

EXCERPT



Together for the City *How Collaborative Church Planting Leads to Citywide Movements*

August 27, 2019 | \$18, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4153-0

We need a bigger vision for the city. Pastors Neil Powell and John James contend that to truly transform a city, the gospel compels us to create localized, collaborative church-planting movements. The more willing we are to collaborate across denominations and networks, the more effectively we will reach our communities—whatever their size—for Jesus.

The Bigger Picture for Church Planting

We have a deep conviction that the more willing we are to find ways to collaborate, the more effective we'll be in reaching our city for Jesus. The more generous we are toward one another, the more God will bear fruit through us. The closeup and the bigger picture of the opening scene are connected. This is life and death, and heaven and hell. It's what gets us out of bed in the morning. The need is too great to allow our vision to be too small.

We aim to convince you that collaborative church-planting movements are a Christ-honoring implication of the gospel and a strategic way to reach our communities for Jesus.

We aim to cast the bigger vision by telling our story as transparently as we can and by introducing you to what is happening all over the world. If God can use us in this way, he can use anyone.

In a way that may be useful to you in your context, we aim to share our experiences with you as well as some of the convictions we have grown in, lessons we have learned, and principles we have discovered.

We aim to encourage you wherever you are on this journey and to implore you to see that we each have a role to play in this bigger vision—for the sake of people like James.

With a vision to reach lost people through church planting and with healthy collaboration at its heart, by the grace of God may we together reach our cities—and through them, the world.

You may already be convinced of the need for collaborative church-planting movements. You are ready to go, and you hope we can help you get started. Our prayer is that this book will be a practical encouragement to get you on your way.

Or you may be unconvinced and are wondering why this should be a priority for ministry. Perhaps you're struggling to see how to embrace collaboration without compromise. Perhaps you assume this kind of vision is for bigger or more established churches than yours. Almost certainly you're already far too busy and are wondering why this should take up valuable space. Our prayer is that *Together for the City* will be a provocative book that prompts you to think again.

Ideally we're writing for people who are open to the idea but need to be equipped to defend it among those who are more skeptical. There is a difficult balance. Perhaps you instinctively "get it." We hope we get practical enough quickly enough, and that the time spent defending principles helps root your convictions. Perhaps you're reading with the voice of a cautious leadership team in your ears. We hope that we've done enough groundwork to aid you with difficult conversations. We also hope that our story will give you confidence to step out with risky faith.

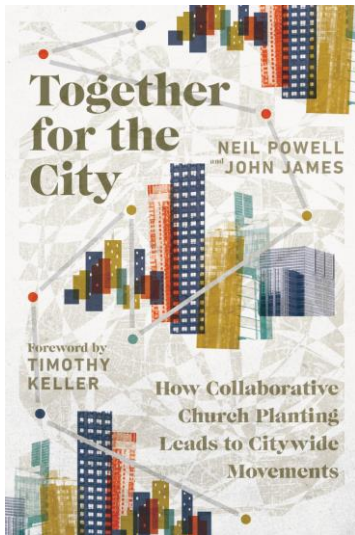


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It's also possible that our talk of "the city" is a barrier to you. You picture a large metropolis and struggle to relate that image to your context. Throughout the book, "the city" is simply any local conurbation. Across the world, what defines a city varies significantly. In Scandinavia, urban populations may be as low as a few hundred people, whereas in the United States, they begin in the thousands. In the United Kingdom, large towns with cathedrals are called cities, regardless of size. Please don't let the word city put you off or alienate you if you wouldn't define your own locality as a city. This principle remains: the more open we are to collaboration, the more effectively we can reach our community. This is what it means to be together for the city.

—Adapted from the introduction, "The Bigger Picture: Through a Wide-Angle Lens"

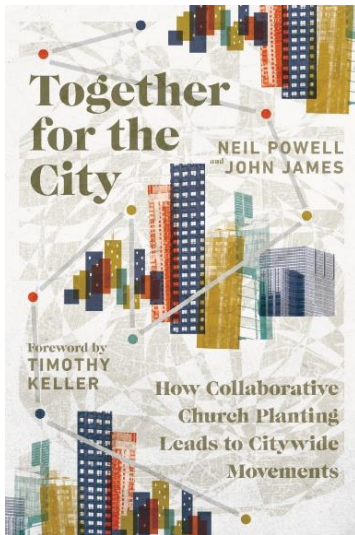


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A Rally Cry for Unity Across Denominations

"While there is an increasing body of literature about church planting in general, there is almost nothing available that describes whole-city collaboration between multiple denominations, networks, and movements. Neil and John spell out what it takes to get this done. I know of no better book on the subject."

—From the foreword by Timothy Keller, founding pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church

"*Together for the City* is a very insightful view about the nature of church as movement that is based squarely on real experience in the white-hot missional context of Birmingham, England. This is a great example of the kind of thought leadership that we need in our time."

—Alan Hirsch, author of *The Forgotten Ways*, founder of 100 Movements, Forge International, and 5Q Collective

"*Together for the City* is a wonderful testimony of God's grace and power through his willing servants. This book will enlarge your vision for advancing the kingdom, encourage collaboration, and invite you to dream together of what God might do in and through you."

—Lloyd Kim, coordinator, Mission to the World

"*Together for the City* sounds the alarm for the great need of the day, holds out a clear and bold vision, and gives great practical advice. I'd love to see all church leaders read this, soak up its spirit, and rise to its challenge."

—Michael Reeves, president and professor of theology, Union School of Theology, author of *Delighting in the Trinity*

"This book may be our best hope to move collaborative church planting from an oxymoron to the unstoppable force it was meant to be. What if whole cities joined together to start new churches that were making the gospel known in fresh ways to our increasingly post-Christian context? These words connect thought leadership with praxis to remind us that if the gospel is at the heart of our churches this truly is the way forward."

—Nancy Ortberg, chief executive officer of Transforming the Bay with Christ

"Over the past ten years 2020birmingham has pioneered an innovative model of collaborative church planting that has borne much fruit and is now being replicated in other cities and regions around the United Kingdom. It is rooted in a determination to reach the lost, maintain faithfulness to the gospel, and build generous partnerships with those who share core convictions. Neil Powell and John James tell their exciting story with passion and humility."

—John Stevens, national director of Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches



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Neil Powell is founding pastor of City Church Birmingham in England, and also serves as codirector of 2020birmingham, a church-planting movement for the city of Birmingham. He is the director of City to City UK and a chair of City to City Europe, an organization that helps local leaders plant churches in their cities. He lives in Birmingham, England, with his wife, Jane, and their two children. Follow him on Twitter: @afaithtoliveby.

"Together for the City is a rally cry for unity across denominations, networks, and movements in order to champion disciple-making in our cities. Since the gospel changes people and people change the world, then we must do whatever it takes to strategically reach people in our cities. Neil Powell and John James are wise practitioners who graciously share their years of insights both locally and globally in this book. We must lock arms and partner together for the city, recognizing that we can surely do more together than we ever could on our own. The need is clear, the opportunity is great, and the kingdom is at stake!"

—**Dhati Lewis, lead pastor of Blueprint Church, Atlanta, Georgia, vice president of the Send Network**

"Together for the City is the most inspiring book I've read all year. It's amazing to think what God might do if churches and pastors work together to see movements of God in their cities. Imagine what would happen if church leaders collaborated together across denominational lines to see new churches started for the glory of God. The fruit would be immeasurable. I can't wait to apply the concepts and practices from this book in my own context."

—**Dave Furman, senior pastor, Redeemer Church of Dubai, author of *Being There* and *Kiss the Wave***

"There is a great well-known African proverb that says, 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' These wise words encompass Neil Powell and John James's book, *Together for the City*. A vision this grand requires a community effort, a coming together of different people, from different walks of life, but all with the same golden thread of the gospel that runs through them. Many of us speak of doing great things for God's kingdom, but too often we lack the humility to recognize that we need others to achieve these goals, and they in return need us. The truth of the matter is that God has beautifully designed us for community and this community is also expressed and experienced in our mission that God, by grace, has called us to. Neil Powell and John James will challenge you to think big. They will share helpful, practical concepts and tools, and they will leave you inspired to not only think of planting one or two churches but also envision a movement that plants healthy gospel churches for your city and beyond."

—**One Mokgatle, network director for Southern Africa, Acts 29**

"In our current cultural moment, the urgency of our missionary calling necessitates us breaking free from a tethering tribalism. Gospel churches, gospel people, and gospel leaders *need* each other and *need* to collaborate. In *Together for the City*, Powell and James are able to tell us their particular story in their particular city in a way that acts as an exemplar for your particular story in your particular city. It's illuminating, inspiring, and for tribal folk, quite unsettling—but we do need to hear it and act on it!"

—**Daniel Strange, director, Oak Hill College**



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John James is the lead pastor of Crossway Church in Birmingham, England, and the author of *Renewal: Church Revitalisation Along the Way of the Cross*. A trustee of 2020birmingham, he is part of a coalition of churches with church-planting initiatives in the Birmingham area. He also is a host for the Midlands Ministry Training Course. He lives in Birmingham, England, with his wife, Sarah, and their three children.

"Do you have a burden to reach your city with the gospel? And do you realize that you can't do it on your own? If so, then you've picked up the right book! Neil and John present a well-worn path that will help you move from isolation to collaboration so that you can—together with others—plant churches that plant churches. Don't miss this important work that should be standard for every church planter and pastor moving forward."

—**Daniel Im, pastor, podcaster, and author of *Planting Missional Churches***

"Praise God for this *inspiring, challenging, useful and timely* book: *inspiring* because it shows what can be accomplished by God's grace when church leaders resolve to overcome selfish tribal instincts and work together; *challenging* because it reminds us of the desperate need of our cities for the gospel of Christ proclaimed from a flotilla of ordinary church lifeboats we can launch rather than a sleek, megachurch QE2 ocean liner we will never build; *useful* because it offers fresh theological reflection on collaboration and practical thinking derived from the experience of planting in a British city; and *timely* because despite the tragic spiritual decline of our nation, God has raised up evangelical churches, networks, and gospel partnerships in every region. It's time we worked out how to cooperate without being too broad nor too narrow, in order to reach the vast numbers of people around us who are drowning in sin. I have admired God's work in Neil Powell and in 2020birmingham and in City to City for many years, *solus Deo gloria*."

—**Richard Coekin, executive director of Co-Mission, London**

"There is a new wind of God blowing across the Christian landscape, and it is forging a unique and beautiful unity among churches and movements. In this book, the authors succeed in showing the practical outworking of such collaboration, its benefit to the city, and the kingdom expansion it brings through church planting. This is a much-needed model of mission partnership."

—**Tope Koleoso, lead pastor of Jubilee Church London**

"A passionate call for evangelical collaboration in church planting for the sake of the gospel. This is good news indeed for our city."

—**David Urquhart KCMG, the Lord Bishop of Birmingham**

"With a solid, biblical foundation, the authors encourage meaningful gospel collaboration among local churches of all different stripes, but who agree on core doctrinal truth. This book exudes a sense of purpose, joy, and local intentionality in mission. It will challenge and encourage in equal measure, as it shows how partnerships, though at times uncomfortable, can bear much gospel fruit."

—**Steve Timmis, CEO, Acts 29**



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