

# **Missional Analysis Of The Impact Of Urbanization On The Church Ministry In Beni, Democratic Republic Of The Congo**

Linda Kasoki Kasali  
*Phd Student At Biola University*  
*UCBC Missiologist*

---

## **Abstract:**

*This empirical study focuses on analyzing the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in the city of Beni with a missional perspective. My objective has been to know if urbanization has offered amelioration in how church ministry was undertaken or if urbanization hinders the effectiveness of church ministry in Beni. I compared the practices of church ministry in Beni from 1980 to 2000 and from 2001 to 2020 to see if any change has occurred in the church ministry because of the influence of urbanization. I used a survey research method with six open-ended questions to interview seven Protestant reverends in the city of Beni to understand their viewpoints on the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in Beni. The answers given by the seven reverends to the six open-ended questions have constituted the different sections of this paper. The reverends' answers to the six open-ended questions revealed that urbanization has hindered the effectiveness of church ministry because it has led Christians to lose the sense of priority in the church ministry, therefore, its impact on the church ministry is primarily negative even if it has offered some ameliorations in the practice of church ministry in Beni. Through the missional analysis of the negative impact of urbanization on the church ministry in Beni, I have provided practical recommendations on how to wisely control the influence of urbanization by equipping Christians to put first things first and prioritize what matters the most in Christian life despite changes.*

**Keywords:** Church Ministry, Urbanization, and Missional Analysis

Date of Submission: 17-02-2025

Date of Acceptance: 27-02-2025

---

## **I. Introduction**

Today's world is compared to a small village where the interconnection between people from different towns, countries, and continents is made more accessible compared to some years ago through globalization with the use of technology. Some scholars argue that globalization despite being a conversation, is also a life-changing tool (Smith, 2013), and a bridge connecting people worldwide (Scholte, 2008). Globalization is the channel that has led to the urbanization of the cities. Urbanization is a concept explaining the transformation of the forms of society which can be measured by the increase in the number of inhabitants in a city coming from different places, tangible facts of the development of the city in several aspects of human life. It is therefore a process of the development of a city and the concentration of populations in the city attracted by its infrastructures and the many job and education opportunities available in the city (Tisdale, 1941). I define church ministry as all activities and programs (worship services, evangelism, discipleship, missions to youth, children, women, orphans, widows, and the needy of all kinds) organized by the church in alignment with the Great Commission in Mat. 28:19-20.

This empirical study focuses on analyzing the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in the city of Beni with a missional perspective. I want to know if urbanization has offered amelioration in the way church ministry was undertaken or if urbanization hinders the effectiveness of church ministry in Beni. My motivation arises from my observation concerning the acculturation process both based on the new lifestyle people are embracing and related to the use of technology by Christians in the church. I have noticed that many people in the area are still struggling to admit that in postmodern societies, the world is no longer "composed of villages where people are related to each other, where everyone speaks the same language, everyone makes their living in the same way, and everyone shares the same culture" (Rynkiewich, 2011, p. 96).

I use survey research defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods)" (Ponto, 2015). This empirical research is based on qualitative research strategies. I will use six open-ended sub-questions to interview seven well-known Protestant reverends from five denominations who have spent more than 30 years in the church ministry. I was helped by David Kasumba, a student in the Theology

Faculty at the Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (UCBC) to conduct and record each interview session for not less than 30 minutes. The recordings helped me to do a faithful transmission of the reverends' responses to my six questions.

The answers provided by the seven pastors constitute the different sections of this paper. Among the seven pastors, one is the leader or president of the association of all Protestant churches in Beni called 'Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC)', reverend Samson Balerwa. I will make his answers fundamental to all questions supported by the six other pastors' responses because he has a wider perspective of the church ministry in Beni, as he is always in contact with pastors from all other protestant denominations.

Beni is one of the cities located in North-Kivu province in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo DRC. In 2017, the town reportedly counted over 400,000 inhabitants (Kamwira & Tshikongo, 2017).



DR Congo: Carte des Territoires du Nord Kivu (OCHA, 2002).

## II. Exploring The Concept Of Urbanization

### *Question one: What is your understanding of Urbanization?*

Urbanization involves the massive movement of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and continents who come to live together and create a new way of life for the inhabitants willingly or unwillingly. Research has demonstrated that “in the early stages of growth, economic development is characterized by urbanization” (Henderson, 2005). So, urbanization is one of the factors that contribute to the development of a society. However, urbanization causes many expected changes with opportunities and challenges.

According to reverend Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), urbanization was caused firstly by insecurity which caused the movement of several people from one town to another, from village to city, but also from other countries to Beni as people like Monusco came to assist our government to end the war in the area. ONGs also brought people to help the refugees with primary means. However, this massive movement has caused a lack of trust among people. People have just been exposed or forced to co-live with others because of what has been happening, without being prepared on how to live in an intercultural society, and how to support each other as members of the same society regardless of the divergence linked to each person's origin.

Reverend Basile Kavasya (personal communication, December 2024), said that urbanization has an ideal vision of wanting to easily reach many people with the gospel. The Great Commission in Mat. 28:19-20 commends the disciples of Jesus to go to all nations and make disciples. But urbanization allows nations to gather in one place which makes the mission of the Great Commission easier. Then reverend Yosia Kasuki (personal communication, December 2024) says that urbanization in itself is not bad, because it also increases the number of members in the churches. Unfortunately, urbanization has also opened the way for foreign values to settle among Christians. For example, many women no longer want to cover their heads because they have seen others not covering their heads in church services. On the other side, reverend Abraham Tsongo (personal communication, December 2024) says that urbanization is not yet effective because there is no action taken by the Congolese government on how to care for the population during deep changes.

Pastors' understanding of urbanization is not far from research findings, as it says that “Urbanization is a very complex phenomenon, with myriad dimensions. However, the size of the place has been the most widely used criterion in the definition of urban population. Urban areas have a higher concentration of population in a limited area and thus a higher density of population and social heterogeneity” (Hussain & Imityiaz, 2018). Another way of understanding urbanization is that “urbanization may be defined as those environment-altering

activities that create and maintain urban places. This includes the processes of construction, habitation, transportation, energy and water use, communication, industrialization, commercial and manufacturing services, plus civic activities associated with education and governance” (Elvidge et al., 2004).

### **III. Describing Church Ministry In Beni From 1980 To 2000 And From 2001 To 2020**

***Question two: How can you describe church ministry in the city of Beni in the years 1990-2000 on spiritual, financial, and social levels?***

Reverent Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), says that during the reign of President Mobutu much more between 1990 and 1996 on the political level, people had already noticed that the country's economy was going badly. People were looking for a better life. So, when Mr. Kabila, the father, came to conquer the country, our army was not able to resist him because a good number of the population was poor and wanted an improved lifestyle. However, on a spiritual level, there was cooling. Many churches were closed in on themselves as conservatives without an open mindset to learn from others. Churches with an Evangelical and Baptist tendency did not want to learn or imitate what was happening among the Pentecostals. For example, Evangelical and Baptist churches did not want togetherness prayers during the church service as was done in the Pentecostal churches. Meanwhile, Christians from their different denominations had a thirst for the word of God, they wanted to understand the word of God in depth. So they were interested to know what was happening elsewhere because each tendency considered itself to have the absolute truth about God. The good part of this is that each Christian was proud of his position, doctrine, and values, and did not want to cheat elsewhere.

Financially, reverend Samson Balerwa says (personal communication, December 2024) given that there was an economic crisis in the country, many people moved from one environment to another, in search of a better life. And where they settled, they opened or started a church there. This change facilitated the establishment of several churches at that time. Churches that were created during that time were based on sincere commitment or a deep thirst for God. Today, many churches are created for selfish interests. Socially, people were united in the church and community. Attending church together makes people feel like belonging in one family. Young people respected anyone with the age of their father or mother as being their parents. So this unity reduced the conflict in the churches.

According to reverend Kyota Kinanga (personal communication, December 2024), Christians were very zealous in the work of God during that time. Their faith in God was strong and firm since there was peace and security in the area. People lived in love. Reverend Nicodeme Thisando (personal communication, December 2024) says this period from 1980 to 2000 was marked by the true faith many Christians had, fear of God, and respect for God's servants. Then reverend Thomas Musavuli adds that the spirituality during that time was strong as the church walked according to the word of God. And people were receptive to the word of God. At that time, the creation of churches was well structured and monitored, which meant that there were not many churches that were created in alignment with Western missionaries.

However, financially, according to reverend Thomas Musavuli (personal communication, December 2024), there was financial instability in churches because coffee, which was the main source of income for many farmers, had just experienced a drop in production. And then socially, Christians were united among themselves and also showed consideration to non-believers which became a testimony of God's love towards them, to attract many to the Christian faith.

According to reverend Basile Kavyasa (personal communication, December 2024), the church was greatly considered. But at some point, the spirit of tribalism was developed in the churches which caused division in the churches for people were gathered in churches based on their origin. Financially, churches functioned by collecting funds through members' offerings, and pastors relied on the generosity of members for their survival. And then according to reverend Yosia Kasuki (personal communication, December 2024), the spirituality was very high, but financially churches were poor. So, people were more spiritual but they were not committed to development, so many Christians were poor. Socially, there was harmony among people as the gospel was preached by actions. Finally, according to reverend Abraham Tsongo (personal communication, December 2024), during that time 1980-2000, the church ministry was marked by a high level of spirituality as Christians were engaged in proclaiming the gospel to everyone with a sincere heart.

***Question three: What is your analysis of the particularity of the Church Ministry in the city of Beni in the years 2001-2020 on spiritual, financial, and social levels?***

Reverend Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), says that the country's elections had influenced the church's ministry during that time in the sense that some pastors or fervent Christians in the churches also wanted to be elected to lead the country. This created an imbalance in the church as everyone wanted to gain voters' trust. The conflict entered the churches. Hate and jealousy spread in the hearts of many. Nevertheless, a positive aspect is that people were now open to wanting to learn from others. For example, in Evangelical and Baptist churches, Christians could not pray together at the same time during the worship service.

When it was time to pray, only one person was designated to pray for the rest of the people gathered in the church and everyone else remained silent. But today, these churches have just adopted the Pentecostal church practice of allowing Christians to all pray at the same time during the worship service.

However, this open-mindedness has created a critical spirit among Christians to the point that today, it is possible to see Christians criticizing their pastors and even other pastors. The conflict and division continue to intensify in the churches. Love has truly grown cold in the hearts of many. Now churches have members who are not born again but are devout in church activities because the church is considered by some as an association or group of belonging for social purposes and no longer for their spiritual growth. Financially, during this time, the good thing is that Christians are supporting the activities and projects of the church such as the construction of temples, schools, and hospitals. Christians have just developed the mentality of self-care while remaining open-minded to learning from others. On the social level, still, according to reverend Samson Balerwa, Christians are no longer in love, but more animated by the spirit of controlling, leading, and oppressing others. Everyone wants to become a leader. This has just given access to many to leave their churches to open their church where they can easily lead others.

According to reverend Nicodeme Thisando (personal communication, December 2024) on a spiritual level, hypocrisy has become dominant in the churches. Then reverend Thomas Musavuli (personal communication, December 2024) says that the change is obvious in the church. On a spiritual level, the faith of many had diminished given that it was a very difficult time with the massacres caused by the ADF (Allied Democratic Forces) rebels to the point that many Christians have turned away from their faith by asking themselves questions if God was still present with them in this suffering. Some began to doubt about the presence, love, and power of God. Since several other churches had just been created by certain individuals locally, teachings on prosperity had also become widely spread. That led many Christians to question their faith as people were undergoing painful situations.

On the Financial level, reverend Nicodeme Thisando says that the churches experienced financial stability because it was at this time that the idea of giving a pastor a salary had just been proposed and applied. This initiative contradicted the teaching of missionaries which said that a pastor does not deserve a salary because he is in the service of God. And that pastor's salary will be in heaven. But today, people understand that though the pastor is exercising a spiritual ministry, he is also eligible for a salary to meet his needs and enable him to take care of his family. Socially, during this period, life was moderately good given that pastors from different Protestant denominations now have regular meetings together. So pastors are no longer serving in isolation. But they have the opportunity to learn from one another and collaborate.

According to reverend Basile Kavasya (personal communication, December 2024), today, there are a lot of opportunities such as churches organizing seminars to strengthen Christians' faith. Unfortunately, not all Christians participate in those seminars. Also, many Christians are no longer fulfilling their duty mostly related to tithes. According to reverend Yosia Kasuki (personal communication, December 2024), since 2000, people are no longer spiritual, especially regarding the use of phones. Christians tend to think that the use of phones is a sign of being civilized, but the truth is that the use of phones has destroyed the lives of many people and caused the spirituality of many to decline. So, the development mindset has increased to the destruction of spiritual life in the churches. There is also a considerable failure in social life because people no longer love each other. People from the same family can spend even six months without visiting each other. So, the community mindset of Africans is progressively losing its power and influence in many African modern cities.

I have noticed that Pastors are aware of the changes that are happening in Beni. They are even able to say when and how this change has occurred. Some say that the change occurred first because of the war in the area which made many people move from one place to another. As people increase in Beni, many customs are replaced by new ones as people are co-living together. So, people in Beni have found themselves living in an intercultural area because of the influence of urbanization. An intercultural environment is not generally a peaceful place to live in, as "people with different ways of life are strangers by definition, their ways seem unpredictable, and the unpredictable is probably dangerous as well. Communication itself is difficult. Even after an appropriate medium comes into existence, like a second language in common, understanding is hard to come by. Strangers may appear not to be hostile, but they are still not to be trusted in the same full sense that neighbors and kinfolk can be trusted" (Curtin, 1984, p. 1). This intercultural difficulty has been expressed by the reverends in Beni as trust and love among people have reduced considerably because of this massive people's movement in Beni. Though Swahili is used as a common language to unite people in Beni, still many are struggling to use it in preference to their mother tongue.

#### **IV. Analyzing The Change Occurring In The Church Ministry In Beni From 1980 To 2001 And 2000 To 2020**

***Question four: In your opinion, is the change in the church ministry in the city of Beni, positive or negative, justify your answers.***

According to reverend Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), It is difficult to say whether change is positive or negative because it is difficult to judge spiritual matters. But for some Christians, during this moment of crisis mostly related to massacres in Beni, the church ministry has attracted them more in search of spiritual awakening. But at the same time, a large part of Christians have cooled in their faith through the search for political and ecclesiastic power. On a spiritual level, other Christians have understood that the realities of the moment are a signal that the time we are in is not the same as 10 years ago. So, this led them to seek the wisdom of God through rigorous meditation of the word of God, to get prepared for the second coming of Jesus to judge the world. Socially, people are now living at a distance from one another because trust and love have greatly reduced among them.

The division is now visible in the churches as some church departments fail to collaborate or do ministry together with another church department. During this crisis, many teachings have been developed in the church to show Christians how to support the work or the ministry of the church. However, few teachings have been developed to help Christians on how to take care of themselves in this moment of crisis. Reverend Samson Balerwa continues by saying that the politics of the country and the spirituality of the church are interconnected. The politics of the country influences the spirituality of the church, just as the spirituality of the church influences the politics of the country. Though a few are managing to stand firm in their faith during this difficult time, many have failed to remain trustworthy. And this is visible in the Congolese government. Many elected to political positions are Christians from our churches, but they do not reflect the light of the church. This reveals that the depth of Christianity in the lives of many Christians is not considerable or their spiritual foundation is not solid.

Many seem to have knowledge of Christianity or a generalized knowledge about Christian living but do not have a personal relationship with Jesus the transformer of lives. Although during these years many have joined the churches, unfortunately at the same time, sin has just increased in the churches. To the point that many sing and do different church ministry work for God, while their spirituality is not in harmony with the holiness of God. This is why many Christians, although fervent in the Church, still need fundamental teachings on Christian life. So change is both positive and negative. The majority of Christians have fallen into the negative side of urbanization because they were quick to compromise their Christian life. But others have been boosted in Christian life because they considered this moment of crisis as an opportunity to grow in their faith in God.

According to reverend Thomas Musavuli (personal communication, December 2024), the change is remarkable, positive but also negative concerning certain realities. Spiritually, there are now many opportunities to mentor pastors with theological training. This causes the spiritual life of Christians to change positively. For example, having the opportunity to access theological school, some Western missionaries' teachings are being questioned and modified. Financially, there is improvement in the lifestyle of many Christians which resulted from the good offering every Sunday leading to the construction of temples and the creation and implementation of projects. Socially, the change is positive, nevertheless, with negative consequences in the churches. Reverend Thomas Musavuli emphasizes that the way women are now dressing and doing make-up are different compared to how women were called the dress and keep their appearance simple. According to him, women's appearance in the church is negatively affecting the ministry of the church.

Reverend Kyota Kinanga (personal communication, December 2024), thinks that changes have occurred mostly with the war which caused a massive movement of people coming from different places with cultural differences. Reverend Kyotha's opinion is that the change is positive as before based on the Western missionaries, a pastor was not allowed to request a salary nor to search for a job outside the church. But today, Christians have understood that a pastor is also a human being like any other who needs food, clothes, and means to take care of his family. According to reverend Yosia Kasuki (personal communication, December 2024), on a spiritual level, change is negative because of the misuse of technology and the increased pursuit of development. Socially, Christians are no longer committed to supporting one another. In our days, it appears normal for a Christian to do many months without paying a visit to a neighbor Christian unless the neighbor has a problem. Everyone is busy with personal interests. To the point that people now tend to normalize sin. Nevertheless, the change is positive as it has increased the number of Christians in the churches.

***Question five: In your opinion, is the impact of urbanization on Church ministry in the city of Beni positive or negative, justify your response.***

According to reverend Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), the impact of urbanization is positive because the gospel can reach many people from different cultures and nationalities without much difficulty. Also, urbanization has allowed people with different spiritual gifts to serve together to strengthen the ministry of the church. From this, the world sees that unity in diversity is possible. However, this

unit is not yet effective at several levels in people's lives. Thus, there is a great need for appropriate teachings to strengthen this unity in diversity in the city of Beni. Also, urbanization has strengthened the open mindset of many Christians which leads many to fight against ethnocentrism. Currently, some programs are organized to bring pastors together from different denominations for teachings on capacity-building, to strengthen the exercise of the ministry of the church. This means that people today understand that they need others to spread the gospel.

However, the thing to avoid is that now in the churches there is more syncretism because people are now imitating the beliefs, values, and practices of many other people without analyzing whether they are under the gospel's teachings. People are more likely to be led by cultural values and scientific knowledge than to submit to the gospel. This means that the faith of many is facing instability because of the fact of co-living with people from elsewhere. For this, the responsibility of pastors is to provide appropriate teachings to respond to this issue brought about by urbanization in the city of Beni. Although urbanization brings several benefits to the spread of the gospel, the major challenge is the risk of syncretism which is weakening the spirituality of many Christians.

According to reverend Thomas Musavuli (personal communication, December 2024), Urbanization negatively affects the lives of many in society as people with different cultures now live together. But urbanization is also positive because it also brings improvement in the exercise of the ministry of the Church with the use of technology and through the improvement of the lifestyle of many. Unfortunately, some aspects of this lifestyle mostly related to technology have negatively affected the lives of young people in churches. According to reverend Basile Kavasya (personal communication, December 2024), the impact is positive because people from different cultures and backgrounds are receiving the gospel easily. Something hard to do some years ago. Reverend Nicodeme Thisando (personal communication, December 2024) says that urbanization does not seem to be a good thing because it has caused weakness in the spiritual life of many Christians.

Reverend Yosia Kasuki says that urbanization is not primarily bad, because the negative aspects of one culture are covered or corrected by the strengths of their culture. So people are learning to strengthen one another. However, people co-living together has also caused many to imitate strange behavior or other cultural customs without understanding their purposes. The negative aspect of urbanization is that as everyone is now committed to personal and collective development, church ministry during the week lacks people to join and participate.

***Question six: What is your point of view concerning the adaptation to urbanization by Christians in the city of Beni?***

According to reverend Samson Balerwa (personal communication, December 2024), a Christian can adapt himself to every circumstance, so that he may have the ability to make all nations disciples of Jesus as recommended in Matt. 28:19-20. Nevertheless, the exercise of adaptation should primarily consist of maintaining Christian salt and light in all circumstances and all environments. Jesus prayed in John 17 that his disciples would be one as He and the Father are one. So, this urbanization seems to become a channel to strengthen unity among the disciples of Jesus regardless of their origin and denomination. However, it is important to use discernment to identify the values and practices to adopt in life as a Christian to avoid any evil manipulation.

According to reverend Thomas Musavuli (personal communication, December 2024), adaptation to urbanization is difficult for the old generation. The new generation adapts themselves easily to change such as the use of smart telephones and computers and so on. The old generation is sometimes even annoyed by certain aspects of urbanization since certain practices that were previously considered taboo are now acceptable with urbanization such as women's dresses and family lifestyle.

According to reverend Yosia Kasuki (personal communication, December 2024), adaptation is still difficult because some churches have several members, but not all of them serve in the church. So, there are many members in the churches but few workers as people are busy with their affairs, pursuing development. According to reverend Abraham Tsongo (personal communication, December 2024), adaptation will be difficult because imitation is sometimes done blindly. However, urbanization is good in the fact that Christians are now committed to building new temples and new houses based on modern standards in Beni. Also the use of official languages (French and English) during worship services.

My opinion as the researcher is that globalization has imposed urbanization. It is impossible to avoid urbanization in postmodern societies, as I have mentioned it earlier. However, urbanization should not at the same destroy or falsify the Christian faith in churches in Beni. It is then very important to promote a well-balanced mindset that promotes holistic stability so that no one will fall into one type of syncretism. Charles Kraft noticed that "There are at least two paths to syncretism. One is by importing foreign expressions of the faith and allowing the receiving people to attach their worldview assumptions to these practices with little or no guidance from the missionaries" The other way to syncretism is when a form of Christianity imports every aspect of the Christian life without considering the belief, values and practices of the Christians being ministering too (Kraft, 1999, p. 390). So, if urbanization leads a church to change completely its liturgy and core components of its doctrine, then the old generation will fall into the second type of syncretism because they will be uncomfortable with the new form of Christian life imported.

That is why, there is a need to develop an intercultural discipleship approach in modern societies to help local Christians how to stand firm in Christian faith while embracing some aspects of urbanization. Christians should know that urbanization should not be a one-way action but rather a two-way action. That means, as people co-live together, the learning process must be on both parties. Christians from different cultures and countries who come to live in Beni should learn from the indigenous while at the same time, the indigenous learn from them. If the old generation does not find help with the new way of doing, they will be “forced to go elsewhere for answers” or create generational conflict in the church (Moon, 2017, p. 40).

It is obvious that urbanization offers a lot of opportunities and at the same time complex challenges, therefore for effectiveness in ministry, intercultural discipleship approaches will be needed to help develop teachings to be biblically faithful and culturally and socially relevant to maintain objectivity in Christians’ lifestyle based on God’s Kingdom mindset. A well-developed intercultural discipleship plan will help to reduce or solve the negative side of urbanization in the church with objectivity, as discipleship is “a transforming process whereby people center their lives on the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), such that they obey Christ’s commands in the cultures in which they live (Matt. 28:19-20)” (Moon, 2017, p. 52). This is a call to learn how to incorporate all aspects of life in the discipleship plan for mutual understanding among the disciples (old and new generation) based on the truth of the gospel.

Urbanization is also facilitating the accomplishment of the great commission as many reverends affirmed. In modern societies where urbanization has caused people from different parts of the world and with different cultures to co-live together, is then necessary to learn deeply how will the church make all nations represented in one city faithful disciples of Jesus. That is why, intercultural discipleship approaches become needed. Intercultural discipleship approach is “defined as the process of worldview transformation whereby Jesus followers center their lives on the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33) and obey Christ’s commands in culture (Matt. 28: 19-20), utilizing culturally available genres” (Moon, 2017, p. 54). That shows that churches operating in modern society under the influence of urbanization should avoid calling some practices evil when it is not. Instead, by developing God’s Kingdom mindset, churches should learn to identify cultural customs from the different cultures represented in their area and aspects of globalization such as technology which do not contradict the biblical truth to utilize them to accomplish effectively church ministry for the benefit of all despite their cultural background.

I define God’s Kingdom mindset as the ability to seek first to honor and please God in everything at all times. The ability to make God’s interests and desires priorities in defining the standard of our lifestyle in modern societies. God’s interests are to extend His (1) holiness (2Cor. 7:1, Heb. 12:14, Mt. 5:48), (2) love (Jn. 3:16, Col. 3: 14, 1Jn. 4:16, 1Cor. 13:13, Jn. 15:12), and (3) glory (Ps. 93:1, Rom. 6:4, Ps. 19:1) over every life. If we do so, then we will have superiority over the pressure of urbanization in modern societies. We will then control its impact without letting it control us. Also developing God’s Kingdom mindset when doing the church ministry is very capital as it allows the disciples to focus first on what matters the most (the salvation of the lost) and prioritize what God prioritizes (His reign over everything). God’s Kingdom mindset will keep us from a blind imitation during the acculturation process. It will enable us to avoid conforming without a clear purpose (Rom. 12: 2).

## **V. Missional Analysis Of The Impact Of Urbanization On The Church Ministry In Beni**

Through the missional analysis of reverends’ viewpoints on the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in Beni, I discovered that reverends affirmed that urbanization has positive and negative impacts. The impact of urbanization is positive as it has allowed openness and mutual collaboration among pastors from different denominations. It has ameliorated the liturgy of the worship services and has greatly improved the way church ministry is done. However, the impact is also negative as it has led to weakness in the spirituality of the church ministry. In Mat. 28:19-20, the spirituality of the church ministry is centered on discipleship, by leading people to become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

John Koessler said that “Discipleship is not primarily a matter of what we do. It is an outgrowth of what we are”. According to him, “It is reasonable for others to expect to see proof of the reality of our commitment to Christ reflected in the way that we live” (2003, p. 12). Urbanization has made many Christians focus more on what they do and less on what or who they are. Church ministry in Beni has grown wider through different actions and activities but with little life-changing impact.

According to the seven reverends, urbanization has led churches to pay much attention to the out-appearing of the church and to social issues such as mutual gathering among pastors and Christians from different denominations, and the development of the church like building the church temple, schools, hospitals, Guest houses, buying musical instruments while at the same, less attention is made on true discipleship to preserve the spirituality of the church ministry. Social issues, spirituality, and the development of the church are all necessary but each one has a different degree of consideration. If the three aspects (social issues, spirituality, and the development of the church) can be considered pillars of the church ministry, I will consider the spirituality of the church as its central purpose, or as the principal pillar, because the church ministry is not primarily a mutuality

for people’s relationship neither a channel for people’s development. Instead, it is primarily a community of Jesus’ disciples (Acts 11:26) to advance the Kingdom of God on Earth by making other disciples. That is why Tizon said, “I wish when outsiders heard these words (gospel, church, and mission) they would imagine a community of ordinary but loving people who shine the light of God in a darkened world” (Tizon, 2018, p. XV).

So, the church is primarily a reflection of God’s power, holiness, and glory through true discipleship. However, God being the creator of everything, is not against the wellness of the whole human being. God also cares for the social issues and development of His people. Unfortunately, urbanization has led churches to lose focus on what must be put first or misuse the priority in the church ministry. Discipleship is what must be put first or must be the priority in the church ministry because it carries the spirituality of the Church ministry. It is, therefore, important to know how to do good discipleship which promotes the spirituality of the church ministry in modern societies.

Five basic characteristics of discipleship leading to true disciples according to John Koessler (2003, pp. 13–26): **True Baptism or faith:** When Jesus commissioned the Church to go and make disciples of all nations, He identified baptism as the first of the two central tasks of disciples making. Baptism is a rite that has both individual and corporate significance. Baptism symbolizes the believer’s union with Christ through the Holy Spirit as it contains an implicit promise of transformation. It also signifies that the believer has joined the larger fellowship of the church.

**Faithful Obedience:** Obedience is not optional for Christians, as it is the true test of their discipleship. The Bible speaks of two very different kinds of obedience. The first is the legalistic obedience which is rooted in human effort and achievement to obey God’s commands to earn a righteous standing in God’s sight. The second is grace-rooted obedience based on the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. Grace-rooted obedience is an expression of our gratitude for God’s love for us based on our true friendship with Jesus.

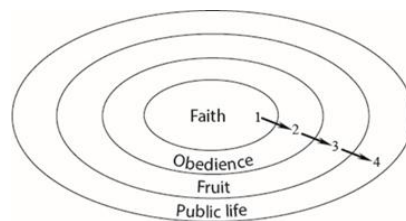
**The Mark of Abiding Fruit:** The disciples of Jesus are called to bear fruit. Those who abide in Jesus pray in a way that results in spiritual fruit because prayer leads to personal transformation. To be able to bear fruit, disciples need to recognize their dependency upon Jesus, recognize the importance of the meditation of the Scripture, and recognize the need to grow further.

**The Mark of Love:** Christ has commanded us to love everyone, whether they are believers or not. But there is a special obligation when it comes to other believers. The truth is if we love God, we will want to be like Him. We will love what God loves and hate what He hates.

**A Reality Check:** Discipleship is faith expressed in practice. At its heart, it is a living relationship with Jesus we love, serve, and seek to imitate. Jesus is not calling us to put on appearances, but to get engaged and committed or to be ready to take our cross at all costs so that we may become like Him. The message of the cross is at the center of the Christian faith and the heart of Christian discipleship.

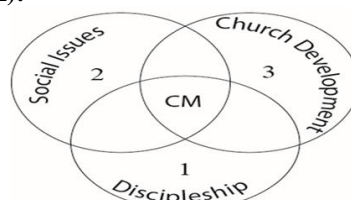
In modern societies, Church ministry should put those five characteristics central because they summarize components of discipleship which is the core element in the church ministry. I want to emphasize the issue of discipleship and church ministry through the graphics I conceptualized.

**Components of discipleship:**



Discipleship is based on (1) faith through a true baptism, (2) obedience in holiness, (3) spiritual fruit, and (4) public or daily life. The public or daily life is a result of what comes from within. The nature of our faith dictates our level of obedience; the level of our obedience determines the kind of spiritual fruit we will bear; and the kind of fruit we bear will condition our public lifestyle.

**Components of church ministry (CM):**





Church ministry is based on (1) discipleship or spirituality, (2) social Issues, and (3) church development. Among the three, discipleship is central, it is the number one and very essential in church ministry. If the combination of the three components is not well made, below is what will follow:

- Social issues + Church Development = Human association, not church ministry
- Discipleship + Social Issues alone = Incomplete church ministry
- Discipleship + Church Development = Incomplete church ministry
- Discipleship + Social Issues + Church Development = Holistic Church Ministry

Only holistic church ministry will triumph over the pressures of changes occurring with urbanization in Beni. These practical recommendations will help churches in Beni realize holistic church ministry to strengthen and mature the Christian faith of all believers despite changes occurring with urbanization:

***To train church leaders on intercultural approaches for effective discipleship:***

Churches should understand that not every aspect of urbanization is evil or sinful. Nevertheless, the way each aspect is used can make it evil or not. It is therefore essential to understand the purpose of each thing and select what can capitalize a true discipleship in modern societies. Churches in modern societies need to train intercultural disciples to offer adapted discipleships. Intercultural disciples are open to others despite their cultures, while monocultural disciples are filled with ethnocentrism. It says “Without participation, observation deceives; without observation, participation is meaningless” (Rynkiewicz, 2011, p. 108). Intercultural disciples should learn the importance of putting the Gospel into language that people can understand culturally and socially without compromising the authenticity of the gospel. The great commission in Mat. 28:19-20 will not be accomplished in isolation. Instead, it will be effectively fulfilled through mutual interactions and acceptance. However, since acculturation can easily lead to syncretism, that is why it is necessary to train disciples with an intercultural discipleship approach to maintain a clear balance between cultural customs and the unchanging truth of the gospel.

***To develop appropriate and integral teachings:***

Churches in Beni should learn to develop teachings that are appropriate and integral to deal with all aspects of people's lives within their context. Teachings should address the spiritual, cultural, and social challenges and needs of the people. In doing so, the faith of believers in God will be strengthened and equipped on how to wisely cope with the realities of urbanization without losing the authenticity of their faith in God. Early churches had well-established liturgies that not only focused on the wealth of the church but placed a strong accent on the Christian faith (Jenkins, 2008). The Church during the post-apostolic period shows the amazing work of the Spirit of God in the lives of simple people who were just available to make a difference for God to the point of utilizing their business trips to open churches because they were well equipped with strong and adapted teachings (Kreider, 2016).

I think that the issue of how to balance the different teachings in the Church in modern societies is one of the major challenges to be addressed by church leaders. Ignoring the influences or role of urbanization on the church ministry will only increase its damage to Christian lives. Instead, accepting its existence and its impact will orient on how to equip Christians with necessary teachings and advice to wisely overcome the pressure of urbanization in a modern society.

Daniel Shaw in his book *Singing Samo Songs* said “If Jesus had come to the Samo, what would he have said and done?” (Shaw, 2022, p. 82). I want to paraphrase Shaw’s statement by saying if Jesus had come to modern societies, what would he have said and done? Certainly, there could be things/lifestyles that Jesus could adopt himself into, because that is what he did with the Jewish culture. Jesus contextualized his lifestyle and speeches based on the Jewish culture without falling into sin or embracing ways that were against God’s will. If Jesus through his entire life on life learned to live and speak in the way his audience could understand, why not his disciples in modern societies? It is essential therefore, for pastors in Beni, to orient their teachings in a way that is meaningful to the people of modern societies by always putting first thing first which is true discipleship which is in alignment with the holiness of God.

***To accept the changes with God’s Kingdom mindset not with a cultural mindset:***

Urbanization causes changes on different levels individually and collectively. Therefore, helping Christians to develop God’s Kingdom mindset not primarily a cultural mindset will enlarge their critical thinking which will increase their commitment to God’s interest or purpose in their daily decisions. Churches in Beni should remember that we are not returning but we are moving forward. So still more changes will occur in modern societies which churches will have to face or deal with. That is why investing in helping Christians develop God’s Kingdom mindset will help them maintain a higher standard for their lifestyle which will lead them to an authentic Christian life as agents of God’s Kingdom on earth despite the pressure of changes in their area. Christians should know that a cultural mindset will not advance the mission of God on earth. Christians should avoid elevating their

culture higher than searching to know what God could do in a particular situation and context. As I said earlier, ignoring or opposing change when the change is imposing itself will end up weakening church ministry in modern societies.

However, Christians should never forget their sinful nature which misleads them if intentional procedure to stop it is not taken. John Koessler said “Our position in Christ has freed us from sin’s domination but not from sin’s influence. The sinful nature has been crucified with Christ, but it has not been eliminated” in us (2003, p. 31). That shows the importance of developing God’s Kingdom mindset and not falling into the influence of sinful nature regarding our attitude toward urbanization.

## VI. Conclusion

This empirical study focused on analyzing the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in the city of Beni with a missional perspective. My objective in doing this research has been to know if urbanization has offered amelioration in the way church ministry was undertaken or if urbanization has hindered the effectiveness of church ministry in Beni. I compared the practices of church ministry in Beni from 1980 to 2000 and from 2001 to 2020 to see if any change had occurred in the way church ministry is undertaken. I used a survey research method with six open-ended questions to interview seven Protestant reverends in the city of Beni to understand their viewpoints on the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in Beni.

I used six open-ended sub-questions to interview seven well-known Protestant reverends from five denominations who have spent more than 30 years in the church ministry. I was helped by David Kasumba, a student in the Theology Faculty at the Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (UCBC) to conduct and record each interview session for not less than 30 minutes. The recordings helped me to do a faithful transmission of the reverends’ responses to my six questions. The answers provided by the seven pastors constituted the different sections of this paper. Among the seven pastors, one is the leader or president of the association of all Protestant churches in Beni called ‘Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC)’, reverend Muhasa Balerwa Samson. I made his answers fundamental to all questions supported by the six other pastors’ responses because he has a wider perspective of the church ministry in Beni, as he is always in contact with pastors from all other protestant denominations.

In conclusion, after missional analysis of reverends’ responses to the six open-ended questions, the impact of urbanization on the church ministry in Beni is revealed to be primarily negative even if it has offered some aspects of amelioration in the way church ministry is now practiced. This negativity of urbanization is because urbanization has weakened the spirituality of the church ministry leading Christians to minimize discipleship by prioritizing social issues (assisting the needy, Christians’ fellowship) and church development (building the temple, entrepreneurship) in the church. I have explained that church ministry is primarily for the discipleship of believers because that is what comes first in the Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples. Social issues and church development are necessary and inevitable but not priorities compared to the importance of discipleship in the church ministry. Strong discipleship based on intercultural approaches is what will give meaning to social issues and church development in the church and preserve it from being misled by the influence of urbanization. If the churches in Beni faithfully apply the recommendations provided in this research, Christians will be holistically and biblically equipped on how to handle changes in their lives.

## References:

- [1] Curtin, P. D. (1984). *Cross-Cultural Trade In World History*. Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Elvidge, C. D., Sutton, P. C., Wagner, T. W., Ryzner, R., Vogelmann, J. E., Goetz, S. J., Smith, A. J., Jantz, C., Seto, K. C., Imhoff, M. L., Wang, Y. Q., Milesi, C., & Nemani, R. (2004). Urbanization. In G. Gutman, A. C. Janetos, C. O. Justice, E. F. Moran, J. F. Mustard, R. R. Rindfuss, D. Skole, B. L. Turner, & M. A. Cochrane (Eds.), *Land Change Science: Observing, Monitoring And Understanding Trajectories Of Change On The Earth’s Surface* (Pp. 315–328). Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-2562-4\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-2562-4_18)
- [3] Henderson, J. V. (2005). Chapter 24—Urbanization And Growth. In P. Aghion & S. N. Durlauf (Eds.), *Handbook Of Economic Growth* (Vol. 1, Pp. 1543–1591). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0684\(05\)01024-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0684(05)01024-5)
- [4] Hussain, M., & Imitiyaz, I. (2018). Urbanization Concepts, Dimensions And Factors. *International Journal Of Recent Scientific Research*, 9(1), 23513–23523. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dr-Hussain-6/publication/330564226\\_URBANIZATION\\_CONCEPTS\\_DIMENSIONS\\_AND\\_FACTORS/links/5c48719ea6fdccd6b5c2d974/URBANIZATION-CONCEPTS-DIMENSIONS-AND-FACTORS.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dr-Hussain-6/publication/330564226_URBANIZATION_CONCEPTS_DIMENSIONS_AND_FACTORS/links/5c48719ea6fdccd6b5c2d974/URBANIZATION-CONCEPTS-DIMENSIONS-AND-FACTORS.pdf)
- [5] Jenkins, P. 1952-. (2008). *The Lost History Of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age Of The Church In The Middle East, Africa, And Asia - And How It Died* (1. Ed.). Harper One.
- [6] Kamwira, I. S., & Tshikongo, A. K. (2017). Profile Of The Prevalence Of Typhoid Fever At The Beni Reference General Hospital In The City Of Beni In The Democratic Republic Of Congo. *The Journal Of Medical Research*, 3(5), 239–242. [https://www.medicinarticle.com/JMR\\_20175\\_09.pdf](https://www.medicinarticle.com/JMR_20175_09.pdf)
- [7] Koessler, J. (2003). *True Discipleship: The Art Of Following Jesus*. Moody Publishers.
- [8] Kraft, C. H. (1999). Culture, Worldview And Contextualization. *Perspectives On The World Christian Movement*, 3, 384–391. [https://perspectivesonmission.com/resources/session07\\_kraft\\_cultureworldviewcontextualization.pdf](https://perspectivesonmission.com/resources/session07_kraft_cultureworldviewcontextualization.pdf)
- [9] Kreider, A. (2016). *The Patient Ferment Of The Early Church: The Improbable Rise Of Christianity In The Roman Empire*. Baker Academic.

- [10] Moon, J. (2017). Intercultural Discipleship. [https://Platform.Virdocs.Com/Read/448301/11/#/4\[Intercultural\\_Discipleship\\_Epubs17-10\]/2/84/1:0/1:0](https://Platform.Virdocs.Com/Read/448301/11/#/4[Intercultural_Discipleship_Epubs17-10]/2/84/1:0/1:0)
- [11] OCHA, D. (2002). DR Congo: Carte Des Territoires Du Nord Kivu | OCHA. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/map/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-carte-des-territoires-du-nord-kivu>
- [12] Ponto, J. (2015). Understanding And Evaluating Survey Research. *Journal Of The Advanced Practitioner In Oncology*, 6(2), 168. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4601897/>
- [13] Scholte, J. A. (2008). Defining Globalisation. *World Economy*, 31(11), 1471–1502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9701.2007.01019.x>
- [14] Shaw, D. (2022). Singing Samo Songs. <https://Platform.Virdocs.Com/Read/2193209/37/#/4/2>
- [15] Smith, K. E. I. (2013). What Is Globalization? In *Sociology Of Globalization*. Routledge.
- [16] Tisdale, H. (1941). The Process Of Urbanization. *Social Forces*, 20, 311. [https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/josf20&id=327&div=&collection=](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/josf20&id=327&div=&collection=Primary_Sources)
- [17] Primary Sources:
- [18] Balerwa, Samson M. (December, 12, 2024). 3<sup>e</sup> Commauté Baptiste Au Centre De l’Afrique CBCA. 47 Years In Church Ministry
- [19] Kinanga, Kyota E. (December, 10, 2024). 45<sup>e</sup> Communauté Des Eglises Pentecôtistes. CEP. 36 Years In Church Ministry
- [20] Kavasya, Basile. (December, 13, 2024). 3<sup>e</sup> Commauté Baptiste Au Centre De l’Afrique CBCA. 39 Years In Church Ministry
- [21] Thihimba Thisando, Nicodeme K. (December, 11, 2024). Communauté Evangelique Au Centre De l’Afrique. Ceca20. 54 Years In Church Ministry
- [22] Musavuli, Thomas K. (December, 10, 2024). Communauté Evangelique Au Centre De l’Afrique. Ceca20. 44 Years In Church Ministry
- [23] Tsongo, Abraham. K. (December, 11, 2024). Eglise Anglican Au Congo. 42 Years In Church Ministry
- [24] Kasuki, Yosia. (December, 11, 2024). 8<sup>e</sup> Communauté Des Eglises De Pentecôte En Afrique Central. 34 Years In Church Ministry