

# MISSIONAL COMMUNITY STARTUP GUIDE



Gospel Community on Mission

While we put this guide together creatively, much of what is said is either taken from or largely influenced by others who have gone ahead of us. We've been so influenced by others that it's impossible to know exactly who to give credit for what, but we do want to specifically mention the following:

*Total Church*, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis | [thecrowdedhouse.org](http://thecrowdedhouse.org)  
Redeemer Church | Round Rock, TX | [redeemerrr.org](http://redeemerrr.org)  
Stonegate Church | Midlothian, TX | [stonegate-church.com](http://stonegate-church.com)  
The Covenant Church | Bossier City, LA | [thecovenantchurch.com](http://thecovenantchurch.com)  
Vista Church | Heartland, TX | [thisisvista.com](http://thisisvista.com)  
Verge Network | [vergenetwork.org](http://vergenetwork.org)  
Soma | [wearesoma.com](http://wearesoma.com)  
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## Introduction | What is All This?

### **The Church: A Gospel Community on Mission**

The church is a gospel community on mission. It's a simple description that unfolds in many ways, but at its core this is what the church is. This means that we have been saved by the gospel and restored to relationship with God, we do life together with other believers in community, and we extend the hope of the gospel to anyone who will listen, in both word and deed.

Having been radically changed by the gospel, our lives look remarkably different. Because of this, our call is to radically reorient our lives around Jesus, his church, and his mission of making disciples for the glory and fame of God. This is always for our good, and it is the reason we were created: to magnify and bring glory to his name.

### **Missional Communities: The Heartbeat of Remedy**

One of the primary ways we do this at Remedy is through Missional Communities. As you probably already know, Missional Communities are smaller groups of people who gather regularly to do life, care for each other, grow as disciples of Jesus, and live on mission together. Missional Communities are not an add-on to the church or an extra program. They are the center of everything we do, the heartbeat of Remedy.

### **How to Use This Guide**

The purpose of this exercise is to guide us in our understanding of what a Missional Community is and help us articulate and decide exactly what our particular expression should look like. We will spend the next four weeks working through the basic DNA of a Missional Community together, discussing our thoughts and expectations, and coming to some agreements on how our group will live out our identity as a gospel community on mission.

As you work through this guide, we encourage you to read and think through the content *before you meet with your group*. Use your Bible and even sit down with your spouse or a friend and talk through the implications of what is being said. Doing this beforehand will help you to more fully engage in the discussion. When you show up to our gatherings, do so with a few thoughts, questions, or talking points in mind from what you've processed during the week. Together we will work toward what it means for us to be a healthy Missional Community.

We are excited about where this group is headed. God has placed us together at this time, in this way, with intentionality and purpose. We pray that God uses these few weeks to profoundly knit this group together and give you a sense of direction, vision, and hope for the future. We look forward to the mighty things he will do!

With you on mission,  
Remedy Leadership

## Week 1 | Gospel

**Key Passage:** Ephesians 2. Study this chapter and discuss it with your Missional Community.

**Intro Questions:** What is the gospel? What implications does it have for us?

The gospel is the good news that, in his death and resurrection, Jesus has rescued us from the penalty and the power of sin. This is good news because there is bad news first. Apart from Jesus we are dead in our sins, without hope and alienated from God, living our lives in rebellion against him with no power or desire to change, and because God is completely righteous and completely just, we are subject to his eternal punishment. (Titus 3.4-5; Ephesians 2.1-3; Colossians 1.21; Titus 3.3)

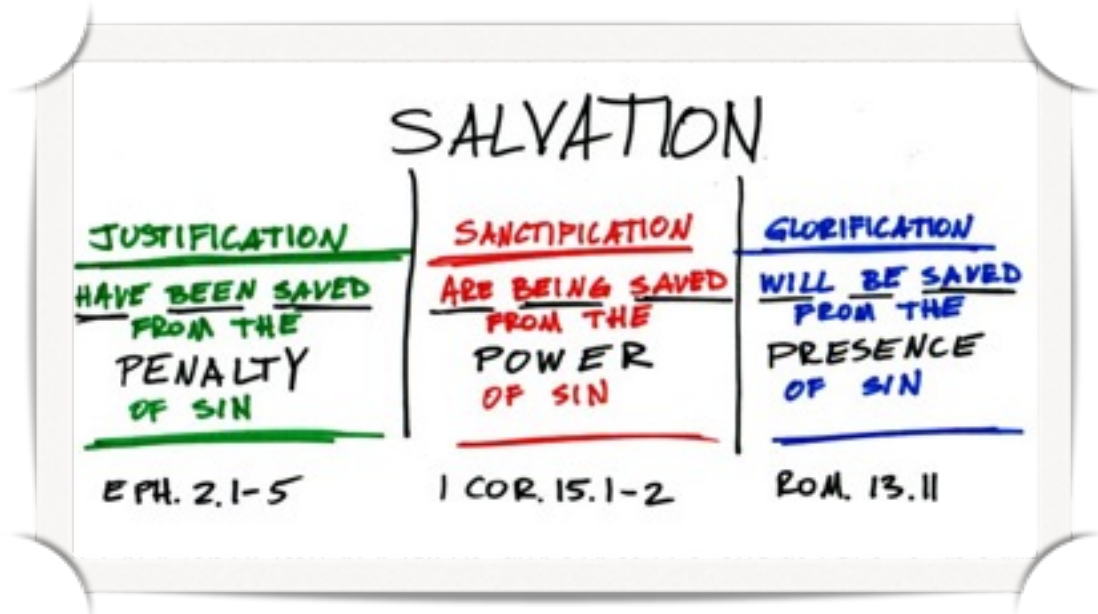
By our faith in Jesus, we who were far away have been brought near, reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Jesus, made his sons and daughters, and declared blameless. This happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin, gives spiritual new birth, and moves into our lives to counsel, empower, guide, and give us spiritual communion with God. (Ephesians 2.1-22; 1.13-14; Colossians 1.22; John 3.3-8; 16.7-15; Romans 8.1-11)

Believing the gospel is not a one-time decision. It is a constant process of acknowledging our own sinfulness, confessing and repenting of it, and learning to live in the power that God gives through his Spirit. Gospel belief isn't something we did once; it's something we started when God called us, and we won't finish this process until we reach Heaven. (John 6.44; 1 Corinthians 15.1-2; Colossians 1.23)

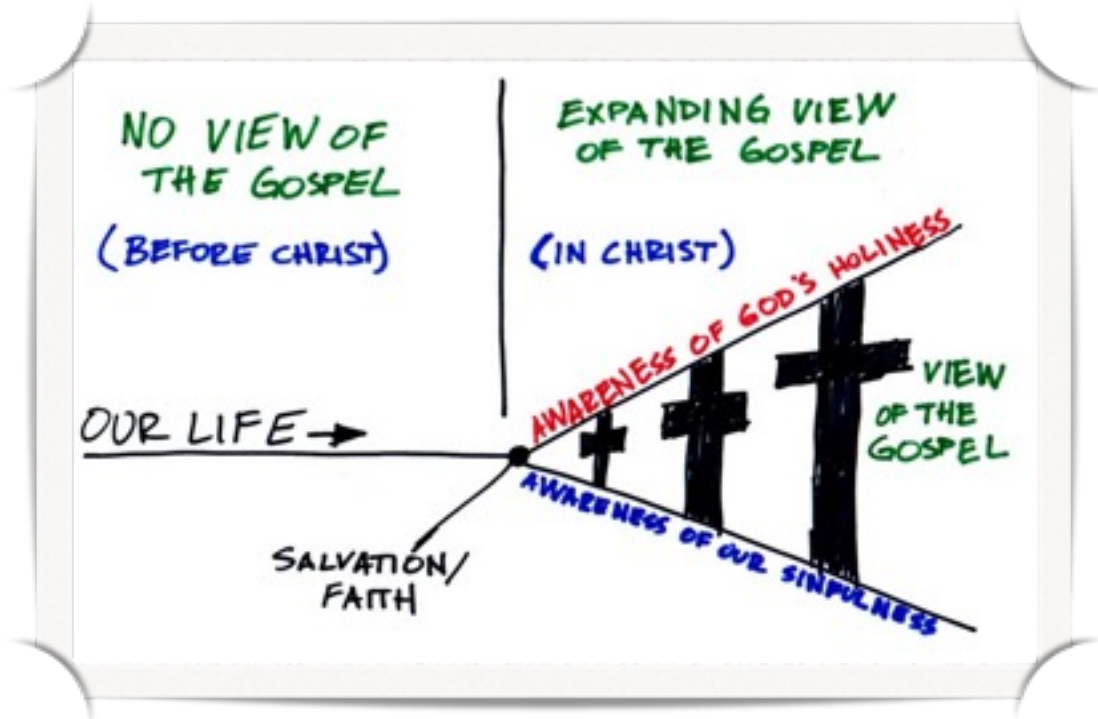
The gospel is the power and glue of the church from beginning to end. It makes us who we are and drives everything we do. Believing the gospel not only gets us into heaven, but continues to empower change in our lives as we grow in obedience and faith. (Romans 1.16; 16.25; 1 Corinthians 1.18; Colossians 1.3-6)

### Gospel Pictures

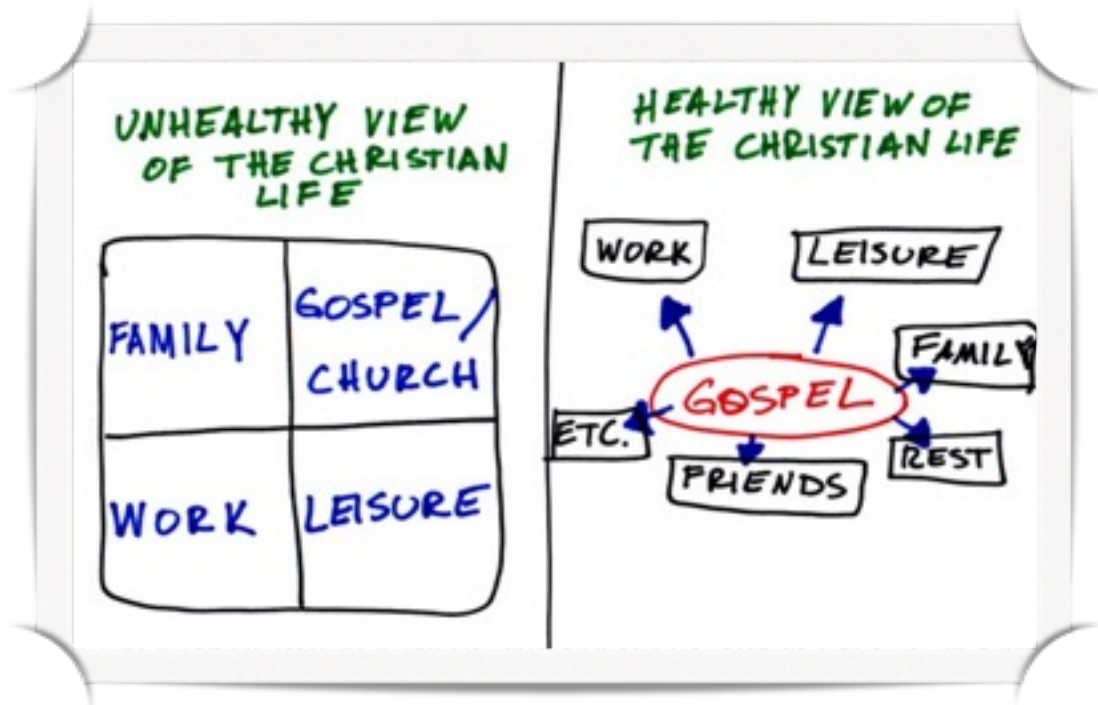
Next we want to show you three ways to understand the gospel. They're not opposing views, but three different perspectives from which to see the gospel that help us understand its massive scope and impact on our lives:



Salvation is depicted in various ways in Scripture. We commonly think of the justification component, but we often overlook the other components. When we look at the scope of salvation we see that it is much more of a journey, something we continue in, than a particular point in time.



Before our faith in Jesus, the gospel has little to no effect on our lives. Once we come to faith, however, we begin to see God's perfection and our imperfection with ever-increasing clarity. Understanding the gospel's work to save us and restore us to God in light of this produces in us an ever-increasing view of the gospel, causing us to turn from our sin and worship God.



We tend to view our lives in compartmentalized ways, with the gospel and our church involvement being one of the most important compartments. While there is some good in the priority we attempt to place on the gospel's role in our lives, a more biblical way to view life is with the gospel at the very center of our lives, outside of any compartment, but permeating and influencing every other area.

These pictures are just three ways to understand the gospel, and they are only the tip of the iceberg. The point is that the gospel is much farther reaching than can be said in one sentence or even a whole conversation. It gives us life and radically reorients our lives the more we understand it, allowing us to know God more and causing us to worship him more fully. As we press into being missional communities, may the gospel be the force that unifies us, motivates us, and gives us purpose.

### Questions for Discussion

- 1) What about the gospel stood out or moved you?
- 2) Was there anything that challenged you or that you had never considered before?
- 3) Have you personally put your faith in the gospel of Jesus and been baptized? How has it affected your life?
- 4) How is the Bible's teaching on the gospel different from your experiences with Christianity in America?
- 5) What else do we sense God saying as we study this?
- 6) What impact does this teaching have on our lives and our Missional Community?

## Week 2 | Community

**Key Passages:** Ephesians 4.1-6; Hebrews 10.23-25. Study these passages and discuss them with your Missional Community.

**Intro Questions:** What is community? How does adding the gospel element change it?

Apart from the gospel we are not only alienated from God, but from each other. When we believe the gospel, not only are we restored to God, but we are also restored to each other by the Holy Spirit that lives inside every believer. Because of the gospel we are no longer enemies with each other, but a family in Christ. We are no longer isolated individuals seeking only our own interests, but are made into a community who is freed to genuinely love and seek the good of each other, trusting God to meet the needs of all.

(Titus 3.3; 1 Corinthians 12.12-26; Ephesians 2.14-22; Ephesians 4.1-16; Philippians 2.1-4)

Community cannot be scheduled or created from the top down, and it does not happen once a week. We can do things to give organization to our community, and gathering once a week can be a catalyst to community, but true community happens when its members are involved in the day-to-day rhythms of each other's lives.

Community also develops most naturally in groups who contend for a common purpose. This can be seen in soldiers who fight together, police officers, firefighters, and people who spend significant amounts of time together working on a major project. As we labor and strive toward a common goal, we find a sense of unity and commonality that binds us together.

This is especially true with gospel mission. As we see throughout the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, the church is made up of many diverse people, but because of the Holy Spirit's work and the common mission of living out the gospel and extending it to the nations, a deep sense of unity, togetherness, and sacrifice develops. What we commonly find is that trying to build community has mixed results, but those who boldly live out the mission of God together develop a sense of community naturally.

For us, all of this is seen through the lens of the gospel. The gospel is what creates our community, and it is the one thing that primarily influences how it functions. We are motivated to press into community because God has saved and united us all by his Spirit (gospel), and we intentionally live in ways that reflect God's glory, love, and grace (gospel). So all of our motivations and interactions in this community are based on the gospel.

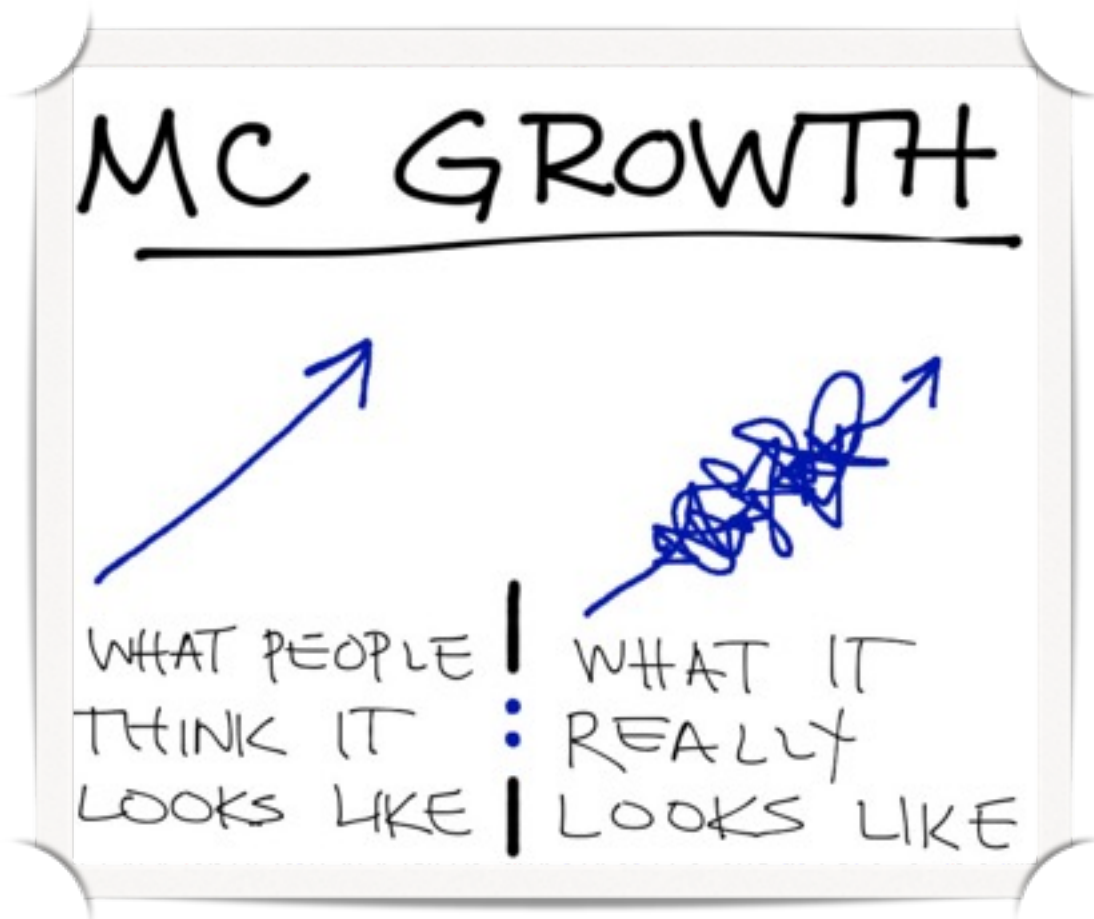
Because these things are true, we hold each other accountable while showing grace. We tell the truth with love, gentleness, forgiveness, and transparency. We confess our sins without fear of rejection. We sacrifice our time, resources, and comfort to serve and care for each other. We encourage each other. We spend time together. We look out for one another's interests. We laugh and rejoice with those who rejoice. We weep with those who weep. We pray for each other. We are mutually encouraged by each other's faith and reminded of the gospel. This is what gospel community is.



## Life is Messy. So is Community.

Though we don't talk about it much, we all know life is messy. Our tendency is to act like things in our lives are well put-together, and we don't like to show our faults and weaknesses. We do this because it looks like everyone else has things pretty well in order, but if we are all honest, we would say that life is hard, and contrary to what we portray to the world, ours is messy.

Because this is true, community is also messy. As we become more familiar with each other and get more involved in the details of each other's lives, we see things that aren't pretty. We realize that we all have struggles and scars, and these things absolutely affect the way we engage each other and relate to the community. While we may want our lives, and our community, to be nice, neat, and simple, that's just not the case.



Rather than our hope of simple, easy life in community, it usually looks more like this. Unfortunately, because of our expectations, we often run when things get hard, not understanding that this is what Jesus called us to. If, when these times come, we press into community and relationships rather than running, we will experience a deeper understanding of the gospel and a more fulfilling and life-giving expression of gospel community.



## **A Differing Perspective on Community**

Consider these thoughts on community from the book *Total Church*:

“The prevailing view of life today is that of an individual standing on his or her own, heroically juggling various responsibilities - family, friendships, career, leisure, chores, decisions, and money. We could also add social responsibilities like political activities, campaigning organizations, community groups, and school associations.

“From time to time the pressures overwhelm us, and we drop one or more of the balls. All too often church becomes one of the balls. We juggle our responsibilities for church (measured predominantly by attendance at meetings) just as we juggle our responsibilities for work or leisure.” (p. 44-45)

“In our experience, people are often enthusiastic about community until it impinges on their decision-making. For all the rhetoric, they still expect to make decisions by themselves for themselves. We assume we are masters of our own lives. ‘It’s my money, it’s my life, it’s my future,’ we say, ‘so it’s my decision.’” (p. 45)

“An alternative model is to view our various activities and responsibilities as spokes of a wheel. At the center or hub of life is not me as an individual but us as members of the Christian community. Church is not another ball for me to juggle but that which defines who I am and gives Christlike shape to my life.” (p. 45)

As we consider our lives, our past experiences, and our commitment to this Missional Community, let’s do our best to look at things through gospel lenses. Perhaps some things in our lives need to change in order to prioritize gospel community. Are there some ways community will, or should, look different than what we were expecting? Let’s consider these things together and learn together what it really means to be the church, the people of God.

### **Questions for Discussion**

- 1) What in this section stood out or moved you?
- 2) Was there anything that challenged you or that you had never considered before?
- 3) What would it look like for us to live as a healthy gospel community? Talk about some specific things here.
- 4) What will our weekly gathering time look like (day & time, place, flow, kids, parties, breaks, etc.)?
- 5) What gifts has God given you to put to work in our Missional Community?
- 6) What roles need to be filled to share the responsibility (meals, kids, discussion leader, follow up, care, parties, prayer, etc.)?
- 7) What else do we sense God saying as we study this?

## Week 3 | Mission

**Key Passage:** 2 Corinthians 5.18-21. Study this passage and discuss it with your Missional Community.

**Intro Question:** What is the mission of God? What role, if any, do we play in it?

Without the gospel we all seek our own agendas and our own glory. When we are reborn by faith in the gospel, we exchange those agendas for God's agenda--his mission. As people who are restored to him and each other through the gospel, we become his means of extending his glory and his message of restoration by showing and telling the gospel with loving words and deeds. We become his ambassadors.

(Matthew 28.19-20; Luke 6.36; 1 Corinthians 4.1-2; 2 Corinthians 5.18-20; James 2.14-17)

At its core, the church is about making disciples of Jesus in all that it does. We are saved and restored to God and each other by the gospel, but our identity does not stop there. We are not simply a gospel community. We are a gospel community *on mission*. The natural outworking of faith in our lives is to join God in his mission to see people put their faith in Jesus and follow him in radical obedience. Our mission also doesn't stop at seeing people respond. We work to present people perfect in Christ--spiritually mature and equipped for good works.

Being on mission with God means thinking like missionaries. Mission is not something we do occasionally or in spurts. It is part of who we are as the church--part of our DNA as disciples of Jesus. Because of this, we always have our spiritual radars up and are sensitive to where God is moving, ready to join him there.

As we live our lives on mission with our spiritual radars always up and running, there are some things we can do to live with intentionality, looking for opportunities to extend the gospel to those around us:

### People of Peace

In Luke 10, Jesus tells his disciples to go on mission, and as they go to offer peace to houses they enter. If they find a person of peace (a person who receives them with peace), they are to remain in that house. This is where we get the term person of peace.

A person of peace is someone who receives you and listens to you. Sometimes when we meet people or start conversations, we are met with a cold shoulder. It's obvious this person is not interested in much conversation or a relationship. In other instances, we meet people who we seem to really have favor with. They are interested in talking to us, they listen to us, or they seem interested in a relationship. These are people of peace.

As we go, and as our spiritual radars are up and running, we are looking for people of peace. Where we find little response or interest in a relationship, especially in regard to the gospel, we assume the Holy Spirit is not working there, and we move on. Where we find people who seem interested in our message or who seem open to a relationship, we press in, taking the next step to see exactly what the Holy Spirit might be doing in these people. These are the

people you look to have more spiritual conversations with, invite to our Missional Community or worship gathering, and invest your life in.

## **Engage > Cultivate > Multiply**

### **Engage People**

We get pretty intimidated about sharing the gospel with people. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves, and often we are looking for an opening so hard that we aren't listening to people. It doesn't have to be as hard as we make it.

The first step is to engage people. What do you like to do? Where do you like to go? What are the natural rhythms of your family? Do those things, and as you go, look for opportunities to meet people, start conversations, and ask people about their lives. You can also invite people to do these things with you as a way to get to know them. Part of bringing the gospel to people is investing in their lives, getting to know them, and letting them get to know you. Engaging people is where you are looking for people of peace.

### **Cultivate Disciples**




As you get to know people and share your lives together, look for ways to sow gospel seeds. It may be in the context of a conversation or taking advantage of a way to serve them. Look for ways to have gospel conversations and tell them what Jesus has done for you. If people hear your story and are interested (person of peace), continue going deeper. Cultivate the relationship and continue to share and take them as deep as they will let you. If they believe and decide to follow Jesus, just keep pouring the gospel into them, helping them learn what it means to follow Jesus.

### **Multiply**

As you see people come to faith, help them learn that part of our job as disciples of Jesus is to make more disciples. In 2 Timothy 2.2 Paul tells Timothy to take what he's heard from Paul and to entrust that to faithful men who will do the same. That's all discipleship is. Help them learn how to share their story with people they know and learn to engage, cultivate, and multiply.

We also want to multiply Missional Communities. Since Missional Communities are a foundational element of Remedy Church, they are also a primary method of life and growth. As we launch new Missional Communities, we enable ourselves to extend the gospel and community to new people, thereby expanding the Kingdom of God.

### **4 questions to gauge missional living:**

- Who have you seen God save through your life in the last year? 
- Who have you had gospel conversations with in the past month? 
- Who have you had a meal with this month who does not follow Jesus?
  - Who are you praying for by name, asking God to save? 

### **Rhythms and Intentionality**

There are two main principles we bring to our approach to mission. Many groups do one to the exclusion of the other, but for us to live like missionaries we have to learn to engage on both levels.

*The first principle can be characterized by the word **Rhythms**.* This is the most basic element of mission, but it gets overlooked by many who are indeed passionate about evangelism. The basic idea is that we don't limit our missional activity to certain times, places, or people. Instead we go about about the normal rhythms and patterns of our lives with gospel intentions and our spiritual radars up.

When we go to soccer practice, while we are grocery shopping, or when we work we do so with our eyes open to the people around us. We pay attention, and we pray as we go. We are open to conversations and people of peace, and when we notice opportunities to engage people or to serve them in some way, we respond.

The point is that we don't have to create special, set aside moments, days, or weeks to emphasize evangelism or missional living. We live our everyday lives as disciples of Jesus, always looking for and expecting opportunities to present themselves, even within our natural rhythms. When those opportunities arise, we act with faith and engage people.

*The second principle can be characterized by the word **Intentional**.* Even as we live within our normal rhythms, we are looking for ways to intentionally engage people. Rather than just sitting back and hoping that someone will walk up to us at the grocery store and ask about Jesus, we do intentional things that help us engage people. An example would be going to the same grocery store, at the same time every week, and checking out with the same cashier, asking her questions and engaging her as you check out. Maybe you also have a friend you can invite to shop with you. You haven't altered your rhythm to do this, but you have intentionally engaged at least two people.

Other ideas for being intentional are a mom inviting several other moms over or to the park for a play date every Monday, asking some friends to join you for dinner or for a movie and coffee, or a guy inviting several friends over to watch a football or basketball game. There are lots of ways to live with gospel and mission intentionality. The point isn't so much what you do, but that you actively look for ways to engage people as you go through life.

**Rhythm** and **intentionality** go together, and there is a flow to them. Sometimes things will come very naturally within your rhythm of life. Other times you will need to intentionally build things into your life in order to engage. However this winds up looking for you, it means inviting people into your rhythms, or even creating some new rhythms, and looking for ways to leverage your everyday life for the gospel.

## **Mission in Community**

Consider these quotes from *Total Church* (see p. 2 for info on *Total Church*):

“Ideally evangelism is not something to be undertaken in isolation. Of course, if opportunity presents itself, the gospel word should be spoken clearly and sensitively in conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit - whenever, wherever, and to whomever. But evangelism is not *best* done out of the context of a gospel community whose corporate life demonstrates the reality of the word that gave her life.” (p. 58)

“Mission must involve not only contact between unbelievers and individual Christians, but between unbelievers and the Christian community. We want to build relationships with

unbelievers. But we also need to introduce people to the network of relationships that make up that believing community so they can see Christian community in action.” (p. 59)  
“In our experience people are often attracted to the Christian community before they are attracted to the Christian message. If a believing community is a persuasive apologetic for the gospel, then people need to be included to see that apologetic at work.” (p. 59)

“Not all of us are eloquent or engaging. Not everyone can think on their feet. Some people are simply not good at speaking to strangers and forming new friendships. One of the practical benefits of [this method] of evangelism is that it gives a role to all God’s people. By making evangelism a community project, it also takes seriously the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in distributing a variety of gifts among his people. Everyone has a part to play - the new Christian, the introvert, the extrovert, the eloquent, the stuttering, the intelligent, the awkward. I may be the one who has begun to build a relationship with my neighbor, but in introducing him to community, it is someone else who shares the gospel with him. That is not only legitimate - it is positively thrilling!” (p. 62)

As you can see from these quotes, community can be a huge factor in mission. Rather than viewing mission as something we engage in alone, we can, and should, see it as something we do as a community. If what Jesus said in John 13.35 is true, that the way people will know we are his disciples is by how we treat each other, two other implications must also be true:

1. Gospel community is a primary apologetic for the gospel.
2. Outsiders must be exposed to our community.

Seeing these things as true frees us *from* the lone ranger mentality and *to* seeing God’s mission as being accomplished through the context of gospel community.

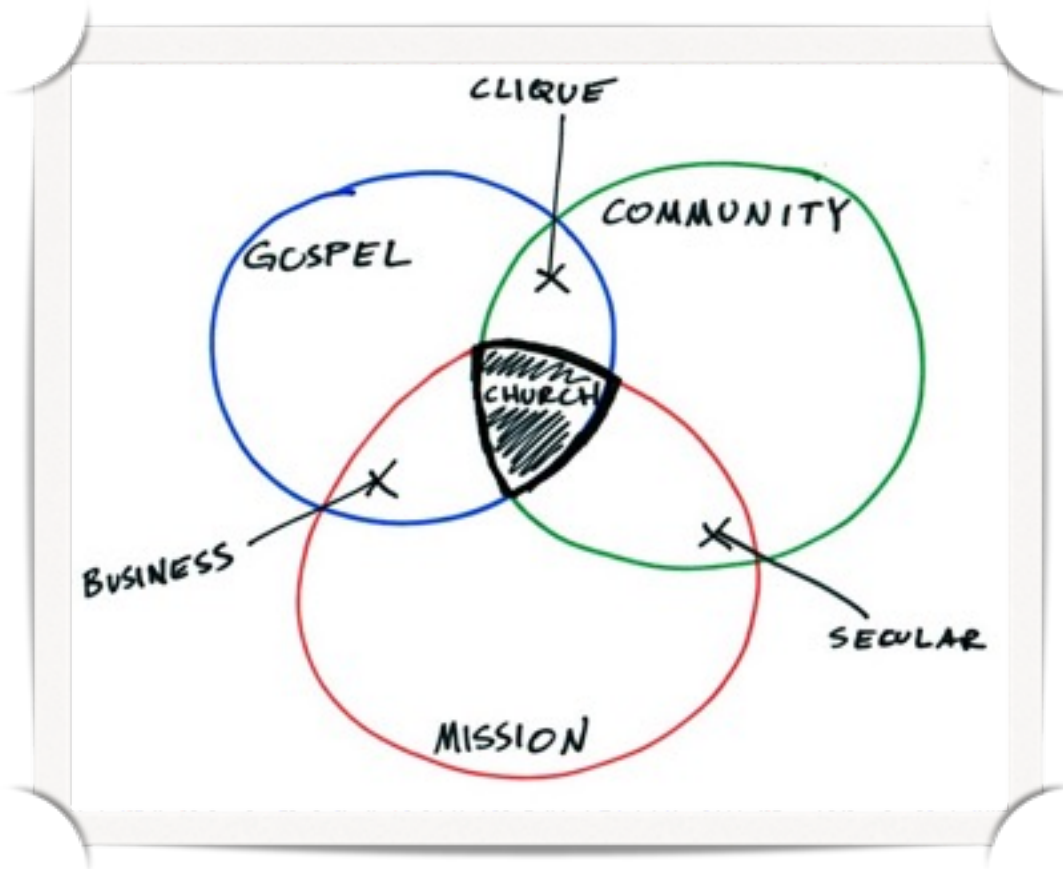
### **Questions for Discussion**

- 1) Was there anything in this section that stood out?
- 2) Was there anything that challenged you or that you had never considered before?
- 3) How is this perspective of mission different from what you may have previously thought or experienced?
- 4) What are your impressions of the ideas of “people of peace” and “mission in community?” How do you see these things playing out in our Missional Community?
- 5) What are your impressions of the strategy “Engage > Cultivate > Multiply?”
- 6) What are some specific ways you personally can engage, cultivate, and multiply?
- 7) What are some specific ways our Missional Community can engage, cultivate, and multiply?

## Week 4 | Putting It All Together

We've talked about the church's identity as a gospel community on mission, and we've explored the elements of gospel, community, and mission. Our task now is to figure out what those things look like for us as a Missional Community. Our job is to go live it out.

As we do that, there are a few things we need to remember:



### Three Essentials

The church is a *gospel community on mission*. These three elements cannot be separated from each other in a healthy church. Without the gospel the church becomes secular. Without its communal nature the church functions like a business. Without its mission the church becomes a clique. All three elements are essential in a healthy church or Missional Community.

This can also be expressed by using the terms *up* (gospel), *in* (community), and *out* (mission). We can evaluate ourselves as disciples and as a church by how we are doing in these three areas. As we move forward into life as a Missional Community these three areas will become our focal points, and we will continually come back to them as the foundation of who we are and what we do.

Discuss these questions as a group:

1. In which of these areas are you the strongest?
2. In which of these areas is our group the strongest?
3. What are some things we can do to leverage our strengths in these areas?
4. In which of these areas do you think you will struggle the most?
5. In which of these areas do we think our Missional Community will struggle the most?
6. What are some things we can do to intentionally focus on this area?

## **Multiplication**

We have already talked about our strategy to engage, cultivate, and multiply. There is an aspect of disciple multiplication that takes place in this strategy where our hope is to see people come to faith in Jesus. We have said that we are a gospel community with a gospel mission. With that in mind from the very start of our new group, where are the places, and who are the people, that God is leading us to invest our lives in?

Discuss these questions as a group:

1. What neighborhoods or networks of people are we already part of?
2. Are there any neighborhoods or networks of people where God has placed us and is already revealing people of peace?
3. Are there places or people where we could begin to serve regularly?
4. How do we intentionally engage these people? Make some specific plans together.

There is another aspect of multiplication that we consider foundational to our DNA, as well, and that is multiplying Missional Communities. One of our primary methods of growing and reaching new people with the gospel is by planting new Missional Communities in different areas of our city and even in the neighboring cities and towns. There are a few reasons for this:

1. Planting new groups gives us the ability to engage communities and people groups that we may not otherwise have access to.
2. It helps us emphasize the “life in community” aspect of discipleship.
3. It helps us keep the groups at a size that is conducive to conversation, sharing, and connection.
4. It helps us to keep the feel of the church small even as we grow larger.
5. Many people who are not willing to come to a Sunday gathering *are* open to a smaller group of people in the home of someone they know.

Because these things are true, and because this is a primary method of mission for Remedy, one aspiration that we must keep continually in front of ourselves is to launch a new group. Even as we are just beginning this group we should be asking ourselves what it will take for us to launch a new one. We should be thinking about when that time might be, who we will be able to send out, who might lead it, and where it might launch. Unless we are intentionally thinking about how and when to launch a new group, it will not happen, and we encourage you to begin thinking and praying about it today.

Discuss these questions as a group:

1. What excites you about our group multiplying?
2. What scares you or makes you nervous?
3. What things do we need to start doing now to work toward multiplying our group?



1. In what ways do you see these things overlapping with the things we've already talked about being essential functions of our group?
2. Of all the things we've talked about in the last few weeks, what excites you the most?

## **What Now?**

Our hope in walking through this guide together is that God will move our group from being a weekly dinner, meeting, Bible study, or prayer group and form us into a community of people who care for each other, are being shaped by the gospel, and are actively living on mission in our community. As you wrap up this exercise, we encourage you to see that the journey is just beginning. Reflect on the things God has shown you in the last few weeks, and ask him how he wants to use this Missional Community for his kingdom.

Keep this booklet and come back to it often, both as individuals and as a Missional Community, reminding each other who we are in Christ and what we are about as his people. As new people become part of this Missional Community, use these exercises and tools to disciple each other and share the mission and vision of your group. Be assured that Jesus is with us as we live as his church, a gospel community on mission, and always remember that he is faithful, and he will do the work!