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Book Review: Crossroads of the Nations: Diaspora, Globalization, and Evangelism by Jared Looney

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Church Planter makes several significant contributions to church planting thought. Certainly, anyone who is considering church planting, or really any form of full-time vocational ministry, would benefit from reading this book. It provides an excellent framework for Bible college or seminary students who are giving their first thoughts to their pastoral identity, and it is a book that I would wholeheartedly recommend them to read. *Church Planter* is also a tremendous resource for seasoned pastors and established churches. For them, it is a valuable reminder of the basics of pastoral ministry that are needed to grow any church. Personally, I gleaned much from this wonderful book, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in pastoral ministry, church life, church plants, or other forms of vocational ministry.

Looney, Jared. *Crossroads of the Nations: Diaspora, Globalization, and Evangelism*. Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015. 330 pp.

Reviewed by David B. Srygley. He is pulpit minister for the Arlington Heights Church of Christ in Corpus Christi, Texas, and holds an MS in Biblical Studies from Abilene Christian University and a D.EdMin from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Crossroads of the Nations has fast become a premier resource for both academicians and practitioners of missiology. Dr. Looney received his D.Miss from Fuller Theological Seminary where he learned and employed, very effectively, the teachings of Donald McGavran and Ralph Winters. Through Global City Mission Initiative, which Looney established, a well-researched plan was developed and executed to identify and harvest the lost souls of New York. This book represents Looney's understanding of the challenges facing diaspora communities in global cities and his approach to reaching the lost within them.

Crossroads of the Nations is divided into seven chapters, each providing invaluable information for a reader desiring to understand the current world setting of missions. The first two chapters provide extensive data from well-researched sources on the current trends in urbanization and globalization, while the third chapter emphasizes the need for and role of love in reaching the unreached. From these first three chapters, it is clear that the book is written with missiology students in mind, at least as a secondary audience to missiologists and practicing missionaries. The information and admonitions ensure the reader is starting with a solid grasp of the situation, demographically and spiritually, and will not launch out into mission work unprepared or misdirected in his or her efforts.

The remaining four chapters delve deeply into discussions about diaspora communities and churches, the impact of globalization and technology, and opportunities and challenges presented by these developments.

The final chapter weaves together the many and varied threads discussed throughout the book into a tapestry of the modern global city. These cities are vibrant, colorful, and complicated, and they are the doorways to parts of the world once closed to the gospel. Looney's book will help any student, missionary, or minister understand this mosaic and work effectively in the harvest field.

Looney introduces his work with a challenge to traditional missiological definitions. He states, "In many respects our contemporary global context has begun to transcend our traditional missiological categories" (24). In particular, Looney identifies "the global dynamics of mobility and networking" as global trends that are driving the need for new definitions and strategies (24). Members of diaspora communities are no longer cut off from their homelands. Through technology and global networks, immigrants can maintain relationships with family members across the globe and participate in family and religious practices from thousands of miles away. This connectivity may create more challenges for missionaries working in global cities, but it also opens doors into houses and communities all over the world.

While technology would allow diaspora communities to develop anywhere, this global networking is occurring most often in urban settings. Looney writes, "In large measure, diaspora missiology cannot be separated from urban mission as cities are essentially the nodal centers for migrant activity on a local and global scale" (30). The resources available in urban areas and opportunities for interpersonal networking remains a significant draw to immigrants. However, it would be a mistake to approach diaspora missions with a purely urban missiology, just as it would be to develop a diaspora missiology without considering its urban setting. The two methodologies are not the same, but they must be considered simultaneously in developing strategies for reaching the lost.

Just as Looney notes that the dichotomy between global and urban has begun to disappear, so have many other dichotomies. Looney states that missionaries, both domestic and abroad, face a "fluid set of challenges" (102). Global cities and diaspora communities challenge the many dichotomous debates about methodology in missions and evangelism. If a Chinese immigrant driving a cab in New York is interacting daily with his family in mainland China, discussing religious, political, and local issues, will urban mission strategies, foreign mission strategies, or lifestyle evangelistic strategies work best? The answer, per Looney, is all of the above.

Looney challenges churches, missionaries, and missiologists to carefully consider Ralph Winter's evangelistic typology. E-0 and E-1 evangelism, the sharing of the gospel within a culturally homogenous group, has been the primary focus of churches and evangelism training programs. E-2 and E-3 evangelism, which call for the crossing of cultural barriers, has been rele-

gated to the domain of foreign missionaries and the occasional immigrant community (e.g., Chinatown, Little Italy). That distinction, which Winter posited was not always a valid one, has certainly become less valid in the twenty-first century. Almost any church doing evangelism in the surrounding neighborhood quickly confronts the reality that its “neighbors” are as diverse as the global population.

Looney argues that local churches have two choices. They must become more proficient in utilizing E-2 and E-3 or, as Looney recommends, seek out partnerships within the resident ethnic group to empower them to reach their own. This approach may be counterintuitive to many urban churches who have approached evangelism in diaspora and ethnic communities as opportunities to help migrants assimilate into the host community. The assumption that migrants desire to, or even need to, assimilate may be invalid in today’s global network.

In recognizing the uniqueness of individual groups within a diaspora community and the need for these groups to evangelize within their own ethnic community, Looney affirms Roland Allen’s spontaneous expansion model and McGavran’s multiplication movements theory (177). Churches grow through the expansion of indigenous, lay-led small groups and house churches throughout a homogenous people group. While churches and urban missionaries may face challenges crossing the cultural barriers which surround diaspora communities, Christians within those communities do not. Churches must begin developing discipleship strategies that empower Christians within these communities to become evangelists to those around them.

Even in this short review, it is easy to grasp the comprehensiveness of Looney’s book. It would be a modest assessment to state that Looney has given McGavran’s *Effective Evangelism* a twenty-first century facelift. It is everything an eager missionary or aspiring missiologist needs to know for the twenty-first century from the minds of McGavran, Winters, Allen, and other prominent missiologists.

Nevertheless, just as comprehensiveness is the book’s greatest asset, it is also its greatest weakness. The amount of movement and networking within a diaspora community is overwhelming. Even if the book only focused on the positive and negative impact of movement and networking on local churches in a single community within the global city, it would be a challenge to digest. As is, Looney deals with almost every aspect of the diaspora’s nodal function—inflow of migrants, inflow of ideas, local isolation, global interconnectedness, movement between communities, return of migrants to homeland, etc. Missiology students should expect such a challenge, but practitioners may find the amount of information overwhelming. (Looney’s newest book, *Mosaic*, is an effort to pare down the information for local practitioners.)

Regardless of one's role, whether pastor, missiologist, or missionary, Looney's book is beneficial for anyone seeking to better understand the challenges of evangelism in America. He has approached today's mission environment with well-researched theories and data and, in the final chapter especially, offers practical suggestions drawn from both. While processing the many facets of Looney's work may take extraordinary effort and time, the payoff will be a thorough understanding of America's global cities and the challenges of reaching the lost who live there.