

MISSIONAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

What is a Missional Community & Is It for Me?



SATURATE
RESOURCES

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INTRODUCTION

Christians everywhere are asking big questions about what it means to follow Jesus, how their faith should affect everyday life, and how church should figure into their response to poverty and other social justice issues. Into the fray enters “missional community.” No doubt about it: These days, missional community is a buzzword.

Some are curious about the missional church; others are inspired, and some are simply overwhelmed. Although buzzwords such as “missional community” can be helpful or fun to talk about, many Christians simply don’t know where to begin.

A missional community is a gospel community that lives out the mission of God together in a specific area and to a particular people group by demonstrating the gospel in tangible forms and declaring the gospel to others—both those who believe it and those who are being exposed to it.

Simply put, missional communities (MCs) are **families of missionary servants** who make disciples who make disciples: a community of everyday citizens who are devoted to Jesus, to one another, to their neighbors and city.

This is a guide to help you learn together what it could look like to be a community of people who are devoted to Jesus, to one another, and to your neighbors and city.

Our hope is that this guide will help you move from theory to practice, from good intentions to action, and from talking about “missional community” to becoming a “missional community.”

Before we begin talking about what a missional community is, it may be helpful to understand what a missional community is not. From here on we’ll be using the term “MC” to refer to a missional community in this guide.

A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS NOT PRIMARILY:

A SMALL GROUP: Yes, an MC is a small group of people that meets at least once a week. However, as you’ll soon find out an MC is so much more than a typical church small group.

A BIBLE STUDY: The Scriptures play a vital, foundational role in the life of a missional community. However, the goal of studying the Bible in an MC is not simply to gain more Biblical or theological knowledge; it’s to foster our repentance from sin and turn to faith in the completed work of Jesus’ death and resurrection in our place. As a result of this, we will find our place in God’s big story of redemption and so move outward in mission to our neighbors and our community

A SUPPORT GROUP: You will see that because an MC is family with one another because of Jesus, they will carry and support one another’s burdens as they point one another toward their true Savior, Jesus. However, the healing and restoration

Jesus brings is meant to be shared and spread rather than confined to a small group of people.

A SOCIAL ACTIVIST GROUP: You will see that an MC is very active in their community because they recognize that Jesus is Lord over every sphere of life and He calls His people to be a foretaste of the final restoration of all things. However, if they limit their activity to social activism, they realize that they are not being faithful to the fullness of Jesus' mission.

A WEEKLY MEETING: Just as the church is not a building, an MC is not a weekly meeting. An MC is just that: a community of people participating in Jesus' mission to the world that transforms our ordinary, everyday life, not merely one night of the week.

WHAT TO EXPECT

While this is not a full-length treatment of the missional community, this guide will introduce you to the three elementary principles of an MC: gospel, community, and mission. It will also foster reflection through discussion questions, and guide you into making an informed missional commitment with your community.

THE GOSPEL, PART 1

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- The gospel is the good news that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through His own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us.
- The message of the gospel shows us God's power to save, past, present and future.

OPENING

Many MCs practice a weekly rhythm of eating together before sitting down for some intentional discussion time. You should ideally plan 60–90 minutes for dinner to ensure people have enough time to catch up, eat, and take care of feeding kids.

SETUP

Perhaps at some time in your life you have asked why all over the world groups of people in short shorts and brightly colored jerseys kick a ball down a field toward a net for several hours at a time? Some silly clothing and seemingly random movements around a field are confusing to the casual observer until the rules of the game are explained to them. Unless you understand the rules and purpose of soccer (football for our friends elsewhere in the world), you'll never be able to make sense of a Soccer game. In the same way, until you understand the gospel, you won't be able to make sense of what it means to be an MC. So as you begin your journey toward MC, we should begin by asking, "What is the gospel?"

THE BIBLE SAYS

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Cor. 15:1–8)

From this passage in 1 Corinthians, how would you define the gospel in your own words?

In v. 2, Paul tells us that by this gospel we are saved. What do you think it means to be “saved”?

In the Greek language that the New Testament was originally written in, the word “gospel” meant “good news.” What is it about the gospel that makes it such good news?

Who is the message of the gospel for?

ARTICLE

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the good news that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us.

There are two elements of the gospel that are encapsulated in this definition; the gospel's **power** and **purpose**. The power of the gospel shows us the good news of how Jesus has defeated, is defeating and will finally defeat sin, death, and evil. The purpose of the gospel shows us that God's ultimate goal is to make all things new, even us, for the sake of His glory.

Gospel Power

In Romans 1:16, Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the **power** of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” We must understand that this power by which we're accepted, empowered, and changed has three dimensions: past, present, and future. We *have been* saved from the penalty of sin, *are being* saved from the power of sin, and *will be* saved from the presence of sin because of God's power and work. Viewed from this angle, the *Good News* is that God accepts us, empowers us and is changing us by the power of the Spirit because of what Jesus has done.

The Past Dimension: We Have Been Saved from the Penalty of Sin

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf, we have *already* been totally and completely freed from the penalty of sin. When Paul uses words like "justification" in Romans 3:23–25, he's referring to this past aspect of the Gospel.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

In our rebellion against our good Father, all of humanity deserved the penalty of death. However, because of what Jesus has done, the Father has pronounced the legal verdict of "not guilty" over us. The implications of this are staggering! God can never and will never punish us for our sin because he's already punished our sin and rebellion in the person of His Son, Jesus. This work of Jesus has removed the conflict that separated us from God since the Garden. As Paul writes in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our newfound peace with God not only means the reversal of the curse of death, but it means being ushered into abundant, full life. The life that God gives us is so rich and plentiful that Jesus actually describes it as overflowing in rivers of living water (John 7:38). This sparkling new life leads us into the second dimension of the gospel. . . .

The Present Dimension: We Are Being Saved from the Power of Sin

The good news Jesus proclaimed wasn't just the message that the penalty of sin was paid for. The gospel also tells us that right now, in real time, the power of sin's stranglehold on our lives is being broken. Paul describes this dimension of the gospel in Romans 6:6–7, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."

Have you ever felt helpless in moments when you feel as if you can't help but sin? It's like you're moving irresistibly toward sin and you're powerless to stop yourself. What are the dynamics going on in our hearts when this is happening? Why does sin have such a powerful draw? Sin has power in our lives because it holds out some offer of happiness, meaning, significance, or worth. We believe the lie that if we simply give in to temptation then we'll have what our hearts truly desire. Here's an easy example we can all relate to: When I give in to the temptation to pursue wealth, I'm believing the lie that money will make me happy, provide security, give me significance, etc.

How then does the gospel free us from the mesmerizing draw of sin? It reveals to us that the deepest longings of our hearts for satisfaction, security, and significance are all designed to be met in God. Not only that but God has already worked through Jesus preemptively to satisfy our needs and desires—so much so that Paul can say in Ephesians 1:3 that God has “blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Just as someone who has a never-ending, always-abundant flow of cash won’t be tempted to look anywhere else for his financial security, so someone who is “in Christ” will never need to look elsewhere for satisfaction, security, or significance. It is this abundant spiritual blessing that breaks sin’s hold over us since when we understand and truly believe we have all we need in Jesus, the allure of sin will begin to fade away.

In Romans 6, we saw Paul describe being freed from the power of sin as dying and rising again with Jesus. Biblically speaking, the transformation that the gospel produces in us is so radical that it is dying with Christ and rising again to the abundant life of the resurrection, a life that anticipates the future dimension of the gospel.

The Future Dimension: We Will Be Saved from the Presence of Sin

Jesus saving us from the penalty of sin, and the power of sin is very good news in its own right. However, that’s not where the story ends. The Bible shows us that God also promises to save us from the very presence of sin and death. It is because of this reality that Peter can tell the scattered Christians of the first century,

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a **salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**” (1 Pt. 1:3–5)*

As Peter sees it, the process of salvation is one that will be completed “in the last time,” the time when Jesus returns to complete the victory that was won in His life, death, and resurrection. In the book of Revelation, this future without the presence of sin is described in this way:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Imagine a world filled with the joy and wholeness of God’s presence rather than a world filled with the misery and brokenness of sin’s presence, a world with no mourning, crying, or pain where God Himself will directly comfort His people. This blissful future is possible because of what Jesus has done on the Cross and will be

carried out with His power when He returns to make everything new again fully and finally.

The astounding truth though is that this future hope can radically change our lives and our cities even now! Knowing how the story ends, that sin and death will not ultimately have victory over us, gives us the faith to persevere through the struggles of life in a fallen, broken world. What soldier wouldn't charge straight into the fray of battle if he or she knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he or she wouldn't be killed and would end up winning the battle? Similarly, no matter how messy and hopeless our lives, our communities, or our cities become, we know this is not the end of the story. We know that sin, death, and brokenness won't last and will eventually be eradicated completely because of Jesus' work.

DISCUSS

Have you ever thought about the gospel being God's power to restore the entire world? Why or why not?

Do you truly believe on a daily basis that you are as loved and accepted as you can possibly be because of Jesus' work for you? If not, how would your life change if you really believed this?

In what areas of your life have you believed the lie that something other than God holds out hope for significance, security, or satisfaction? How does the gospel's power address that unbelief?

How does understanding the future dimension of God's saving work impact your life right now?

LATER THIS WEEK

Plan a time to take a prayer walk in your neighborhood as a group this next week. As you pray, ask that the Spirit would show you how the power of the gospel can transform what you see around you. When the presence of sin is finally removed, what would your neighborhood look like? Ask the Father to work through the Spirit to begin that transformation in your neighbors' lives and your community now!

THE GOSPEL, PART 2

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- The gospel shows us God's purpose to restore the creation to perfection for the sake of His glory.
- God's plan for accomplishing His purpose is to send out a community of people who make disciples who make disciples and steward God's creation.

OPENING

During the first few minutes of your time together or over dinner, ask each other what you believe God taught you or showed you during your prayer walk this week.

SETUP

What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through His own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us. We've already seen how the gospel shows us God's power to defeat sin, death, and evil and how that affects our past, present, and future. What the gospel also shows us is God's purpose in saving us. However, when we think of the gospel, its power to save is usually what comes to mind for many if not most of us. Much more rarely, if ever, do we ask *why* we've been saved. The power of God to save us is a beautiful, life-giving reality. However, the message of the gospel is not complete unless we understand the purpose of God's work on our behalf. The whole gospel shows we are saved by God's power for God's purposes.

THE BIBLE SAYS

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the Earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (Is. 25:6–9)

What do you think it would be like to live in a world like this?

What part of this description is most exciting to you? Why?

How do you think God is going to accomplish this?

ARTICLE

Gospel Purpose

When we begin to see the Bible as a story, a narrative that recounts God's work in the world, the purpose of God in salvation and all of history come into focus. Along these lines, we can think of the Bible as a play in five acts. Each act functions like chapters in a book that moves the story from its beginning on into a conflict followed by a resolution and the final "happily ever after."

Creation → Fall → Israel → Jesus → Restoration

Creation:

The creation story tells us that God created the universe and everything in it, and it was all pronounced "very good"! The crowning jewel of God's creation was humankind who was made in God's image. After creating them, God **blessed** them and **commissioned** them, saying, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the Earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28). The ultimate goal was that as God's image bearers multiplied and filled the Earth while exercising perfect dominion over the creation, God's image would fill the Earth as the waters cover the seas.

Fall:

Adam and Eve, as the representatives of all humanity, sinned and rebelled against God, meaning they chose self over and apart from God. They chose to provide happiness, worth, and meaning for themselves through what they did rather than resting in the identity they had already received as image bearers. As a result, God let them have what they wanted: independence from Him, meaning they were separated from His presence. This separation also meant that they and all of creation were now subject to the curse of death.

Israel:

Even as God was pronouncing the curses for humanity's rebellion, God gave Adam and Eve the tantalizing promise that a descendant would come from them who would crush the head of the serpent even as the serpent would bruise that descendant's heel. That statement marked God's intention to honor His creation by doing the hard work of redeeming it from the ravages of sin and death rather than wiping the slate clean and starting over.

God purpose to restore his creation and bring blessing back to the Earth is expressed in His calling and covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 12:1–3 He calls a man named Abram (later known as Abraham) and said, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on Earth will be blessed through you." What's clear here is that when God blessed Abraham, He didn't just intend the blessing to remain with Him alone; it is designed to spread out from Abraham and his family until the whole earth participates in God's blessing.

This covenant and commission was passed down through Abraham's family to Isaac, to Jacob, and finally to all of Jacob's sons from whom came the nation of Israel. So Israel, as a nation, was called to embody God's redemptive purpose to restore Creation and bring blessing to the nations. However, the OT shows that Israel failed to live out this role faithfully over and over again. As a result, they were sent into exile among the nations in much the same way as Adam and Eve were sent into exile from the Garden of Eden.

Jesus:

Even though Israel as a nation ultimately failed in the mission God gave them to embody God's redemptive purposes and spread His blessing to the nations, the promise that God would restore all things was passed down and treasured by God's covenant people until Jesus showed up on the scene. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus embodied everything Israel and Adam should have been. He did it through faithful reliance upon His Father, God, in the power of the Spirit of God. This shows us that Jesus imaged God perfectly and was only one who could restore God's broken world. Through His death on the cross, Jesus took the curse of death in place of His people so the Father would count anyone united to Him as having His own righteous life. As a result, anyone who is part of Jesus' people are now being restored so they can image God in the way Adam and Eve were originally created to do.

Jesus' work wasn't completed when He died on the cross; three days later He rose from the grave, signaling that God's restored creation was beginning in Him as a "new Adam." Jesus is the firstborn from the dead meaning that he was the first of all humankind who was freed from the curse of death to live in the fullness of life that God had intended for His children.

Restoration:

We now live in the time when God's restored creation and victory over sin, Satan, and death have begun and are realities here and now because of Jesus. The community of Jesus' people, the Church, is called to give our friends, neighbors, and cities a foretaste of this coming world as we make disciples and participate in God's work to restore the creation. Just as a good movie trailer should cause people to want to go see the full-length movie, so the church living as a vivid "trailer" of God's future restored Earth should be attractive to the watching world.

However, that work of restoration and victory that the Church participates in now won't be completed until Jesus returns again as He promised to make everything right fully and finally. When He comes, He will complete the work of restoration so God's initial purpose for creation, having image bearers filling the Earth and reflecting God's image back to Himself for His glory, will be accomplished. As His people, we will enjoy living in dependence on the Father in the renewed Earth as He cares for us and provides for us for the rest of eternity.

Gospel Plan

What the story of God makes clear is that the purpose of the gospel is to make all things new, even us, as He rescues and restores the whole creation from sin, death, and Satan for the sake of His glory! The primary way God works to accomplish this now is by calling a people to Himself who, as we've seen, act as a community that foreshadows the coming restoration. As a result, God's plan for His people is to make disciples who make disciples and steward God's creation as the outworking of His promises to Abraham. At the end of His time on Earth, Jesus passed on this original mission to his disciples, saying, "All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt. 28:18–20).

What is a disciple according to Jesus here? A disciple is primarily someone who is 1) baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit and 2) taught to obey everything Jesus' commanded, including the command to go and make disciples. Part of the very definition of a disciple is the principle that a disciple will make other disciples. So, as disciples make more disciples who make disciples and so on; disciples of Jesus will eventually spread through the whole Earth so that every people group on Earth will be touched by this disciple making process. This directly fulfills God's promise to Abraham but it also goes further than that. As disciples who make disciples and steward God's creation fill the Earth, eventually the Earth will be filled with image bearing disciples so that God's original intent for the creation will be fulfilled. In this way, God's plan to create a community of disciples who make disciples is how his original purpose for the creation will eventually succeed!

DISCUSS

How does the creation story show us what God's purpose is? Has His purpose changed since then, or is it still the same?

How did Jesus come to fulfill God's purposes?

What would a church look like that focused on the power of the gospel but not the purpose of the gospel?

How about one that focused on the purpose of the gospel but not the power?

Why do you think it's important for an MC to hold together the gospel's power with the gospel's purpose?

EXERCISE

Spend at least ten minutes together asking God to show you through His Spirit how He wants to you participate in His purpose by making disciples who make disciples. Ask Him to give you specific names of friends or neighbors.

LATER THIS WEEK

Practice hospitality! Invite one friend or neighbor who doesn't yet know Jesus (and his or her family if he or she has one) to your house for a meal and get to know his or her story. If your group agrees, it would be powerful to host a community dinner and each family invite one new person! Don't feel like you need to make this time super spiritual. It could be as simple as dinner and a movie or dinner and a game night. Have fun, laugh, and get to know each other!

COMMUNITY, PART 1

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- Our identity, along with security, significance, etc., comes from what God does for us, not what we do for ourselves.
- God has given us His own identity as family, missionaries, and servants.

OPENING

Either during dinner or for your first few minutes together, process your mealtime with a not-yet-believing friend or neighbor. Did you happen to notice any parallels between his or her story and God's story? How might God's story be good news to your friend and help give a happy ending to his or her story?

SETUP

One of the amazing truths we learn from God's story is that the good news about Jesus is designed to create a good news people who play a central role in God's mission to restore the creation from the ravages of sin and death. The gospel's power creates a gospel-people for God's gospel-purposes. Since this is the case, it's important to understand more fully the identity that has been given us as God's people.

THE BIBLE SAYS

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1Pt. 2:9-10)

What gives God's people their identity according to this passage?

In light of this passage, what do you think it means that we are God's people?

ARTICLE

The Gospel People: Our Identity

From the beginning, God designed his people to derive their identity from himself. We see this pattern at work in the garden when God says, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26). Notice that God gives Adam and Eve an identity (image bearers of God), and then out of that identity they are called to work (rule over the creation). The work God's people do must always happen out of the identity they've already received from God. Another way to say this is that our being (identity) must always come before our doing (work). To reverse this order is disastrous!

If we go back to the garden, we get to hear a very interesting conversation take place between Eve and the Serpent. When the Serpent comes to Eve, he attempts to get her to doubt her God given identity. Speaking of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he tells her, "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So the Serpent's lie is that if Adam and Eve take and eat the fruit (work) then they will be like God (identity). Really? Will they really be like God simply by eating some fruit? Didn't God already make them image bearers like himself? They were already like God; they didn't need to do anything else to be like God because He had already made them that way. So the lie they believed was that they needed to work to create or earn an identity for themselves. Sadly, this is the lie every single man, woman, and child has believed since that day.

Gospel Identities

As God's gospel community, we must understand and live out of our identity if we are going to be effective in advancing His mission. But what identity has God given His people? If we go back to Jesus' commission to His disciples, we find an interesting statement on our identity. Jesus tells the disciples,

"All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20).

Did you catch the identity statement? Jesus tells the disciples to baptize new disciples in the **name** of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Bible, a person's name often represents all of who they are. So when we are baptized, we are being identified with the Triune God. But let's press this a little further. What do the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have to do with our identity as Jesus' people?

We're going to run through a series of four questions that connect who God is directly to our identity and response. The big idea is that who God is and what he's done create our identity. Then how we live should flow directly from our new identity in Jesus.

Who is God? → What Has God Done? → Who Are We? → What Do We Do?

Since our God is one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each person of the Godhead has an impact on our identity as disciples. The chart below demonstrates how our identity and practices are shaped by God.

WHO IS GOD?	WHAT HAS GOD DONE?	WHO ARE WE?	WHAT DO WE DO?
Father	Adopted Us	Family	As a family, we love God and love one another.
Son	Purchased Us	Servants	As servants, we serve King Jesus and serve others as a foretaste of the coming Kingdom.
Holy Spirit	Sent Us	Missionaries	As missionaries, we follow the leading of the Spirit as we share and show the Good News of Jesus.

Now that you see the big picture, let's break each of these identities down a little further.

Family: God the Father Adopts Us

Let's start with God the Father. The Father sent Jesus, the Son of God, to reconcile a people for Himself through Jesus' death and resurrection so He could adopt us as sons and daughters apart from any good or bad we've ever done. We're adopted into God's family solely because of Jesus. Paul describes this for the church in Galatia when he wrote to them, saying,

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:26-29).

We see throughout the story of God that He has a family through which He's working to make all things new. However, Jesus was the only true and faithful son of God, and all those who belong to Jesus are adopted into God's family with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of being children of God.

As children of God we love one another as brothers and sisters. Jesus said this is the way the world will know we are His disciples: by our love for one another. Paul said we were to be imitators of God as dearly loved children who love one another (Eph 5:1–2). The primary means by which we show the world what God is like and give tangible proof of the gospel's power to save is through our love for one another. If we don't love one another, we show we don't know and love God (1 John 4:7–21).

Servants: God the Son Purchased Us

Fully God and fully human, Jesus took on the posture of a servant. He gave His life, even unto death, so others could experience salvation, peace, and restoration. Jesus said, *"I am among you as one who serves. . . ."* All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. For us this means joyfully submitting to Jesus as Lord, to the leaders He has placed over us, and to each other as we also serve whomever God brings into our lives. We do *whatever* He leads us to do, *whenever* He tells us, and *wherever* He wants us to do it.

If I believe the gospel, I am being set free from slavery to false gods that keep me imprisoned, don't feed me, and eventually beat me to death. All of us are serving a master or many masters. The question isn't "Am I a slave," but "What am I a slave to?" When I believe and live out my gospel identity as a servant of Jesus, He is my master and sets me free to live life as it should be lived. I now belong to Him as His servant, and whatever I do, I do as unto him (Matt. 25:40). My service and sacrifice for Jesus my Lord unto others is my spiritual act of worship.

As the servants of Jesus, we are a holy nation—a city within a city. We give a foretaste of what the eternal city will be like under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. Living as servants to the King who serve others as He served us presents a tangible witness of Jesus' kingdom and to the power of the gospel to change us. We serve in such a way that it demands a gospel explanation—lives that cannot be explained in any other way than by the gospel of the Kingdom of Jesus. Our humility points to his ultimate humility; our servanthood is led by the Servant of all, and our sacrifice is motivated by the One who gave up His life for us. If we don't serve others as Jesus served us, it is because we have forgotten how He has served us or we don't really know Him in the first place.

Missionaries: The Spirit Has Sent Us

God sent Jesus to Earth to take on human form and live within the culture of first-century Palestine. He worked, ate, and interacted among the people, living in such a way that those around Him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came so that all people, places, and things could be restored to a right relationship with God. In the same way, we believe we are missionaries sent by God's Spirit into our culture to restore all things to God through Jesus. We live this out through involvement in an MC.

If I believe the gospel and can call God my Father it is because God has given me His Spirit (Romans 8:14–17). After Jesus said to His disciples, *“As the Father sent me I am sending you,”* He breathed on them the Holy Spirit. Then, when He commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses, He told them to wait for power from on high (Acts 1:8). He was referring to the Holy Spirit that the Father and Son would send (John 14:16; 16:7). Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, empowered and led by the Spirit, now we are sent as His missionaries by the same power and leading of the Spirit (Matt. 3:16–4:1; John 20:21). If we have the Spirit of God it is so we might be the children of God who accomplish the mission of Jesus by the same Spirit that sent and empowered Him.

As missionaries we are sent to share the truth about God's love for the world through the sending of His Son. The Spirit has been given to us so we can know what is true of Jesus (John 14:26; 16:12–15), live fruitful lives as evidence of the gospel's power to change (Gal. 5:16–24), be empowered to share it boldly (Acts 4:23–31), and trust He is the one who convicts the heart and gives new life (John 3:4–8). All fruitful missionary work is a result of being people who are born of, filled with, and led by the Spirit. If we are not living lives as missionaries fulfilling Jesus' mission, it is either because we don't have the Spirit or we are grieving the Spirit, living in disobedience to what He is leading us to do.

DISCUSS

In your own words, how were people created to derive their identity? What went wrong?

What would change in our community if we fully lived out our new gospel identity as family?

What should motivate us to faithfully live out our servant identities?

In your own words, how do we derive our identity as missionaries?

EXCERCISE

The four questions we used this week to examine our identity are an important tool for rooting your identity in Jesus and His work for us! Individually take a moment to work backward through the four questions. Start with a negative behavior or emotion you've experienced this week and trace it back to how that behavior or emotion could be rooted in a wrong or incomplete picture of who God is.

What Did You Do/How Do You Feel? → Who are You? → What has God Done for You? → Who is God?

Were you shocked by how what you're doing or feeling ultimately shows how, at a practical level, you believe something false about God? The good news is that even though your actions show a false belief in God, the gospel tells us our false beliefs and sinful actions don't determine our standing with God. Work through the questions again beginning with the truth about God you need to hear.

Who is God? → What Has God Done for You? → Who are You?
→ How Should You Live?

This process can be used to repent of our false attempts to secure happiness for ourselves through our own actions/beliefs and to turn in faith to the new identity that God has given us because of what Jesus has done.

LATER THIS WEEK

Write out the four questions on an index card and put it somewhere you'll see it frequently throughout the day. As you begin to see your actions are betraying unbelief, take a moment to preach the gospel to yourself using the four questions.

COMMUNITY, PART 2

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- Our gospel identities were meant to be exercised primarily in community.
- The hope of our community is our acceptance in Jesus, not in perfectly living out our identity as a family of missionary servants.
- Living out our identities in community involves re-orienting your entire life around the gospel.

OPENING

Take a few minutes over dinner or before you begin to share some surprising things you learned about yourself this week as you used the four questions. How did your new identity in Jesus become really good news to you this week?

SETUP

We've now seen that the gospel is God's power to save for the purpose of restoring the creation for the sake of God's glory. This purpose is accomplished through God's people who are given new identities as family, missionaries, and servants and given the task to make disciples who make disciples.

ARTICLE

Discipleship In Community

One of the best parts about our new identity in Jesus as family, missionaries, and servants is that we're not alone! In fact, these new identities were designed to function in community. It would actually be impossible to live them out faithfully in isolation. Jesus knew this truth well and so prayed for unity among His people, "I have given them (the disciples) the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." What's fascinating about Jesus' prayer for us is that as the Church lives in unity with one another (family identity), the world will know the Father loves them and sent His Son Jesus into the world (missionary identity). If our life as disciples in community is so important to Jesus' mission, then we had better understand what community looks like!

Gospel-Shaped Community

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

In this passage we see a glimpse of the early church, a community of people who were devoted not only to Jesus, but also to one another. They prayed together, and they ate together. They shared gospel teachings, and they shared their possessions! We see a beautiful picture of a community of people who were so devoted to the gospel that they were devoted to one another. They lived more like a tight family than a loose collection of individuals. They didn't "go" to church because they "were" the church.

When MCs live out of their family identity, it will lead to a recovery of this biblical pattern of community. We don't want to be a group of individuals who try to follow Jesus on our own, occasionally gathering for a church service or a Bible study; rather, we want to be a community of people devoted to Jesus and one another!

The hope of the gospel is that we don't have to be a perfect community since Jesus was perfect for us. When we let one another down, we point to Jesus who lifts us up. The gospel, not religious rules, unites the church. Religious community, however, says, "If I keep the community rules, then people will accept me", but Gospel community says, "We are already accepted in Christ, therefore, we love, forgive, and accept one another." This is great news! The gospel frees us from performing for God or for the church! You don't have to impress God because Jesus impressed God for you. You don't have to pretend to be perfect because all of us are imperfect people clinging to a perfect Christ, being perfected by the Spirit!

Re-Orienting Life Around the Gospel

You may be asking, "Is being the church going to make me busier than I already am?" This concern is understandable! Many of us have lots of responsibilities with our jobs, school, families, hobbies, and the ordinary demands of everyday life (laundry, cleaning, cooking). How do we find time to be together more than once a week?

Living in community doesn't necessarily mean adding more things to your schedule. Many of the things you're already doing can be done in community. Remember, church isn't something you attend; it's something that you are! You are the church as you work, go to school, participate in sports, enjoy hobbies, and do ordinary things. So, do ordinary things but with gospel intentionality. In other words,

do the everyday things of life, but do them in a way that shows your devotion to Jesus, one another, and your neighbors and city!

Messy Community

Now don't get us wrong: This picture of the church is a beautiful one, but in real life it's messy. There is a problem with community—it's full of people, people who sin. We will inevitably snub, gossip, disregard, and complain about one another. It's an imperfect community.

To enter into true community, our ideal community must be surrendered. We need to recognize several things about gospel-centered community. First, conflict and tension in relationships do not take God by surprise; in fact, he appoints it as a grace for our Christlike change (James 1; Romans 8; Colossians 3)! Second, imperfect community also creates the opportunity to give and receive the gospel of grace by forgiving and forbearing with one another. Because God extends forgiveness and grace to us, we can extend grace and forgiveness to one another (Eph. 4:32). Third, the mess of community helps us become a maturing community that speaks the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15). This is good news because we all need love, and we all need truth! As we mature, we learn how to remind one another of God's love and His truth in our everyday lives.

DISCUSS

Is it good news to you that we were designed to live out our gospel identities in community? Why or why not?

What scares you about re-orienting your life around your new gospel identities in Jesus?

What's one thing in your life you sense God may be calling you to re-orient around your family identity?

EXERCISE

Take a few minutes and brainstorm what kinds of things a normal, healthy, extended family would do on a regular basis.

Since the gospel has made us part of God's family and, as a result, brother and sisters to each other, how can our community begin to live life together like a regular, healthy family?

For example, healthy families regularly:

- Eat together
- Celebrate each other's successes
- Play together
- Plan for the future
- Etc.

LATER THIS WEEK

Take one of the normal, family rhythms you brainstormed during this week's exercise and decide you're going to do that all together as an extended, gospel family this week.

MISSION, PART 1

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- God is on a mission to restore all things for His glory and our good.
- The Father sends us in the power of the Spirit in the same way He sent Jesus.
- We participate in God's mission as missionaries when we make disciples who make disciples for their good and the good of their cities.

OPENING

Over dinner tonight, recount something you enjoyed and/or something that was refreshing about including your MC in something you'd normally do individually or as a nuclear family.

SETUP

What is the first thought that comes to mind when you hear the word mission? For some of us, the word may bring to mind boring board meetings where corporations endlessly debate mission statements. For others of us, the word conjures up vivid images of war movies, spy thrillers, or maybe even cross-cultural adventures. God has been on a centuries-long mission that could be described as almost anything but boring.

Similarly, we all have a mission in life: a mission to make a lot of money, live comfortably, love well, etc. However, we want to learn what it is to orient life around God's mission and purpose for us. Since we are connected to Jesus and sent by the Holy Spirit, we get to be participants in God's cosmic plan to restore all things for the sake of his glory. How exciting is that!? Now, how does a family of missionary servants fit into this picture?

ARTICLE

The Mission of a "Missional Community"

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18–20)

Parting words are a big deal. In Matthew we get to overhear Jesus' parting words to his disciples, who were the beginning of the first "missional community."

So what was their mission?

When we say "mission," many things may come to mind. Some may think of a trip to Africa, a day of work at a soup kitchen, or even mentoring students at a low-income apartment community, and all those are great things to do and can be a great way to "show and share the gospel." Ultimately *the mission of the first disciples was to make more disciples of Jesus and steward God's creation.*

Re-Defining Discipleship

When we say our mission is to "make disciples," most people think of two things: winning people over to Jesus (evangelism) or helping a follower of Jesus learn to obey Him (discipleship). But when we look at Mathew 28, we don't see an either/or discipleship; in fact we see both "evangelism" and "discipleship."

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

Looks like "evangelism."

"teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Looks like "discipleship."

The Great Commission is neither evangelism- nor discipleship-centered. It is gospel-centered. The command to make disciples is described three ways: 1) being sent in the power of Jesus, 2) baptizing into the name of Jesus, and 3) teaching the commands of Jesus. The mission of the church is radically Jesus-centered!

If the gospel is truly at the center of the church and her mission, then both discipleship and evangelism will reflect this focus on Jesus Christ. In fact **both** discipleship and evangelism take place throughout the discipleship process! Belief in Jesus changes what we believe, who we are, and where we live. We will go, baptize, and teach Jesus wherever we live.

The most succinct statement of the gospel is "Jesus Christ is Lord." Disciples of Jesus are committed to sharing and showing that "Jesus is Lord" in every area of life and in every domain of society: work, family, government, education, entertainment, and all of culture. Therefore, we aim to make disciples of Jesus who do the same: disciples who make great culture, redeem social ill, and share the whole gospel!

A Missional God

God is missional. The *Missio Dei* is a Latin phrase that classically referred to the "mission" or "sending" of God—the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son

sending the Spirit. God's mission has always been to see His purpose realized in a restored creation for the sake of His glory. As a missional God, the Father, Son, and Spirit create and send a missional people (the church) to see His purpose accomplished.

- The Father sent the Son.
- The Father and the Son sent the Spirit.
- The Father, Son, and Spirit send the Church (that's us).

A Missional Community

The result of the church being sent is that we live as a community of disciples who are not only devoted to Jesus and to one another, but are also devoted to our neighbors and our city. When we come to Christ, we are sent on His mission.

Mission is not an option for followers of Jesus or something reserved for "super-spiritual Christians." Mission is for everybody! The mission of making disciples who contribute to our wider culture, redeem social ill, and share a whole gospel is the joy and responsibility of every Christian.

A missional community, then, is a family of missionary servants, a group of people who are devoted to Jesus, to one another, and to their neighbors and city! In line with God's gospel purpose, they are disciples of Jesus who are committed to making more disciples of Jesus! Therefore, mission is not merely a monthly trip to feed the homeless or a trip to Africa to serve in an orphanage (although those are great things to do!). Mission is something that happens in our everyday lives as we follow Jesus. Mission is not merely an activity; it is our identity!

Living out your missionary identity just means being yourself. It is making disciples where you live with your community as you collectively follow Jesus.

Sent Like Jesus

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

If the way the Father sent Jesus is the way that Jesus sends us, then it is important to ask, "How did the Father send Jesus?"

The answer to that question is shocking!

God sent Jesus to become human! The God of the universe became a man and experienced hunger, thirst, pain, and betrayal. He lived among us as one of us. Notice God didn't ask people to come to Him; He went to people.

Most of us have experienced the opposite when it comes to “church.” The church builds buildings, plans services, and asks people to “come to church.” Jesus sends the church.

If we are to be sent like Jesus, then we should stop expecting people to come to church, and we should start taking the church to people! After all, the church is not a building or a service; it is the people of God on the mission of Christ. The Church is us. We just need go with one another into our neighborhoods, places of employment, kids schools, and favorite hangouts to make disciples.

Mission is for Everybody (and Happens in the Everyday)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11–12)

There is no such thing as a spectator Christian; we are all in this together! God didn't give these five leaders to the church for them to do missional community. Rather, He gave them as gifts to equip everyday people for life as a family of missionary servants.

Where can you begin? Look around! You live next to people, work with people, and are friends with people who do not know Jesus.

Mission happens in the everyday things of life: backyard grill-outs with the neighbors, lunch breaks with your co-workers, attending concerts, watching films, play dates, and happy hours. The missional church is not about adding activities to an already busy life; rather, it is a matter of being yourself in the everyday with gospel intentionality.

DISCUSS

In your own words, describe the relationship between evangelism and discipleship.

What is the mission of God?

How is the Spirit sending us like the Father sent Jesus?

What are some practices you can begin doing as a community to be intentional about the mission of making disciples?

EXERCISE

As a group, make a list of places that are popular gathering spots for people in your area or city.

Make a plan as a community for how to frequent these gathering spots for the purpose of making relationships with people not-yet reconciled to the Father.

LATER THIS WEEK

Begin to frequent the gathering spots in your neighborhood/town/city.

Take another prayer walk as a community and begin to ask the Spirit specifically how He wants you to reach your community. If the Spirit sends us out on mission, then He will also be faithful to empower and direct us on mission. Remember, He wants this to succeed more than we do!

MISSION, PART 2

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- There are certain rhythms of life we can discern across every place and culture of the earth.
- Our gospel identities are designed to be lived out in the rhythms of life.

EXERCISE

Let's imagine that you all just became a team of missionaries who are going on mission to Delhi, India.

As you think through what it would look like to live as a missionary in India, what kinds of things would you do to prepare for your new life there?

What kinds of things do people do in India that they also do in the West?

How might these same rhythms of life look differently in India than they do in the West?

How might you begin to live as a missionary in these rhythms of life?

THE BIBLE SAYS

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor. 9:19–22)

What kinds of things did Paul feel the freedom to do for the sake of the gospel?

How was it possible for him to feel that level of freedom to enter into different cultures?

What was the goal of him entering into the rhythms and patterns of these different culture?

SETUP

What does gospel-centered community really look like? How could we ever possibly have the time to live out these identities of family, missionary, and servant? When the gospel takes root and begins bearing fruit in our lives, it doesn't primarily add "stuff" to our lives; it will lead to us re-orienting what we already do around the gospel call to make disciples.

ARTICLE

Gospel Rhythms of Life

We have found some transferable patterns or rhythms of life that we see throughout the story of God and in every culture in every part of the world. Through each of these rhythms people have the opportunity to walk by faith—*walking in line with the truth of the gospel* (Gal. 2:14)—or walk in fear or prideful rebellion to God—*walking in unbelief*.

When we come to understand and believe the gospel we realize we are saved by faith, not works, AND we are *being* saved by faith not works. We know the *righteous live by faith* (Rom. 1:17), and every moment is pregnant with the opportunity to walk by faith and therefore in line with the truth of the gospel. Training up ourselves and others to walk in line with the truth of the gospel is really all about learning to *walk by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave up His life for us* (Gal. 2:20) in every part of life.

These everyday rhythms we have identified can be easily observed in the very beginning of the story before the fall of man, and through the story we can see how they can be lived out in faith or in fear and prideful rebellion.

Story-Formed

We know and submit our lives to the story of God while also becoming familiar with one another's stories and the stories of our culture.

God has been unfolding his story since before time began. We believe we are participants in the story, and our only hope for redemption and restoration from our fear and prideful rebellion is when by faith we submit our lives to the overarching story of God. Therefore, we regularly reacquaint with and submit ourselves to the story by interacting with God's Word. We look for ways and times to tell the story often. We also take time to listen to others' stories and lead them to submit their lives to God's story (Gen. 1:1–2; Jn. 1:1; Ps.1; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Every person on the planet is living his or her life inside of and in light of a larger story shaped by the country he or she lives in, the cultures surrounding him or her, the family he or she was raised in, the worldview he or she believes. Until he or she understands all of this in light of the redemptive story of God, he or she will give himself or herself to lesser stories that do not work and will ultimately lead to his or her destruction.

Listen

We submit to God through consistent backward and forward listening.

Everyone is listening to someone or something as the primary voice or voices they submit their lives to—an expert or teacher that they follow. These might include a school of thought, a leader or charismatic personality, demons, or lies from the past. Until the Creator is THE expert and THE teacher to whom they compare all other voices, they are prone to deceit and lies and worship of self or others.

Jesus listened to God in prayer to know his Father's will. We listen to God because through the gospel we are now aware of our ongoing need for Him. We listen *backward* by regularly interacting with God's Word—the story and the Son. We also listen *forward* to hear what God is saying to us today. We believe He declares to all people what He is like through His creation and specifically speaks to those who belong to Him through His Spirit.

We listen well when we direct our listening in the four ways below:

- **Listen to God:** We are fully dependent on God's Spirit so we must walk in submission to the Spirit if we are going to live as God intends.
- **Listen to Myself:** To regularly realign ourselves to the truth of the gospel, we need to listen closely to what we say to ourselves and compare that to the gospel and our gospel identity.
- **Listen to Each Other:** We need to listen to each other carefully to discern where they are not yet gripped by the gospel.
- **Listen to Our Culture and Community:** We should be listening constantly to know which story our culture and communities believe in and where that story has proven weak and ineffective to save.

Celebrate

We gather together to celebrate God's extravagant blessings in Jesus.

God calls people to celebrate his goodness and grace regularly. We gather weekly in MCs and regularly as a larger family to share stories and celebrate all God is doing in and amongst us. We invite everyone to these celebrations as a way of displaying and declaring God's glory, exhorting one another in the gospel and encouraging one another in mission.

We are created to worship, and celebration is one of the clearest ways we do this. Every person in every part of the world celebrates. The question is: *To whom or what is the celebration directed?* Because of sin and idolatry, we are prone to celebrate the creation instead of the Creator. However, if as God's people we truly understand and believe the gospel, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet. God regularly called His people to celebrate through feasts and parties because He did not want them to forget His grace and abundant provision. The very celebration wasn't just a response—it was also a demonstration of what God is like and has done. We must enter into a regular rhythm of celebrating God's extravagant blessings.

Bless

We intentionally bless others through words, gifts, or actions.

God desires that all people would be blessed through Jesus. And now, as His Church, we believe we live out this mission as we bless others. We intentionally seek God's direction for whom He would have us tangibly bless each week. (Gen. 12:1–3; Eph. 1:22–23; 2:8–10; 1 Pt. 2:12)

Just like Abraham, we have been blessed; we have received unmerited favor and provision. This is not because of anything we have done, but because of all God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We are co-heirs with Christ and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:3). However, we are not blessed just for our own good. We have been given what we have so others might also receive. We must regularly take account of what has been given to us and realize it is not ours, but God's to steward. Then, in light of the gospel that reminds us He became poor so that in His poverty we might become rich, we are freed up to pour out our lives and things so others might be blessed and taste and see that the Lord is good.

Eat

We regularly eat meals with others to invite them into gospel community.

Meals are a daily reminder of our common need for God and his faithfulness to provide both physically and spiritually. Jesus called us to remember Him and His sacrifice for us through a meal. When we eat together, we commune around this truth. We regularly eat meals with those not in our immediate family or circle of close friends, discipling them toward a life of dependence on God.

In every part of the world hunger is a daily reality; whether people have plenty or little, everyone gets hungry more than once a day. God gave Adam and Eve the opportunity to demonstrate their faith through the eating of food. They chose to eat unto themselves out of unbelief and rebellion. God has likewise given every person in every part of the world a regular reminder of their need and an opportunity to eat unto themselves in unbelief and rebellion or unto God in faith and with thanksgiving.

The table for the Jews, as it is today, was very symbolic AND communicative. Whom we eat with demonstrates whom we love. This is why Jesus was called a friend of sinners; He ate with people who were dirty, unreligious, and visibly or sociably unacceptable. The table is one of the most powerful displays of God's love and acceptance of sinners.

Recreate

We take time to rest, play, create, and restore beauty in ways that reflect God and the work of the gospel to others.

After powerfully and joyfully creating the universe, God rested. We were created in His image and therefore were made to create joyfully and rest as well. We regularly take time to rest, play, create, and restore beauty in ways that reflect what God is like to our community.

In every culture and with every person we witness the desire to rest and create. Although the means by which people work it out might be different, we find a universal and historical practice of recreating. However, apart from the gospel people remain restless in their work and labored in their rest. The gospel enables people to rest while working because the work that justifies them was accomplished in Jesus. They don't need their work to give them significance any longer. The gospel also enables people to rest when not working because they know God is always working. They don't have to worry their lack of work will stop the world from spinning.

DISCUSS

Describe what you think it means to live out your gospel identities in these transferable rhythms of life.

Which rhythms, if any, do you find yourself resisting re-orienting around the gospel?

Why do you think it might be important to be formed by God's story and to listen to Him while living on mission?

LATER THIS WEEK

If you haven't already, plan a time to get together later this week and begin to share your personal stories with one another.

A MATRIX FOR MISSION

THE BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas to understand more deeply this week.

- A covenant helps an MC plan for obedience throughout the coming year.
- A covenant involves seeking God's guidance on how to live out our gospel identities in the everyday rhythms of life around us.

SETUP

Since you now understand how God's gospel power creates a gospel people living for His gospel purpose in the rhythms of the culture around them, you're now ready to dive in and begin asking Him how to live as a family of missionary servants in the coming year. Since this can sometimes be a lengthy process we're leaving you most of the time this week to read the article and begin praying through the Missional Commitment Matrix.

ARTICLE

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:22-25

Why Make a Missional Community Covenant?

The purpose of this guide, as stated up front, is that we would move from theory to practice, from the classroom to our neighbors and the city, and from talking about "missional community" to being a missional community. James says it this way: to move from being hearers of the word to being doers of the word!

Many of us are convinced that MCs are the way to be the church and to be devoted truly to Jesus, one another, and our neighbors and city. We also realize this doesn't come easy as we rub up against our own sin, individualism, and consumerism, as well as everything we are trying to unlearn about the "church experiences" we had earlier in life.

We are concerned that if we continue to talk about MCs with no sense of how it applies to our everyday lives, it will just be all talk and nothing will actually happen. That is why we want to make a commitment, to take this from a discussion into our everyday lives, to move missional community from our head and heart to our hands.

A Couple Disclaimers:

We Will Fail.

We won't perfectly live out what we commit to; we never do. The good news is that when we fail in loving one another and our neighbors, we have the gospel that freely forgives us! We don't "do missional community" to earn God's favor; rather, in Christ we have God's favor and we are adopted into his family. We are a missional community, imperfections and all!

This commitment will not serve as a legalist document to judge one another's performance; rather, it will be something we can revisit every couple months to see how we are progressing in living out our devotion to Jesus, one another, and our neighbors and city.

This is Not "In or Out"

If you have sat through this discussion, are part of our community, and are not ready to make a missional commitment, that is 100% OK. We are not here to twist your arm to do anything; we are just glad you are here. In fact, please don't stop coming to our gatherings—we want you here with us. A commitment is not meant to create an "in or out"; it is simply a way we want to commit to being a community that lives out what we believe in our everyday lives.

What Does a Covenant Look Like?

Throughout this primer we have talked about missional community in terms of our identity in Christ as God's family of missionary servants. As a result, when we covenant together, we want to articulate how we will express our missionary, family, and servant identities in the rhythms of life in the context that we're trying to reach. This is a helpful way to process how the gospel informs our identity and then how those identities should be expressed in all of life.

	STORY-FORMED	LISTEN	CELEBRATE	BLESS	EAT	RECREATE
Family						
Missionary						
Servant						

EXERCISE

Begin praying through this Missional Community Covenant Matrix. As you do this, you may want to refer to the Missional Community Commitment Template in Appendix A. The questions there will help guide your thinking and praying

throughout the coming weeks as you plan for obedience in living out your identity as a family of missionary servants.

LATER THIS WEEK

Live intentionally as a family of missionary servants in the rhythms of life in your neighborhood, town, and/or city.

APPENDIX A: Missional Community Commitment Template

GOSPEL

The gospel is the good news that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through His own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us.

Because of the gospel, I believe in the power of God for salvation through faith in the work of Jesus Christ saving me for the purpose of glorifying God and participating in his mission to restore all things to Himself.

GOSPEL IDENTITY

I believe I have been given a new identity in Christ because of the gospel. I am now a part of God's family on mission sent to serve our world and continually learn to walk in his ways.

Missionaries — We are missionaries sent by Jesus to make disciples.

How we will commit ourselves to making disciples who make disciples in the power of the Spirit:

- Which PEOPLE group or groups are we focusing in our obedience to Jesus' commission to MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS?
- How will we commit to listen in prayer for our next steps in our friendships with those God is sending us to? Both as an MC and as individuals?
- What specifically will we do to insure that the people we are sent to hear the gospel this year?
- How can we become so fluent in God's story that it shapes our worldview and we can't help but teach it to others?

Servants — We are servants of God who serve others as a way of life.

How we will tangibly demonstrate the gospel in service to our King, Jesus:

- How will we commit to listen in prayer for how and whom we should serve? Both as an MC and as individuals?
- What does GOOD NEWS look like to the people group we are sent to? How might we demonstrate that through service?

- How will we serve the underprivileged (poor, widows, orphans) among the people we are sent to?
- How might we demonstrate God's creative beauty and restorative intent?
- How will we intentionally share what we have with each other and those in need?

Family — We are children of God who live as his family.

How we will express our love as brothers and sisters adopted by the Father:

- How will we commit to listen in prayer for the Father's love and guidance for us as a family? As an MC? Individuals?
- What actions will we commit to which express our gospel identity as sons of God and brothers and sisters together (meals, sharing stories, gathering, celebrating, etc.)?
- How will we insure that each of us is involved in regular, intimate discipleship, nurture, and accountability?
- What regular rhythms of recreating will we commit to together?

As a follower of Jesus and a child of God, I commit with my missional community to live these gospel identities and rhythms.

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

RESOURCES

Saturate

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resources/saturate-book>

Field Guide

<http://fieldguide.saturatetheworld.com>

How to Equip a Missional Community video series

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resources/equip-an-mc/>

DNA Guide

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resources/dna-guide>

Telling Your Gospel Story

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resources/engaging-story-resource>

And more at www.saturatetheworld.com.