

Lesson One

Evangelism: Every Believer's Call

Synopsis

This lesson will prepare participants to motivate and equip congregants to live missionally in order to influence the lives of "not-yet-Christians."

Learning Outcome

The student will

- identify biblical principles that support the practice of living on mission with Jesus
- describe what it means for every believer to live missionally and influence the lives of "not-yet-Christians"
- discuss relevant strategies that involve every member of the congregation in "living sent"

Learning Objective

The student will know

- the skills needed to motivate and equip congregants for missional living that aligns with their context and opportunities

Lesson Outline

Introduction: Dealing with Reality

ReJesus—Return to Jesus as Model

- Missional
- Incarnational
- Love Motivation
- Attraction Fallacy
- Culture Shift and Leading Change
- Community Centered on Mission
- Discipleship Centered on Mission

People, Not Programs or Projects

Practical Applications

- Move Out, Move In, Move Alongside, Move From
- Missional Strategies

Lesson Review Questions

Works Cited

A sepia-toned photograph of a person with long hair, seen from the side, holding an open book and reading. The image is used as a background for the title section.

Lesson One

Evangelism: Every Believer's Call

Introduction: Dealing with Reality

In the movie, *The Matrix*, Morpheus says to Neo, "You are here because you know something. What you know you can't explain but you feel it. You felt it your entire life. There is something wrong with the world, but you don't know what it is. But it's there like a splinter in your mind."¹

As we begin to talk about evangelism in this lesson, we must state the reality of the matter right up front. The Christian world seems generally divided into two segments on this theme. In all of western culture, evangelism has fallen upon hard times rather gradually over the last fifty years. Right now, the statistics reveal that Christianity generally is in decline in the west. That means if we combine all the evangelistic efforts of all the Christian ministries in the west, the data would tell us that Christianity is failing. Yes, it is possible that a church here or there is growing, but from the comprehensive view across all of Christianity in western culture the numbers indicate decline. So, as we talk about evangelism, it seems there could not be a more important lesson for those doing ministry in the west.² (For further discussion on this, see the lesson, "Understanding the Global and Cultural Context of Ministry" in the course, *The Minister's Role as Leader*.)

In the other segment of Christianity, all ministries beyond western culture, the reverse has been true. Over the last fifty years, there has been a great surge generally in Christian ministry around the world. (See endnote 2.) For one, missionary activity has seen a great surge, especially motivated by the AD 2000 movement which embraced the goal of bringing the gospel to every people by the year 2000. Included in this endeavor was the greatest evangelistic tool that the world has ever seen, *The Jesus Film*, which has been translated into hundreds of languages and has been shown in urban and rural settings with high impact across the globe. Also in the last fifty years, the spread of the gospel has been carried on the wings of a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit (See Acts 2:15-17), which former Harvard Professor, Harvey Cox, called the greatest social movement of the twentieth century. In this time nations have literally turned to Christ, millions have come to faith, and amazing ministry has been seen.³ Therefore, in this broad and general context, it might be said that evangelism is thriving in our world, and there is little we need to improve upon.

That may indeed be the case as the last fifty years have been quite incredible. The Church of God of Prophecy alone saw an increase of over 400 percent from 1990 to 2010.⁴ Nevertheless, I believe that most ministers and leaders in the non-western churches would say they sense a change is

stirring. The enemy does not sit still for great revival very long until he finds ways to disturb and disrupt. Through history the normal flow of thought and advancement has gone from the west to the world. I believe that many leaders even now in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia sense a shift seeping into their cultures through the influence of the youth culture, media, technology, economy, and social agents of change. The influences of the west just naturally flow out and beyond, and those influences have not been kind to evangelistic effort to date.

With these thoughts in mind, we invite ministry leaders of any culture to think fresh thoughts with us in this lesson about the call that we have for every believer to carry the gospel of Jesus to every man, woman, and child within our reach.

ReJesus⁵ - Return to Jesus as Model

From the beginning of this gospel story, everything begins with Jesus. We would all agree that he is the source, the fountainhead, the model, the guide, the critical key, literally the all and all of Christianity and, therefore, Christian witness. (Note: Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch wrote the book, *ReJesus*, and the thoughts in this segment of the lesson will flow mainly from that source.)

Jesus is the beginning and the end, as well as the founder and perfecter of the faith. The Bible indicates that everything must be based on him.⁶ Paul was adamant about this:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Colossians 1:15-20 NASB).

"Over the last fifty years, there has been a great surge generally in Christian ministry around the world."

In addition, Paul, after filling the first chapter of Ephesians with another glorious description of the preeminence of Christ, concludes with this:

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22, 23 NASB).

The Body, i.e., the church, is to be the fullness of Jesus. That is the most profound yet simple description of the church and of our mission. Therefore, there must be a constant return to Jesus in order to ascertain that we are in the way. Church renewal projects are of little value if we do not first reconnect with the life and ministry of Jesus. Before such projects deal with leadership, discipleship, worship, or how we do church, there ought to be a thorough attempt to reconnect the church with Jesus. By rebooting the church to Jesus, it will recover itself and become fully operational in any age.⁷

We must constantly return to Jesus to authenticate, as well as legitimize, ourselves as his people. What other guide do we have? It is easy for agendas to take Jesus captive rather than the other way around.⁸ We must return to being that simple, uncluttered, passionate community of Christ, filled with the love of God that so filled our spiritual ancestors. We must reignite our passion directly from the Jesus flame. Christianity minus Christ equals only religion.⁹ Any attempt to be like Jesus or to be a church like Jesus must recover a real sense of the radical and revolutionary nature of following Jesus.¹⁰

Polls today often reflect that people are turned off by the church, but they continue to be enamored by Jesus. This is quite remarkable since Jesus is presented in the Gospels as homeless, peripatetic, socially marginal, disdainful of kinfolk, without a trade or occupation, a friend of outcasts, averse to material possessions, without fear for his own safety, a thorn in the side of the establishment, and a scourge to the rich and powerful.¹¹ We have to admit that there is an immeasurable distance between all that we read in the Bible about Jesus and the practice of the church and of Christians.¹²

What would recalibrating Christian ministry on the model of Jesus look like? Let's expand on that with evangelism in mind through this lesson. Consider the following key concepts before we get into practical applications for evangelism in your church.

- Missional
- Incarnational
- Love Motivation
- Attraction Fallacy
- Culture Shift and Leading Change
- Community Centered on Mission
- Discipleship Centered on Mission

Missional

Apparently, Jesus felt the one characteristic of his ministry that must be announced first was his mission. If Jesus was anything, he was missional. So, in his first sermon he took Isaiah 61 as his text and personalized it.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me To
bring good news to the afflicted; He has
sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives And
freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the
favorable year of the LORD And the day
of vengeance of our God; To comfort all
who mourn, To grant those who mourn
in Zion, Giving them a garland instead
of ashes, The oil of gladness instead
of mourning, The mantle of praise
instead of a spirit of fainting. So they
will be called oaks of righteousness, The
planting of the LORD, that He may be
glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3 NASB).

We would all agree that Jesus was on mission. And as we view his life from the beginning to the end, there was nothing that he allowed to hinder or derail him from his mission. Some have called this first announcement his manifesto. Everything had to submit to this purpose, or it could not be. If the church is to recalibrate to Jesus again, we must restore this primary and deep commitment to be missional in ALL we do.

Going further, the stunning claim of Jesus is that he is not operating on his own or based on his own strategy but entirely at the impulse of the heavenly Father. If we claim to be Jesus followers, we are to be committed to a similar mission of God, the *missio Dei*. Consider this, God sends the Son. Then he joins the Son to send the Holy Spirit. Next, they all join to send the church. Frost and Hirsch say, "Nothing can keep the trinity locked up in the church house. God escapes every stained-glass crypt and sends himself out throughout the world."¹³

Today, mission has become one of the many tasks (twenty or so) that a church does rather than what a church is.¹⁴ I like what Hirsch and Ford say, "It is not so much that the church has a mission but that the mission has a church."¹⁵ Remember, God was the first missionary. Therefore, a missional church is a community of God's people that defines itself by, and organizes itself around, the purpose of being

an agent of God's mission to the world. The true and authentic organizing principle is the mission of God revealed in Jesus. When the church is on mission, it is the true church. To miss this is to block God's purposes in and through his people.¹⁶

Consider these 15 principles of a missional church:

- Proclaims the gospel consistently
- Community where all members are involved

"Mission questions must drive the church's answers and not the other way around. When church questions drive function, mission gets lost."

in becoming disciples of Jesus

- The Bible is normative
- The church understands it is different from the world because of their participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
- The church seeks to discern God's specific mission vocation for the entire community and all its members
- Missional is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another
- Community practicing reconciliation
- Members hold themselves accountable to one another in love
- Community practicing hospitality
- Worship is central in celebrating God's presence and promised future
- Vital public witness
- The church is an expression, though incomplete now, of the reign of God
- The church is incarnational, before attractional
- The church is messianic, not dualistic in its spirituality
- The church is apostolic led and focused, not structure focused¹⁷

Finally, we must receive a caution from C. S. Lewis, Christian apologist. He observed,

*There exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. So we must strive very hard by the grace of God to keep the church focused on the mission that Christ originally gave to it.*¹⁸

The church must not become the object of its own affection. Jesus and the gospel are fixed, and all else can be and must be adapted to the mission.¹⁹ Mission questions must drive the church's answers and not the other way around. When church questions drive function, mission gets lost. Also, when we take mission out of the equation then innovation is greatly lost, something the church desperately needs today. We must renew our commitment to engage the world as God engages it.²⁰ So let us talk about incarnational ministry.

Participant Activity:

The primary objective of Jesus' ministry was fulfilling his mission which is now our mission. The Gospels record many words and actions of Jesus as he fulfilled his missional goal. In small groups, write down several ways that Jesus evangelized. Be specific. (Feel free to scan the New Testament for ideas.) Then compare his methods to our methods today. Would his methods be effective in our day and culture? Why or why not?

Incarnational

John 3:16 is the cornerstone Scripture of the Bible and of all Christianity. There we find the love of God as the model for all motivation for the church. We see redemption through Jesus Christ, the basis of all salvation. What the church possibly overlooks in this verse is the model of incarnation, where God chose to penetrate fallen earth with his saving life

as Jesus became man. Paul talks about this in Philippians 2 with much more detail, describing the incarnation, i.e., “and [Jesus] was made in the likeness of man.”

The taking on of flesh by God (incarnation) is so fundamental that all the acts of God following this are based on it.²¹ It is amazing the church has not seen this as our basis for all ministry as well. Jesus became one with the target audience, humanity, so that could reach humanity. Later, Jesus would make the simple but deeply significant statement, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21 NASB). The implications of these words from Jesus have everything to do with incarnation as a primary mode of ministry.

The gospel must be proclaimed fresh in new ways to each generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must be constantly forwarded to a new address, because the recipients are repeatedly changing their place of address.
— Helmut Thielicke²²

"The taking on of flesh by God (incarnation) is so fundamental that all the acts of God following this are based on it."

It should not bother us that the Christian faith was perceived and experienced in new and different ways. The Christian faith is intrinsically incarnational, therefore unless the church chooses to remain a foreign entity, it will always fully enter into the context in which it happens to find itself. — David Bosch²³

In the Message version of the Bible, Peterson writes, Jesus “moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14 MSG), this was the strategy of

heaven. It was profound affinity, radical identification, and confrontational revelation. Consider these six dimensions:

- Presence in relationship—Jesus hangs out with people
- Proximity—Jesus got directly involved
- Prevenience—The Spirit and the Word in flesh preparing the hearts and the way
- Powerlessness—Jesus choosing servanthood
- Passion—Jesus always motivated by love
- Proclamation—Jesus delivering the gospel personally²⁴

These six concepts should be significant factors in any mission strategy, yet amazingly many are often missing.

All living things exist in a vast web of relationships. Mission fits seamlessly into the web of life, friendships, and community to transmit the love of Christ.²⁵

Consider some of these keys for incarnational penetration:

Holiness

Holiness, a godly holy lifestyle will so tantalize the wider community that they will seek after such. This is certainly scriptural as seen in 1 Peter 2. Of course Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16 KJV). To impact a post-Christian culture today, the church should seriously consider shedding its wealth fascination, siding with the poor, speaking up for those wronged, and living as a kind, loving community. Those do sound a bit like Jesus, don’t they?²⁶

Prayer

Prayer is an incarnational act when we passionately pray for children to be born into the heavenly kingdom from the community we have come to join. Rachel prayed, “Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1 KJV). (Also see Jeremiah 31 and Matthew 2:18.) Passion in prayer will certainly be fruitful in bringing new kingdom children to life.²⁷

Socializing

Socializing is critical to incarnational ministry. With Christians living a holy attractive life, it is logical this life must rub shoulders with not-yet-

"From John 3:16 and elsewhere, we know that the incarnational ministry of Jesus was motivated by and saturated in love."

Christian people in the community. Jesus was found at Matthew's party, Zacchaeus' house, the wedding at Cana, and more.

Furthering the thought of socializing and hospitality to the not-yet-Christian is invaluable. This helps overcome the us against them mentality as we invite the lost of the community into our homes, our lives, and our families.²⁸

Jesus Talk

Jesus Talk²⁹ will mean learning a new language beyond "Christianeze," or church talk, as we share personally and passionately, yet at times subtly and with conviction, the presence and reality of Jesus in our lives. The testimony will be mentioned later as our personal story to speak simply and intimately about Jesus to others.

From John 3:16 and elsewhere, we know that the incarnational ministry of Jesus was motivated by and saturated in love.

Love, The Prime Directive

When we take the life of Christ seriously, we will see the world differently, with eyes of loving compassion. God's image is so stamped on every human that even the fall cannot completely erase it. If followers of Christ love God, then they must love others for God's image is in each person and they are an expression of God.³⁰ He made each one. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me" (ESV).

Jesus teaches us how to observe, identify, and even coax out particular expressions of God in every human. Jesus sees faith in a centurion, a Canaanite woman, a thief on the cross, and even foreigners and criminals. Adulterers and Samaritans were considered on the level of dogs to the Jews, but Jesus saw the expression of God in them, as well as in lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, children, and the demoniac. All of these he treated with respect and grace. It was scandalous to some.³¹

In his term "prevenient grace," John Wesley helps us understand God is at work in them all, and with them, and at times through them. He invites us to join him. God loves every human and God sees beauty and distinct qualities in every human, therefore, so should we. If we love God, we are called to love other humans because each is in some way a unique expression of God.³²

Soren Kierkegaard said, "To be truly redeemed by Christ is, therefore, to impose on oneself the task of imitating him."³³ If our mission is based on the Great Commission, then it feels like an order to be obeyed. But if our mission is based on the Great Commandment, love for Christ and the fullness of his life, then it becomes a passion to imitate him. In this way relationship is key. It must involve a constantly renewed, current love experience with our Lord.

Participant Activity:

Jesus identified "expressions of God" in not-yet-Christians. As we seek to view others as God does, we must avoid seeing with a critical eye but rather look for the gifts the Creator has placed in them. Discuss characteristics of not-yet-Christians that reveal expressions of God. In what ways can we help non-believers see these characteristics in this same way?

The Attraction Fallacy

We have often talked about the fact that the Great Commission calls us to "GO." We have all heard sermons about this, sat through classes about this, and no doubt we have ourselves taught about the commission to GO!

The incarnation and the incarnational ministry of Christ clearly lays down a model of not only going, but of following Christ to be with those we serve and to become like them so that we can touch them. Incarnation is indeed an even deeper description of "going."

This line of thought could be pressed further, but I am sure we all agree the idea of "going" is inherent in the *missio dei*. If we would look at ministry efforts in most parts of the world, it is all about attracting people to come to us, especially to come to our church. Think about this for a moment. Consider the contrast—Jesus calls us to "go" and our ministry calls, "come". Think about the ministry model of Jesus in the light of this.

Let's step quickly back into church history to see this contrast in the years of the fourth century. By this time, the early church was in full swing becoming the most subtle, yet influential movement in the Roman Empire. At times the church drove emperors crazy with their un-Roman principles. They always seemed out of step with Roman culture; they might have been considered strange! But they were noted for their strong principled lives and especially their loving service to others. They were like salt sprinkled in the Roman world. You couldn't see it easily, yet the taste was unmistakable! Little groups spread all over the Empire meeting in homes and caves and obscure locations. They were subtle, yet significant.

Then Constantine became emperor. In the A.D. 320's, he recognized the need to embrace this movement instead of trying to stamp it out as others had done before him. Almost suddenly, this influential movement shifted from being an incarnational ministry sown like salt unseen into the culture and became an attractional ministry. It was the Emperor's religion now requiring large and impressive

basilicas, authoritative bishops wearing ornate robes worthy of the faith of an emperor. And attractional ministry worked well when everyone in the empire wanted to go to the church of the Emperor.

Over 1800 years since Constantine, attractional ministry has worked satisfactorily at times, especially when there was money for cathedrals and the prominent members of society participated actively. Today, the problem seems to be that the Christian church has lost the favor of culture. Attractional ministry does not seem to be working—no matter how big the building, impressive the worship, charismatic the pastor, or wealthy the membership.

It is hard for the church to shift back to an incarnational ministry mode which functions best when all the members are filled with this vibrant new life, excited to share their stories, motivated by love to serve others, viewing their world with missional eyes, and determined to be "Jesus" to the people in their personal world. That kind of ministry has been effective in difficult social settings all through the centuries. But for over 18 centuries the attractional model expected believers only to attend, and give, and possibly volunteer for a church project every now and then. In the attractional ministry, no one needed to actually make friends with a lost neighbor, or serve the poor, or love the unloving.

So, in some of the most radical changing times the world has ever known, it appears the Christian church is going to need to consider change.

Culture Shift and Leading Change

John Maynard Keynes said, "The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify into every corner of our minds."³⁴ Let us remember that one of the calls of the Reformation was *semper reformando*, always reforming.³⁵

Alan Hirsch says,

We need to remind ourselves that if we fall in love with our system, whatever that is, we lose the capacity to change it ... The binary

choice still remains: we choose either to live into the more dynamic missional paradigm or to continue to operate from within the more static monument paradigm that we have inherited.³⁶

All of us would agree that rapid change has been taking place globally for the last fifty years. The conditions we face in the church are radically different than those the church faced in the 1950's, or 1980's, or even 2000. The maps we have from those times are now inadequate. It is almost like trying to navigate in New York City with a map of London.³⁷ The church seems to try to navigate with the idea that if we just do things more intensely, or more excellently, or with more technologic savvy. But in reality, the shift has been so fundamental that it will take a return to the foundations of Jesus and the New Testament mission style ministry.

Think about the church Christ established.

"All of us would agree that rapid change has been taking place globally for the last fifty years."

It grew from A.D. 100 with about 25,000 Christians to A.D. 310 with 20 million Christians. How do you think they did this?

- They were members of an illegal religion.
- They didn't have church buildings.
- They didn't have Scripture as we know it.
- They didn't have a formal institution or professional leadership.
- They didn't have seeker sensitive services, youth groups, worship bands, seminaries, commentaries, and so on.
- They made it hard to join the church.³⁸

The church in China over the last 100 years has seen similar circumstances and similar growth. Like the early church, they were mostly an illegal movement, they had few Bibles (again illegal), no professional clergy (many

imprisoned), no official leadership structures, no central organization, no mass meetings, no buildings, seminaries, and so on. Yet in that time they have seen the greatest surge of gospel-spreading impact in the world, if not the history of Christianity.

Another movement with long-lasting impact, such as the early church, would be the Methodist revival under the leadership of John Wesley. Similar to China, there was a missional DNA that continued to propel this work forward bringing significant national transformation to England. Then the ministry was carried to the New World in the 1770's, and some concede that it was the major force in evangelizing what came to be known as "the Christian nation." By the mid-1800's, there were four times more Methodists in America than all other religions combined.

From these historical illustrations we can see one thing prominently. Each of them maintained a missional urgency that defined their ministries and continued to be the reason for their existence, their very lifeblood. A review of other major movements of the Kingdom of God, such as the Celtic movement with Saint Patrick and others, would reveal this same core force at work. It could be said that when the church of Jesus Christ is at her best, she is a mission-driven movement and this motivation overrides all other purposes.

If at any time in Christian history this missional "prime directive" is displaced by other motivations, it has been seen that the church loses focus, loses power, loses traction, and loses relevance. Therefore, as we speak of change, it is critical that the church in this age acknowledge that we have lost a primary commitment to mission, the gospel, and evangelization. And it is vital that leadership move to restore missional urgency to the central place of prominence in all that we do.

Drawing from our own heritage, it is impossible to read the history of the first twenty years of the Church of God of Prophecy without being impressed and moved by the passion for outreach, pressing into new fields, reaching the lost in every corner, and spreading this

good news message. After 1906 when the Holy Spirit fell on this body and A. J. Tomlinson was baptized in the Spirit, the evangelistic thrust

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multiplied many times over. This is our specific missional DNA.

When former General Overseer, Billy Murray, stepped into office in 1990, he felt the inspiration of the Spirit to proclaim the vision, "Turning to the Harvest." It should not be a surprise that in the next 20 years the Church of God of Prophecy membership quadrupled around the world. Bishop Murray was inspired to create an environment that encouraged and expected gospel-spreading ministry.

As pastors, ministers, and leaders, could we determine to make it a priority to nurture and build a climate of passion, focus, and priority for reaching the lost and serving the needy? Further in this lesson we will talk about a few strategies to initiate this effort. Begin now to visualize how you could use your influence in your position of leadership, as Bishop Billy Murray did, to create expectations for and implementation of gospel-focused outreach ministry.

Mission-Centered Community

It has been noted many times through the years that churches often become bodies of people that become more interested in servicing their own needs and desires than servicing the community around them, or even the lost and needy nearby. One of the challenges of creating a missional climate will

be to bring the church around to the vision, "Us for the Community."³⁹ Remember the words of William Temple, "The church is the only society in the world created for the benefit of non-members."⁴⁰

The genius of John Wesley was no doubt the inspiration of the Spirit to base everything in his Methodist ministry on the four words, "Love God, Love Others" (Matthew 22:36-40). Throughout history the church has done well giving focus to "Love God," but the "Love Others" part has often been overlooked. Yet if we consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 25, we find that he says that when we love others, we are indeed loving Him. Therefore, it is a true statement that the motto of the church could rightfully be, "Us for the Community."

It is important to note that mission at its best and when it most basically reflects New Testament practice is not an individual endeavor. It is an entire cell of Christ followers committed to influencing the not-yet-Christians around them. The solitary witness is at a loss to

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provide a family of nurture and loving relations that will bring the seed of the gospel to full fruition in the life of a new believer.

As a matter of fact, the bands and classes that Wesley formed all around his nation often saw seekers come, attend, participate, and belong as much as two years prior to them experiencing conversion. It was the acceptance, loving relations, and family nurture that prepared the hearts for conversion and then

for growth in discipleship. This is a key that has been overlooked in many evangelism efforts through the centuries.

There has been strong movement toward small groups in recent decades. It is possibly due to the mega church phenomenon; leaders sense the real need to connect people in the massive crowd to a relational group. That is indeed a serious need, but small groups have not been easy to maintain, and their success has been elusive in most applications. Here again we have an overlooked key from Wesley. There was a strong missional purpose built into his bands and classes. Relating together was a third objective, a byproduct of the first two goals, personal spiritual development and mission.

Alan Hirsch says, "The Christian community must overcome their instinct to huddle and cuddle, and they must form themselves around a common mission..."⁴¹ Believers are called to shake off their desire for a warm blanket (or cappuccino) and plunge into the world to experience the challenges of mission together. It is here they will encounter God and bond with one another in a powerful new way. Togetherness happens with amazing impact among a group of people inspired by the vision of a better world who actually attempt to do something about it. Remember your mission trip experience, or your summer church camp bonding, or some intense project you worked on? Mission together should be a common ingredient of small group ministry. It was for the early church.

Mission Centered Discipleship

C. S. Lewis says,

*"The church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose."*⁴²

Somehow Christianity came to think of discipleship as an objective that was different and distinct from mission. The mindset grew that we would do discipleship, and this would

prepare followers for mission to come. Well, in the last 100 years that has not worked out very well. Let's talk about it.

Discipleship and mission are both motivated by lordship. Our identity is linked to Jesus and our destiny is linked to Jesus. He sets the primary template for the movement that bears his name. If the movement fails to resemble, act, and sound like the founder, something must be deeply wrong. Discipleship is becoming like Jesus. We need to focus back to the root of it all and recalibrate everything around the person and work of Jesus. This will mean taking the Gospels seriously as the primary texts that define us. It will mean acting like Jesus in the world, the friend of the outcasts.⁴³

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How did Jesus make disciples? He said, "Come and follow me." And the disciples left what they were doing and began to follow Jesus, doing what he was doing. It transformed their lives, gave them an entirely new vision of spiritual life and faith, and brought them to embrace and engage this kingdom call. Jesus simply took them out on mission with him and then reflected with them about the mission activities afterward!

The major tool in making these fishermen into disciples was going on mission with Jesus. That's right, going and doing ministry and then reflecting with the Master about what they had done, how and why. So where were the classrooms? Where were the PowerPoint presentations and lectures, and note taking, and memorization, and Scripture reading, and study, and on and on? Where were all the things we see as central to discipleship today?

"Mission should be at the center of every ministry that the church

Jesus made "doing" mission the major tool of discipleship for all of his disciples. We seem to have disconnected mission and discipleship long ago, even though the idea is not a new revelation to anyone.

Mission should be at the center of discipleship. As mentioned above, mission should be at the center of community building (small group ministry). Mission should be at the center of our church services. Mission should be at the center of every ministry that the church performs. Mission should be the organizing principle for every function of the church.

Jesus made mission the central tool of discipleship. Imagine the impact if every follower of Jesus sitting in your church were exposed to mission ministry (reaching lost people) as they were discipled? And what if they were expected to continue in some expression of mission, as most disciples are expected to continue being disciples? Do you think this would have a transforming impact on a church?

If churches separate discipleship equipping from mission, they will not experience this strength of mission ministry. Naturally, strength of mission is the life blood of any church. A church may be like the monks of old who made discipleship about being a cloistered holy community. That may produce united community. It may produce a kind of holiness, but it will not produce mission. A church may center discipleship on worship like the Tabernacle of the Old Testament, where offerings of sacrifice for worship were carried out daily. Again, all the saints gathering together for worship will not fulfill the Great Commission.

Alan Hirsch gives us another perspective stating, "Mission acts like a catalyst for all the other three classic functions of the church:

Worship, Community, and Discipleship."⁴⁴ Think about that. A church on mission will be like the disciples rejoicing when seeing that even the powers of the dark were subject to them and their gospel message (worship). A church on mission will discover community, togetherness, and close relational bonding as they take on the challenges of reaching and serving their world (community). A church on mission will make disciples the way Jesus did by first exposing them to mission and then helping them find spiritual and scriptural answers and support (discipleship).

T.S. Eliot, American poet and literary critic, said concerning discipleship,

*The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief.*⁴⁵

Mission establishes discipleship on the foundation of living and doing, rather than on information acquired and knowing. (See James 1:22-24.) Jesus succeeded in embedding his life and the gospel in his disciples. At the most uncomplicated level, missional movements are disciple-making systems. This is at once the starting point, the abiding strategic practice, and the key to all lasting impact.

People, Not Programs or Projects

Over the centuries, the Christian church has slipped into the snare of sponsoring ministries to reach out to people living without Christ. Often these programs and projects begin with great compassion for people in desperate need. But as the ministry continues, there is a drift from passion for people to the drive for certain results. Consider a few historical examples.

Mass evangelism is an easy target for this challenge. The goal of reaching lost people needing salvation subtly shifted to counting decisions and converts with little attention to ongoing lives, needs, and development. This writer was intensely involved in personal evangelism decades ago and must confess the same was true. The goal to celebrate too quickly became how many people heard

the witness and prayed with us to receive Christ. Think about revival days of the past century, and we soon recognize the same result. Numbers were reported and celebrated when many of the people receiving ministry may have drifted away unnoticed. Even church attendance so easily became the goal superseding continued ministry to people, addressing their needs, and providing nurture through loving relationships.

Go back to Jesus one more time. Some might say, didn't Jesus speak to multitudes quite often? That is certainly true and easily verified in the Gospels. The interesting thing about this seems to be that hindsight helps us to interpret those mass ministries more like seed sowing activities than actual mission or evangelistic thrusts. Later, thousands would respond to the message of the small new church, and no doubt many of those had been at one of those mass meetings with Jesus. In the ministry Jesus was building, he did not count them as his followers, his disciples. No, Jesus fully gave himself to the twelve for his time in ministry. He also gave himself to the 70 that he taught and sent out to minister. Clearly, the 120 in the upper room felt they were under personal orders from Jesus to wait before they launched this kingdom building endeavor. Jesus also seemed to have a relational bond with the 500 that witnessed his ascension. These numbers are far short of the 5000, 3000, or multitudes described at times in the Gospels.

One application we should carry away from this brief gospel review is that Jesus gave himself in a relational connection to all those that he would count as his own. In other words, Jesus personally loved and poured into all of those he would call his church by the time of

his ascension. If we will follow the footsteps of Jesus, we must never allow mission activity of any kind to become less relational than Jesus did. Yes, there is space for seed sowing events. Still, at the most fundamental level, mission is about carrying the love of God through the love of Christ by the love-spreading work of the Holy Spirit to each man, woman, boy, or girl on earth. Each new follower of Christ deserves a loving presence to join them on the journey of new life they have entered. If we would imitate Jesus, then no one responding to the gospel should feel abandoned to find his or her way alone.

As we talk about mission applications now, may we keep this most basic precept from the ministry of Jesus front and center.

Participant Activity:

Being missional means being relational. Sharing your personal successes—not on your own merit but giving God the credit—is relational evangelism. We must be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us when God opens the door. In groups of two or three, share with one another your faith story. It does not have to be your story of conversion but can be a specific event or circumstance when God worked in your life. This activity will prepare you to incorporate your faith story in conversation with not-yet Christians.

Practical Applications

Conversion is commission. That may not be well understood today, but the fact is that from conversion we are sent and so we should live it out. We are recipients of a message that must be passed on. Every believer is a messenger. Every believer is a missionary. To fail to pass on the message is to fail in our obligation to Jesus and his cause. As pastors and ministry leaders, we must emphasize this truth to new

"Numbers were reported and celebrated when many of the people receiving ministry may have drifted away unnoticed."

believers we are discipling. Evangelism is every believer's call. It is not reserved for a few gifted in evangelism or called into specific ministries.

Missional living is about living out the gospel in such a way that, through our lives, people experience the direct influence of Jesus. The level of relational commitment determines the impact. Jesus invested relationally in his disciples and, by extension, in the 70. He understood that as he exemplified this missional value to them, they would then live it out and transmit it to others. As we pastors and ministry leaders live missionally—intentionally investing in others through committed relationships, those we serve will also begin to live out the gospel through intentional relationships.

Move Out, Move In, Move Alongside, Move From

Consider these four guiding markers to missional Christianity laid out by Hirsch and Ford in their book, *Right Here Right Now*:⁴⁶

- Move out—into mission engagement
- Move in—burrowing into the culture
- Move alongside—building genuine friendships and relational networks
- Move from—challenging the dehumanizing and evil aspects of our culture

Move Out

"It is not so much that the church has a mission but that the mission has a church."⁴⁷ God sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit, and the three sent the church. After it is all said and done, it's all about learning to love other people as Jesus did.

We can learn the art of small things. One person can make an impact. Concentrate your efforts on smaller and smaller areas. Try to find an area that will cause a tipping point. Focus on small changes that will spread. Doing the small possible things can bring profound results. Use what is in your hand, not necessarily something new and unknown. Mother Theresa said, "I don't do big things. I do small things with big love."

The bottom line is missional living means moving to see, understand, relate, serve, love, and influence others. It requires moving

"Missional living is about living out the gospel in such a way that, through our lives, people experience the direct influence of Jesus."

out from our own little world of comfort and stepping into the world of another or others. It usually means putting others' needs above our own desires and agendas. It means considering every day that one is a missionary and available to be interrupted by others nearby. Each day the natural and cultural forces around us will pull us back to our ego-centric universe, but the missional Christian resists and moves out with others in view.

Move In

We choose to connect with, identify with, and belong to one or a few specific people groupings, pockets of people, or individuals. It might be a neighborhood of women, a fishing group of men, football (soccer)-loving crowd—you get the idea. It is incarnation along the model of Christ. We move into a group and become like them, with them, bringing Christ along with us. We model Jesus at the party of Matthew, the tax collector, with his publican friends. That was not the comfort zone of a young Jewish Rabbi, but it was the comfort zone of a missional Messiah.

Research indicates that the majority of Christians have no significant relationships with people beyond their church community. To move out and to move in, this must change.⁴⁸ We begin by taking their culture seriously. In this way, you begin to see how the good news

relates to their issues. You can in effect, redeem their hang out. Rather than initially asking them to church, take Christ to them through your long-term commitment to relationship. This will include learning to speak their language in place of your Christianese.

Above all, remember God is already involved in every person's life and is calling them to himself through his son. C.S. Lewis noted that all vices are virtues gone wrong. We can use this clue to develop new missionary eyes to see what God is up to in peoples' lives. Begin to see their vices with missionary eyes looking below the surface. Realize that all people have religious experiences. It is up to us to see their religious experiences as bridges and doorways to Christ.⁴⁹

As we move out and move in we experience seamlessness, the ability to live our sacred life out in the secular, bringing unity that all is sacred as we reach and love others for Jesus.

Move Alongside

Consider three practices of incarnational engagement: proximity, frequency, and spontaneity. We must come near to people to touch them. We must touch them often. And we must be ready at any moment of a conversation or during a shift in their life routines to serve, to share our story, to proclaim God's love. That's spontaneity.

Consider the art of conversation as a crucial key. We Christians should strive to be more culturally interesting. Some see us as bland, lacking color in life. What a shame when we profess to drink from the fountain of life itself. Conversation invites friendship, provokes intrigue, promotes mutual quest, weaves story with opinion, extends a listening ear, and offers something of self in the equation. Of course, it is often mixed with food and even hospitality.

Move From

There are non-negotiable issues in culture that must be denied. The most consistent way to challenge the destructive forces in popular culture is to live contrary to them, to actually be the change we want to see. Love is critical here.

"Research indicates that the majority of Christians have no significant relationships with people beyond their church community."

And just as critical is the absolute trust that God can and will work by the Holy Spirit if we give him time to move in hearts.

A community is essential to carry this reaching project along. The communal aspect is why mission is not the work of a lone individual. God requires the change in the world to be achieved through people in life fellowship and communal action. We can do truly great things only when we find each other and do it together. A relating community is the realm of the missional church.

Missional Strategies

Keep these four concepts in the back of your mind as you approach mission strategies more specifically. If a concept is missing beware that a critical piece will be lost as you work to bring people to Christ.

Missional Prayer

It has been proven over and over again that when Christ followers begin to pray for the lost, they begin to be drawn toward reaching the lost themselves. God will hear our cry for laborers and the first step in answering this prayer will be to send us.

Rachel's prayer is an example for us of missional praying. Jacob's wife, Rachel, was so distraught that she had not born a child that she cried out to God saying, "Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1 KJV).

Rachel was grieved by her childless condition. Even though she was the most loved wife of her husband, Jacob, she was not satisfied to be barren. She became distraught over the situation. How does this compare with any

Christian church that lacks new life through salvation and the new birth? Do others observe that we are obviously grieved by the lack of new Christ followers? Can anyone see that we are not satisfied with this condition? Like Rachel, do we feel desperate enough to cry out for a change in circumstances?

Personally and in the community of believers (the local church), we must cry out for God to use us to bring new believers to birth.

Living with Missional Eyes

If we genuinely decide to become Christians on mission, then we will want to ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to people all around us.

What if we open ourselves to the voice of the Holy Spirit? What if we allow the people all around us to intercept our lives? Mother Theresa claimed her secret for dealing with the masses of poor and sick in Calcutta was, as she

"A community is essential to carry this reaching project along."

said, "I don't see crowds, I see individuals." This was the attitude of Jesus as he moved through the crowds of people also.⁵⁰ In John 5:19, Jesus was listening to the voice of his Father and had eyes that wanted to see what the Father was showing him. In this same way we look and listen for the Holy Spirit.

We can cultivate in ourselves the habit of moving past prejudice assessments of others we get from the initial impressions and from culture. We can work to develop a hearing ear and a seeing eye to what the Lord is saying about another individual in spite of common prejudices.⁵¹ This habit of seeing will lead toward a greater respect for the unbeliever, a greater grace for those who we might reject or judge quickly.⁵²

Talk to Strangers

We have become experts at avoiding interaction with strangers. Middle-class culture strives to protect and maintain its sense of privacy as it seeks more and more security, convenience, and comfort. Living as missionaries, we will have to break from the same attitude and step out of the private comfort zones we have created.⁵³

Display Grace When Touching People

The kingdom fruit of kindness, gentleness, peace, and goodness are the fruits that should demonstrate the difference in the lives of Jesus followers from the surrounding culture. Let's become people of Shalom (Isaiah 52:7).⁵⁴

Consider these thoughts drawn from The Message Bible in Colossians 4:5, 6. The theme is how to display creative grace in touching people.

- Be present and observing around people
- This is real spiritual ministry in daily life
- Make the most of opportunity
- Use gracious, others uplifting, speech
- The goal is to bring out the best in others
- Really listen even if you don't agree
- Do not put them down, do not cut them out

Participant Activity:

Discuss how you as a pastor or ministry leader can help your congregation "open their eyes" to "see" the people around them.

Mission through Good Works

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16 NASB). Paul said, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 NASB).

If there was one major factor that caused early Christianity to spread like a contagious virus, it was their good works.

This quote is well known direct from the Roman Emperor Julian stating,

*It is their [Christians] benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done the most to increase atheism [Christianity]. ... When ... the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well...*⁵⁵

*Wherefore they do not commit adultery or fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man... And their oppressors they... comfort and make them their friends; they do good to their enemies... Further, if one of them have bondmen... through love toward them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction.*⁵⁶

Clearly, this quality of life was a major influence in the spread of the gospel of Jesus all throughout the empire. Just as Jesus had described in the Sermon on the Mount, they were living it out. "Let your life so shine..."

Participant Activity:

In the early decades of the Pentecostal movement, it was common to hear of families and congregations demonstrating this ministry of good works. Discuss what "good works" members of your congregation or ministry group are engaged in that allows the light of God's love to shine.

Mission through Recovery Ministries: "Find a Hurt and Heal It"

One of the great revival ministries flourishing in many parts of the world is the recovery ministry which helps people with addictions break free and find deliverance. With addictions

becoming so prevalent in the recent past, recovery ministries have touched a genuine need and have produced eternal results.

I love the testimonies coming from Russia and the Ukraine since communism fell. Alcoholism and drugs have been rampant in many nations of the CIS (formerly part of the Soviet Union) with unemployment, economic distress, and dysfunctional family lives. Since communism fell, many Pentecostal churches, including the Church of God of Prophecy, have targeted homeless, addicted men and have witnessed their deliverance, recovery, and return to healthy lifestyles. One of the Church of God of Prophecy pastors requested to plant a church in a nearby town. The mayor was aware of the church's recovery efforts and welcomed the church to come and establish ministry there. He applauded the church's "good works" by saying, "The community ignores the homeless, addicted men who have lost everything in their lives, but the church provides shelter for them and supports them with training and ministry. These men become good fathers, good husbands, good workers, and good citizens."

A church may find other hurts to heal as well. The brokenness of our world is more apparent today than at any other time. Any church can pray asking God to lead them to specific "hurts" in their community that they could reach out to touch. We can have great faith that God wants to answer such a prayer. Remember, Jesus declared the words from Isaiah to be His ministry manifesto.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me To
bring good news to the afflicted; He has
sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives And
freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the
LORD And the day of vengeance of our
God; To comfort all who mourn,
To grant those who mourn in Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit

of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3 NASB).

Missional Habits

The most successful missional communities (congregations) are ones that commit to a set of mission habits. Michael Frost and his faith community have adopted five practices, or missional habits.⁵⁷

Bless

Members of this faith community seek to do at least three acts of blessing each day: one to a member of the Christian community, one to a non-Christian, and one wherever the giver feels led. Blessings can range from a simple word of encouragement to meeting a specific need or giving a gift.

Eat

Members of this faith community share meals with others following the same pattern: one with a member of the Christian community, one with a non-Christian, and one with whomever you wish to share food. Around the table, relationships are built and a door of opportunity to share faith may open.

Listen

Members of this faith community commit to at least one hour per week of listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Some members have a prayer walk routine or a particular weekly time of solitude, listening to God.

Learn

Members of this faith community commit to read from the Gospels each week in order to specifically learn more about Jesus. The Gospels are always included in the weekly rhythm in order to constantly stay Jesus centered. They also commit to read from other books of the Bible. Then they commit to read one other good book, fiction or nonfiction.

Send

Members of this faith community stay mindful of opportunities to engage in mission on their day-to-day journey. To do this they keep a

daily journal of how they have worked with Jesus during the day, and how they have resisted Jesus during the day. This is a constant reminder that they are God's sent people.

The strategies for living on mission with Jesus are more than can be written here. Let the Spirit lead you and your congregation to lives of influence and eternal impact among the "not-yet-Christians" near you.

Participant Activity:

Consider the five missional habits discussed here. Are members of your congregation or ministry intentionally practicing any of these habits? Briefly share a specific example. What might be obstacles members have to overcome in developing these habits? Are there other missional habits that you feel could be included in this list?

Lesson Review Questions

1. The statistics show that Christianity in the west is in _____, and that around the world there has been a _____ in Christian ministry in the last fifty years.
 - a. Growth, decline
 - b. Decline, great surge
 - c. Growth, great surge
 - d. Decline, rapid decline
2. The AD 2000 movement, the Jesus Film, and a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit have all contributed to _____.
 - a. Nations turning to Christ
 - b. Decline of the church
 - c. Millions coming to the faith
 - d. Both A and C
3. Before church renewal projects deal with leadership, discipleship, worship, or how we do church, there ought to be a thorough attempt to _____.
 - a. Increase visibility of the church
 - b. Reconnect the church to Jesus
 - c. Set up mission trips
 - d. Both A and B
4. What is the one characteristic of Jesus's ministry that he announced first?
 - a. His compassion
 - b. His authority
 - c. His mission
 - d. His relationship to the Father
5. If the church is to recalibrate to Jesus again, we must restore the primary and deep commitment to be _____ in ALL we do.
 - a. Missional
 - b. Practical
 - c. Outgoing
 - d. All of the above
6. The Christian faith is incarnational and, according to Helmut Thielicke, since every generation has its own unique questions, the gospel must be proclaimed _____ to each generation.
 - a. Consistently
 - b. Fresh in new ways
 - c. Creatively
 - d. All of the above
7. What six concepts should be significant factors in any mission strategy?
 - a. Presence, proximity, prevenience, powerlessness, passion, proclamation
 - b. Prudence, proximity, prevenience, powerlessness, passion, proclamation
 - c. Presence, prudence, prevenience, power, passion, proclamation
 - d. Practicality, prudence, presentation, profitability, pliability, problem solving

8. A key for incarnational penetration is?
 - a. Holiness
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Socializing and Jesus Talk
 - d. All of the above
9. According to Soren Kierkegaard. "To be truly redeemed by Christ is, therefore, to impose on oneself the task of _____. "
 - a. Imitating him
 - b. Serving
 - c. Equipping leaders
 - d. Daily study of the Bible
10. True or False? Ministry efforts in most parts of the world are about attracting people to come to us, but through the Great Commission, Jesus calls us to go.
 - a. True
 - b. False
11. True or False? In early church history, Christians were out of step with Roman culture and were known for their strong principled lives and their loving service to others.
 - a. True
 - b. False
12. Which emperor, in the A.D. 320's, embraced Christianity, shifting it from incarnational to attractional?
 - a. Constantine
 - b. Hadrian
 - c. Claudius
 - d. Tiberius
13. No matter how big the building, impressive the worship, charismatic the pastor, or wealthy the membership, when the church loses the favor of the _____, attractional ministry stops working.
 - a. Community
 - b. Culture
 - c. Church leaders
 - d. Congregants
14. The conditions the church is now facing are so radically different than those the church faced in the years past that it needs a return to _____.
 - a. More liturgy
 - b. The foundations of Jesus and the New Testament mission style ministry
 - c. A simpler communication style
 - d. Less technology
15. When the church of Jesus Christ is at her best, she is a _____ movement.
 - a. Tight knit
 - b. Congregation focused
 - c. Forward thinking
 - d. Mission-driven

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