devils believe in God (James 2:19). Christ came to save us from the best of our good deeds ["All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. . ." (Is. 64:6, NIV)], and we can reside in a church without being saved
6. A great place to begin your gospel presentation is the issue of assurance of salvation. Most are not *positive* that they will be saved, because most are not trusting in Christ entirely for their salvation. Many sincere Christians do not have this assurance. See "A Sample Gospel Presentation Outline: Inner City Emphasis"⁶ for a fuller treatment of these issues. Another excellent question is, "What are you really looking for in life?" (suggested by Carl Ellis).
7. Try to observe an experienced evangelist. Be prepared to share what God has done in your life (your "testimony"), and gradually more and more of the Gospel presentation itself. However, make sure that you don't take away the Gospel presentation from the lead evangelist.

Prayer guide for inner-city evangelism

1. Pray for the revival among Christians and a spiritual awakening among the unsaved. The gift from God of repentance is absolutely critical (Acts 11:18; John 16:8). Unless people are convicted of personal sin, they remain lost.
2. Pray for a burden upon Black and White churches to consistently and skillfully evangelize the inner city.
3. Pray for protection (John 17:11-12; Luke 11:4; 1 John 5:18-19).
4. Pray against the spirit of antichrist, embodied in the Jehovah-Witness doctrine that Jesus is not God the Son [they admit that He is the Son of God, not God].
5. Pray for more workers and more teams of evangelists, particularly Black (Luke 10:2).
6. Ask God for "divine appointments" with those He is drawing to Christ (John 6:44, Acts 8:26-38).
7. Pray by name for those who do profess Christ to join solid churches, and to have contact with them again (Heb. 10:24-25; 3 John 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:2).
8. Pray for the welfare of the city, and against wickedness in it (Jer. 29:7; Ps. 55).

¹ Professor Ted Ward's suggestions, former professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993

² Census Bureau 1999, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documnetation/twps0020/twps0020.html>

³ Bureau 2000, <http://www.census.gov/Press-release/www/2000/cb00-27.html>

⁴ Census Bureau 2000 <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/ff00-01.html>

⁵ Gary Fields, "Study: War on drugs is stacked against Blacks," USA Today 6/8/00, 3A

⁶ http://www.ReconciliationNetwork.org/child_evangelism.htm