# USING THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT THE ROCK CHURCH OF SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI, TO HOLD CHRISTIANS ACCOUNTABLE TO A MISSIONAL LIFESTYLE

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by

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

USING THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT THE
ROCK CHURCH OF SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI,
TO HOLD CHRISTIANS ACCOUNTABLE TO
A MISSIONAL LIFESTYLE

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To Jill,

my wonderful wife and gift from God,

and to

our children Sarah, Caitlin, and Caleb,

may you each discover and fulfill God's mission for you

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# PREFACE

At the age of six I first felt the call of mission on my life. My salvation experience was also my call to vocational ministry. I knew that Jesus was calling me to give my life to him, and I knew this meant that I would be a preacher. I am thankful for my parents, Jerry and Karen, who led me to understand that my life belonged to Jesus. I also feel blessed that I was raised in a pastor's home. My parents live their lives as people on a mission. I am grateful for their continuing example.

I owe a great debt to The Rock Church of Saint Louis for their financial and spiritual support in the completion of this project. I feel honored and privileged to be the pastor of a people who want to be on mission for Jesus. May God bless us with his power and presence as we seek to be his hands and feet in the world.

One of the deepest thanksgivings I have to the Lord is for my dear wife, Jill, who is a true gift from God. I am blessed to have a wife who loves God more than she loves me. She is a prayer warrior and a source of inspiration and encouragement. We are blessed to have three children: Sarah and her husband Matt, Caitlin, and Caleb. They each love the Lord and are seeking to walk in God's plan and purpose for their lives. Sarah and Matt gave us two amazing grandchildren, Seth and Selah. I always thought grandparents were a little over the top with their preoccupation with their grandkids. I get it now!

Finally, I am dedicating this project to my dear friend Fred Winters. We began this program together. I am saddened that I am finishing it without him. On Sunday March 8, 2009, Fred left this life and stepped into the presence of our Lord. A deranged man entered his church that morning, walked right up to him while he was preaching, and began shooting. The first shot pierced his Bible, spraying confetti through the air. Rather

than running away from the gunman, Fred engaged him. In the process of attempting to restrain him, with the help of others who valiantly moved to help, Fred was shot and killed. His heroism saved the lives of many of his people. Ever the consummate shepherd, he faithfully laid down his life for his sheep.

I first met Fred in 1988. I was transitioning from being a soldier in the United States Army to being a college student. My wife and I, with our two little girls, were looking for a church home. We visited Fred's church in Maryville, Illinois, and later joined. At the time, it was a small fellowship that averaged eighty in worship attendance. Fred Winters was a man on a mission to reach his community for Jesus. First Baptist Church of Maryville grew from a worship attendance of 30 to 1300 under his leadership. When we joined his church, I was 23 and he was 25. That was the beginning of a long and significant friendship with Fred and his dear wife, Cindy. God used Fred as the Barnabas in my life.

After I joined the church, Fred ran into my dad at some pastors' meeting. During the meeting my dad got acquainted with Fred and told him that as a child I had expressed an awareness of God's call to ministry. I became Fred's project. At the time I was pursuing a path that would take me to law school. Fred kept asking me to fill different roles and responsibilities in the church. For some reason I simply could not say no. Over the course of two years, I first became his personal visitation partner, then a Royal Ambassador leader, then a discipleship training teacher, then the discipleship training director, and finally a member of his church council.

Then one day the big one came. Fred also happened to be the director of the Baptist Student Union, in which I was not really involved. The Baptist Student Union was going to lead a weekend revival at a church in our area and Fred asked me if I would speak. Once again I said yes. As I took the pulpit and preached that night, I felt God's amazing call rush back into my being. Within months I became a pastor and have been serving our Lord since 1990. Through it all Fred prayed for us, supported us, and at

times financially helped us. He was a true friend, a source of advice, and a real encourager.

Not too long after I landed in St. Louis in 1998, a forty-minute drive to Fred's one and only church pastorate, I convinced him to join me in enrolling in the Doctor of Ministry program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The trips and weeks spent in Louisville were the best of times. He finished and graduated before me. Each week when we talked on the phone and at our monthly lunches, he would annoy me by wanting an update on the status of my project. I wish I could call him right now and declare that I am finally finished!

I am deeply thankful for our friendship and the influence that Fred Winters had on my life. He modeled what it looks like to live with an undeterred focus on fulfilling God's mission. I will forever miss him, but know I will see him again. God is good!

Timothy James Cowin

Saint Louis, Missouri

May 2011

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

The church is called to be an active part of the Trinitarian mission of God in this world to redeem a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 5:9). Jesus was sent by the Father into this world with a mission to purchase a people with his own blood (1 Pet 1:18-19). The gospel tells us that by the blood of Jesus our sins can be forgiven and we can be accepted by the Father (Matt 26:28; Col 1:20). Jesus transferred the responsibility for the continuance of the mission of God to his people, the church (John 20:21). Furthermore, the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit have been given to the church so that it can continue the Trinitarian mission of God (Acts 1:8). One of the primary roles of the pastor is to equip and lead Christians to be active participants in God's grand mission in this world.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project was to use the small group ministry of the church to hold people accountable to developing and maintaining a missional lifestyle.

## Goals

The first goal was to lead the church to understand its missional purpose. In order for the church to fulfill its purpose the members must recognize and understand what that purpose is. Clarity of purpose is a necessity for effective ministry.

The second goal was to adopt a purpose statement that reflects that the church understands its mission. A purpose statement will help guide the church's ministries. A purpose statement will help each member to recognize and remember biblical priorities that should guide the life of the fellowship.

The third goal was to equip small group members with the skills and knowledge to share the gospel. The Bible clearly teaches that followers of Christ Jesus have a responsibility to tell others about Jesus (Matt 28:19-20, 1 Pet 3:15).

The fourth goal was to implement a missional purpose in the life of the small groups. A growing, vibrant church leads its people to participate in small groups. In the small group people are able to grow in their relationship with God and in their fellowship with other Christ-followers. The small group can also be the place where the church is being equipped and organized for participating in God's mission.

The fifth goal was to develop and use an accountability strategy that would be used in the small groups to hold members accountable to maintaining a missional lifestyle. This is the best place to apply a systematic strategy to equip and encourage people to be missionaries in their world.

## Context

This project was conducted at The Rock Church of St. Louis (hereafter The Rock), is a 75-year-old, established, mid-city church that was known as Rock Hill Baptist Church until the fall of 2008. The church was founded in the year of the Wall Street collapse and steadily grew during the early decades of its existence. Beginning in the 1980s, The Rock plateaued and by the early 1990s began to decline. In July of 1998 I assumed the pastorate and began to implement a strategy to halt the decline and prayerfully to turn the situation around. I have been extremely blessed to be able to pastor a people who have a genuine desire to do whatever it takes to begin to reach people and grow as a church.

### The Community

The community surrounding The Rock is an exciting, redeveloping area. It is centrally located within the St. Louis metropolitan community. The area consists of the original suburban communities of the St. Louis City. Now it is considered a mid-city

community, and the new suburban areas are approximately a ten to fifteen minute drive away. The most current data I was able to secure, reported here, comes from the 2000 census of the United States Census Bureau.[1]

The community surrounding The Rock is experiencing renewal and renovation. Areas are being bought and redeveloped. Old homes are being renovated or torn down and replaced. The original owners are passing away and newcomers are moving into the community. Only 22 percent of the population has lived here over fifteen years. The community is very much alive and stable.

According to the 2000 census, within a five-mile radius of The Rock, there are nearly 300,000 people and 120,000 households. The population base is stable. The housing units consist of 24 percent single-family housing and 26 percent multi-family housing units (this figure is 8 percent higher than the Missouri average for multi-family housing). With this type of population base the opportunity to reach the unchurched is tremendous. There are people all around us desperately needing a growing relationship with our Lord.

The ethnic make-up of the community is 85 percent (255,000) white. Blacks make up 13 percent of the population or around 40,000 people. Asians and Hispanics make up approximately one percent each, or around 8,000 combined.

**The Church**

The Rock's heritage is one of being a growing, evangelistic church. In the 1970s, The Rock was a leading church in the state for baptisms and growth. There were some key characteristics of the church during this time. They had a vibrant bus ministry and an exciting children's program. They had a great recreation ministry through the use of their gym and bowling alley. They also focused their evangelistic efforts on personal

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[1]"The 2000 United States Census Report" [on-line]; accessed 2 February 2009; available from http://www.census.gov/; Internet.

soul winning and on the use of evangelistic revivals. During this time, they stepped out in faith and built a new sanctuary that was of excellent design and quality.

Over the next two decades the church began to slowly decline. There are some important changes in the ministries that possibly had a negative impact on the church. First, in the early 1980s the church dismantled its busing ministry. Not too long after this decision, the staff was downsized to two full-time ministers. The senior pastor assumed the responsibilities of the education and outreach minister. The church basically began to shut down ministries and did not replace them with alternative plans to reach people.

Through the late 1980s and the 1990s, the church declined by approximately 100 in Sunday school attendance. For the first eight years of the 1990s the church averaged 19 baptisms and 21 other additions per year. This modest growth was not keeping up with those that were dying or leaving the church. Each year brought another slight decline in attendance. Compounded over a 10-year period, this trend revealed a state of general decline for the church.

The church over this period did not reach young couples. The average attendance in Sunday school in 1998 was 242. In the same year, the average attendance in Sunday school for couples 35 years old and below was six. The people that joined the church during this time were typically middle-aged to retirement age couples, with no children. The church had no singles or college ministry other than a Sunday school class. This situation was a great weakness in light of the fact that there was a substantial presence of singles and unchurched college students in the immediate area.

The church also lost its effectiveness in evangelism. The church has always had a regular visitation night. This night is used to visit those who have been guests at the weekend services. Because of the church's location, it averages around forty first-time visitors per month. The discouraging trend had been that many visited but few joined.

The facilities and its location are a major strength. The Rock has a gym with a basketball court. The gym can be used for many outreach-oriented ministries. The

sanctuary is a contemporary design with a fan-shaped seating capacity of 750. There are two educational wings that can support a Sunday school of 300, when all the space is utilized. The property is located at a central point in the metropolitan area and is easy to get to from anywhere in the region.

## New Strategies

In the summer of 1998, I assumed the pastorate of what was then Rock Hill Baptist Church. It was obvious to me that the church was and is facing growth barriers that are typical for the middle-sized church. These challenges are described in detail in chapter 4 of *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*.[2] Fortunately, the people have had a great desire to grow and a willingness to try new methods. They were willing to follow my leadership in making some substantial changes in their ministry style. The first project for me was to establish a prayer room, and we started an intercessory prayer ministry. We also have begun each year with forty days of prayer and fasting.

I also quickly began to share my vision and formulated a basic ministry manual to guide the key leaders of the church through the principles of my strategy. My strategy for the church centered on the acrostic P.O.W.E.R.: Purpose Driven, Organized for Ministry, World Wide Mission, Experiencing God, and Relevant to This Generation.

Basically, we spent time developing an awareness of the biblical purposes of the church, and we reorganized the Sunday school to make it the foundational ministry from which these purposes are fulfilled. We renamed the Sunday school and called it our *CrossGroup* ministry. We focused on recruiting *CrossGroup* leaders who would lead their group in fulfilling the four purposes of the *CrossGroup*. The four purposes of the *CrossGroups* are fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, and ministry. This plan was designed to counter the prevalent perception that a Sunday school teacher just comes to

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[2]Elmer Towns, C. Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998).

teach a lesson. We needed more than teachers; we needed leaders.

Recently we have revamped our entire small group ministry. For a couple of years we have had two small group ministries: The Rock University (Sunday school), and Community Groups. We now have one LifeGroup ministry that encompasses much of what we do as a church. We have church-based and community-based LifeGroups that are centered on Bible study and fellowship. We have sports and recreation LifeGroups. We have LifeGroups that focus on various service projects. For example there are prison and homeless ministry LifeGroups. We also have many affinity LifeGroups that unite people through common interests. The purposes of the LifeGroup is to connect people relationally, to pray and care for one another, and depending on the type of group, have varying degrees of Bible study or Bible devotions.

We also changed our worship service to a contemporary style. The key word to describe our services is celebration. We added guitars, drums, and various other instruments. We have also recently developed several vocal groups in addition to the use of our choir and praise team. This style of worship has changed the atmosphere of our services. We have transitioned from a somewhat formal, traditional service to an informal, contemporary celebration. This has had a positive impact in our ability to attract and assimilate younger people into the life of our church.

Furthermore, we have multiplied the leadership of our church. What was once a staff of just two full-time ministers and no part-time ministers has, at the time of the writing of this project, become a leadership team of three full-time pastors, three lay pastors, and two part-time ministry leaders. The church had not had three full-time ministers in over ten years and had never had lay pastors. These staff positions helped meet the ministry needs in some critical areas as well as enabling the church to begin new ministries.

Furthermore, in the fall of 2008, I led the church to study the possible impact of a name change. After many months of prayer and research, followed by several church forums, Rock Hill Baptist Church voted to become known as The Rock Church of

St. Louis. This decision was made for three primary reasons. First, St. Louis County is composed of many municipalities and the city of Rock Hill is one of these. In order for us to continue to develop as a church for all of St. Louis we decided it was important for us to not identity with one small municipality. Second, after conducting research in our community, we decided that the term "Baptist" was a barrier for those who were looking for a church like ours. Our dress is informal, our services are very contemporary, and our focus is on being a place of grace. The studies we conducted in our community indicated that many people that would be looking for a casual, contemporary fellowship simply did not expect that it would be found at "Rock Hill Baptist Church." Finally, we began a ministry in downtown St. Louis and became one church in two locations. We literally outgrew being a church in just one specific municipality.

The result of the name change was almost immediate. We regularly have twice the visitors on any given Sunday then we had before the change. We also have seen a renewed excitement with most of the people in or fellowship. They are genuinely thrilled to be a part of The Rock Church of St. Louis.

## Leadership

I have been in the ministry twenty years. My leadership style has changed over the years as I have gained experience and matured. I used to think that leadership was a gift with which some were born. I have come to realize that, although some persons possess personality traits that lead them toward leadership positions, productive leadership is an acquired skill gained through experience and learning. I know that I have certainly learned over the years, through the ups and downs of leading, how to be more effective as a pastor.

I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses as a leader. I regularly try to evaluate myself and work on improving. I really do want to be the best that I can be, and I know that acknowledging my weaknesses is a big part of being able to grow as an individual. There are areas that I feel are personal strengths, and there are some

weaknesses that I need to overcome. Having a strong sense of vision has always been one of my greatest strengths as a leader. I have always had the ability to discover and to work with a strong sense of purpose and direction. I strive to lead people to see beyond the here and now and to capture a vision for what God can do and what God wants to do. I am an equipper. I feel that one of my primary purposes as a pastor is to help people find and fulfill their God-given purpose in the church and world (Eph 4:11-12). I have come to understand that the people of the church are not resources to be used in doing my ministry; they are my ministry.

## Rationale

Close to 300,000 people live within a five-mile radius of our church.[3] Yet, our church could not be described as an evangelistic church. There was no recognizable strategy in place for systematically reaching our community for Jesus. A plan was developed and then accepted by the church, which served to mobilize resources and manpower for the reaching of the lost. The plan also served as a compass for the church as a whole. A new plan for continued outreach will keep the church focused on its mission. I hope that a new plan, focused on evangelistic outreach, will also heighten the awareness of our people to the necessity of being a trained and active missionary in their world, even after the completion of this project.

Although The Rock had experienced growth, it has not come from reaching the lost with the gospel. I know that the people of the church were not reaching out to the lost people who are around them. Most of our growth is transfer growth. I had seen little activity in personal evangelism. We needed to teach our people intentionally to reach out to the lost. They needed to develop a lifestyle of sharing their faith.

Some facts indicate that our church was not the evangelistic church that we needed to be. First, although our worship attendance averaged around 450, for the past

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[3]"The 2000 United States Census Report."

five years we averaged only 29 baptisms per year. That is a 15:1 ratio of attendees to baptisms. Moreover, most of those baptisms were the result of special events or the children of church members, rather than an intentional outreach to the lost in our city.

I truly believed that with the proper training and motivation, that our people would become more evangelistic. I knew that we must make disciples. Part of making disciples is training people how to reach others with the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Definitions and Delimitations

For the purpose of this project, here are the definitions of some important terms. *Discipleship* is the process whereby church members are led to develop a lifestyle of worship, prayer, evangelism, ministry, fellowship, and growth in the understanding and application of the Word of God.

*Accountability* is a process whereby disciples are systematically encouraged and expected to maintain certain behaviors as part of their lifestyle.

*Missional lifestyle* is intentionally connecting with God's redemptive mission in the world by living as a missionary among the people you know and in the place you live.

A *big event* is an evangelistic service or event planned for the specific purpose of mobilizing Christians to invite and bring their lost friends.

*LifeGroups* are the small group ministry of The Rock Church. Every small group in our fellowship is called a LifeGroup.

I placed two delimitations on this project. First, this project was limited to LifeGroup participants. Those individuals that were worship attendees but not part of a LifeGroup were not involved in this project. There was a training and educational component in the project that was conducted through the LifeGroups. Therefore, those who did not attend a LifeGroup would have missed out on a major component of the project. A system of accountability was also applied in the LifeGroup's weekly gatherings. Therefore, one must have been a LifeGroup member in order to participate in this project.

Second, this project was limited by design to fifteen weeks. In fifteen weeks I could not see the long-term results of the project. Because one of my goals was to lead disciples to develop and maintain missional lifestyles, the positive results of this project will hopefully go on indefinitely in the life of the church.

## Research Methodology

Two forms of research methodology were used in this project. First, a pre-project survey on missional lifestyle disciplines was administered to LifeGroup participants. The survey asked questions about the individual's personal disciplines as a disciple. The survey was designed to reveal the perceptions that the participants had about the missional nature of the church and their particular LifeGroup.

The second form of research was a post-project focus group meeting with some of the participating LifeGroup leaders. The discussion dealt with their understanding of the project and talking about perceived strengths and weaknesses.

## Conclusion

Robert Coleman, in the foreword to his classic book *The Master Plan for Evangelism*, asked this important question: "How do we go forward with an evangelism—a widening of the circle of faith so that it includes more and more people who have transformingly trusted Christ as Savior—that is continuous, contagious, and compelling?"[4] Coleman answered this question by examining the biblical record of how Jesus made disciples. The Bible gives clear direction concerning the mission of God and how the church and its disciples are to participate in it.

It was my goal in the implementation of this project to do likewise—to see how Jesus evangelized—and to work to build a testable program in our church to use small groups as a means to evangelism among the people in our city.

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[4]Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 9.

# CHAPTER 2

# BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3.16). This verse is possibly the most well-known and beloved verse of the entire Bible. Christ has taught us that God cares about the eternal destiny of people so much that He sent His son on a mission to redeem them.

This truth is called the *missio dei. Missio dei* is a Latin theological term that can be translated as "mission of God."[1] Through the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has made a way for all people to have abundant and eternal life (John 10:10, 14:1-6). Now Christ wants this truth to be known through His church that has been commissioned to take this message to the world.

This chapter will address a scriptural foundation for understanding that the heart of every church must be its connection to the mission of God. Examined first is the mission of God and the subsequent mission of the church. Examined next is the strategy and method that Jesus used to make disciples and reveal its relevance for the church today.

## The Mission of God

"Mission" specifically refers to that action of one being sent to fulfill the will of a superior. In the Bible, it is God who commissions and sends His servants to participate in His mission in the world. Christopher Wright describes mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's

[1]Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62-63.

own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[2] The mission of God has been from the very beginning of time His plan for worldwide redemption. God has "a divine program to glorify himself by bringing salvation to all on planet earth."[3]

**Mission in the Old Testament**

From the first pages of God's Word, one is able to see God's redemptive nature. The concept of mission and redemption is certainly not germane to just the New Testament. The New Testament continues the story that began in the Old Testament. God from the very beginning of His self-revelation has made Himself known as a God who reaches out redemptively to make a people for His very own.

**The blessing of Abraham.** One of the first and greatest examples of the mission of God is found in Genesis 12. The Lord came to Abram and said:

> Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen 12:1-3)

Walter Kaiser identifies this passage as the Old Testament "Great Commission." He explains, "This is the earliest statement of the fact that it will be God's purpose and plan to see that the message of his grace and blessing comes to every person on planet earth."[4] Abraham, who is known as the father of the Jewish nation, was given a covenant that included in it a blessing to "all the families of the earth." The goal of the Old Testament was to show that one day both Jews and Gentiles would come to a saving faith in the Messiah: Christ Jesus. The plan of God from the beginning was to redeem people from

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[2]Ibid., 22-23.

[3]Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 12-13.

[4]Ibid., 7.

every tribe and nation. God's eternal plan was to make salvation possible for all people.[5]

The truth of this universal blessing is further reiterated to us when the Lord visited Abraham to announce the birth of a son by his wife Sarah (Gen 17). The Bible tells us that as the Lord was leaving, He decided to tell Abraham of the impending judgment against Sodom, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed by him?" (Gen 18:17-18). Again we learn that God's mission was to bless not only the people who would one day be known as the Jews but all nations of the earth through Abraham. Matthews explains that, "The Lord chose Abraham for the purpose of blessing all nations; this appointment also included the intermediary step of creating a righteous people whose conduct would be a beacon for the nations."[6]

Variants of this blessing repeatedly occur throughout Genesis. In the aftermath of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the Lord reemphasizes, "and in your offspring shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen 22:18). These same words are used by God when the promise to Abraham is passed on to the son Isaac as God again affirmed, "and in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 26:4). Finally, this same promise is repeated to Jacob when God spoke to him at Bethel, "Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 28:14).

Certainly God called Israel to be His special people. What is sometimes obscured is the fact that from the very beginning God intended for the Jewish people to be a light and a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. The purpose of God was to bless Israel so that He could work through them in such a way that all the nations of the earth

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[5]Ibid., 10.

[6]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* The New American Commentary, vol. 1b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 223.

would be able to know the one true God and experience the gift of redemption.[7]

This truth is further understood in light of New Testament teaching. The New Testament gospel is deeply connected to the Old Testament action of God's blessing of Abraham. This truth is clearly taught by the apostle Paul:

> Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness' Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Gal 3:6-9)

Paul clearly stated that when God called Abraham He "preached the gospel" to him. Paul's commentary on this Old Testament passages teaches us that the promise of God to Abraham was a launching point for the universal mission of God to bless and redeem both Jews and Gentiles. Those who came to Christ by faith are seen as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessing. As Wright notes, "The ingathering of the nations was the very thing Israel existed for in the purpose of God; it was the fulfillment of the bottom line of God's promise to Abraham."[8]

**The Psalms.** In the worship of Israel, we repeatedly hear the message of God's mission to redeem people from all nations of the world. There are many psalms that refer to the nations and God's interaction with them. God's plan for the nations is seen through these words of worship: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you" (Ps 22:27). "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations" (Ps 67:1-2). "May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!" (Ps 72:17). "All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name" (Ps 86:9).

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[7]Ibid., 20.

[8]Wright, *The Mission of God*, 194.

"They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deed, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom" (Ps 145:11-12).

These verses are just a sample of the many verses that declare God's mission to redeem from all nations. In the Psalms, we see that the nations learn of the reality of the one true God through His interaction with Israel. The recognition of the reality of God leads the nations to join in the universal exaltation and worship of the Lord. As Wright noted, "Here we have a theme that carries considerable missiological significance in our survey since the mission of God is to lead the whole creation and all nations to that universal worship that so fills the final vision of the canon of Scripture."[9]

**The message of the prophets.** The truth concerning God's missional plan to redeem the nations is also repeatedly revealed within God's messages to His prophets. One such message is seen in the prophecy found in Isaiah 42:1, 6 and 49:6,

> Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Nations. I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nation. (Isa 42:1, 6)
>
> He says: 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' (Isa 49:6)

These messages to the prophet Isaiah further reveal that God intended to use Israel as a blessing to all people. God's covenant with Abraham included his immediate offspring, but it also included the nations that would see the "light" in God's relationship with Israel.

Isaiah's message concerned the futility of believing in other gods. There is only one God. The word "justice" in 42:1 is the Hebrew word *mispat*.[10] It is a judicial term that literally means a "judgment." God is going to make His judgment known.

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[9]Ibid., 478.

[10]Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 95.

Claus Westermann notes, "Once the 'gods' of the nations are shown to be nothing and a delusion, the coastlands, and the wider earth are placed in a position where they might see and receive the *mispat* that the One God means to be theirs, as offspring of servant Abraham."[11]

In these revelations to Isaiah, the Messiah is clearly presented as a "servant" who has a multi-national mission. God reveals that salvation was going to reach to the "end of the earth" (Isa 49:6). The Messiah was going to bring "salvation" to the Gentiles as well as to the Jew. Paul Hanson points out that the message to Isaiah teaches that "since the compass of God's redemptive activity is the entire created world and its scope is the restoration of all that exists to wholeness, the nations are included in God's plan."[12]

Of all the prophets, Jeremiah stands out as a messenger of God's mission to redeem not only the Jews but all nations. Jeremiah was appointed a "prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5), and the nations were a repeated subject of his prophecies (Jer 12:14-17; 18:7-10; 33:6-9). In one of Jeremiah's prophecies is a clear connection between the future of the nations and the faithfulness of Israel to their God:

> If you return, O Israel, declares the Lord, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, and if you swear, 'as the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory. (Jer 4:1-2)

It is clear that the mission of God is tied to the nation of Israel. Here it is taught that God intended for Israel to be a witness to the nations of His glory and sovereignty. The fulfillment of mission in the Old Testament can be seen as a product of Israel's faithfulness to God.[13] As Wright states, "If Israel will return to their proper place

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[11]Patrick D. Miller, *Jeremiah*, in vol. 6 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, edited by Tremper Longman III (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 362.

[12]Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 130.

[13]J. A. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 213.

of covenant loyalty and obedience, then God can get on with the job of blessing the nations, which is what Israel was called into existence for in the first place."[14]

As noted, mission is not just a concept of the New Testament; it has always been part of the nature and heart of the triune God. The mission of God as observed in the blessing of Abraham and his seed, in the worship of Israel, and in the messages of the prophets, is continued in the New Testament first in the incarnation of Christ and second in the continuing mission of Christ Jesus' church.

**Mission in the New Testament**

The Bible is the revelation of God's mission to redeem a people for Himself. At the heart of this message is the person introduced to us in the New Testament: Jesus Christ. Jesus is presented as none other than the eternal God incarnated as a man (John 1:1, 14, Phil 2:5-6, Col 1:15-17, Heb 1:3). He came to the world which He created to die as a substitute for sinners (Rom 5:6-10). He was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit in power and glory and given a name that is to be above all names: Jesus Christ, the Lord (Acts 2:24-36, Phil 2:10-11). In His death and resurrection, Jesus was victorious over sin, death, and Satan. Jesus is now exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords and is going to come again to judge the living and the dead (Acts 2:33, 2 Tim 4:1).

It is by the name of Jesus that all peoples must come before God in repentance and faith to receive the gift of eternal life (Rom 1:16). Those who are unrepentant are already condemned and will be punished for their sin and unbelief in a fiery hell (Rev 20:11-15). This story of God's redemptive mission through His Son Jesus, in the language of the New Testament, is called the *euaggelion* or literally "the good news."[15]

This gospel must be continually taught and grasped by the local church.

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[14]Wright, *The Mission of God*, 241.

[15]James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (McLean, VA: Mac Donald, 1978), s.v., "gospel."

Certainly one can be saved with a simple faith in Christ for the Scriptures teach us, "For 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom 10:13). But if the church does not understand the gospel in the context of God's missional plan for His church, it will lose vision of its purpose in the world. Mark Dever and Paul Alexander aptly warn:

> The gospel and its required response, therefore, are the very last things we want to assume that people know—even if some of them insist otherwise. The human heart is astoundingly deceptive (Jer 17:9), nominalism (being a Christian in name only) has spread like gangrene, and misunderstandings about the Gospel abound among professing evangelicals, especially regarding its relationship to other religions and its implications for our everyday lives. People need to hear the Gospel—whether they're professing Christians or not.[16]

Ignorance of the gospel as it fits into the context of God's mission has produced Christians and churches that have become "nominal" in our world today. People may know enough of the gospel to attain salvation, but they are ignorant of God's purpose and plan to reach the world through everybody that has already been reached. To understand fully the gospel means to understand fully the means by which God has designed to make the gospel known: the gospel-mission of the church, His people.

**The mission of the church**. A tremendous need exists in the typical church for a fuller understanding of the mission that has been given to it by its founder, Christ Jesus. When one looks at the book of Acts, he cannot help but sense the excitement and the passion the early church had in sharing the gospel with the world. Christ had risen from the dead, and they went with power to make this truth known. Amberson is correct in his assessment that "we, today, need to recapture the note of spontaneity which existed in the New Testament and, therefore, produced churches as the believers witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ."[17]

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[16]Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 43.

[17]Talmadge R. Amberson, "The Foundations for Church Planting," in *The Birth of Churches*, ed. Talmadge R. Amberson (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 45.

Christ was sent by the Father on a mission, and Christ has clearly sent His followers to continue the fulfillment of that gospel-mission (John 20:21).[18] Christ's plan was to leave a community of people who would carry out His mission to the ends of the earth. The three years of Christ's earthly ministry were in part filled with the training and mentoring of disciples who would one day be left with the task of proclaiming the gospel to the world. Christ prepared and trained His followers for the eventuality of His departure and their inheritance of this gospel-mission.

Matthew 10 records Christ's instructions to the twelve in correlation to their being sent to proclaim the "kingdom of heaven." This mission was preparatory training for the day that they would eventually be empowered by the Spirit to take the gospel to the world. Immediately before the disciples were given this mission, the Lord told them that "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt 9:37-38). Interestingly the word for "send out" is *ekballo*, which could be translated as "thrust out." It could refer to workers who are already in the field but need to have a fire lit under them to thrust them out.[19]

We know that this gospel-mission was not to be confined to just the twelve because the gospel of Luke tells us that at another time, Jesus sent seventy-two disciples on a similar mission:

> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:1-2)

A significant lesson to be taken from this passage is that mission and ministry are not confined to a select few. Jesus expanded the ministry beyond the twelve.[20] The

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[18]Joe Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1993), 30-31.

[19]Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 167.

[20]Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 994.

mission of the church is to be shared by all the members of the fellowship. The mission must be carried out by more and more disciples. Of this passage Bock perceptively points out:

> Part of the mission's goal then is to expand the number of disciples, so that the number of those who can engage in the missionary task can grow. In other words, if people receive the message, they will help deliver it. . . . Luke is saying that one of the results of the mission is that more take responsibility for it.[21]

**Four missional mandates.** The gospel-mission of Christ's people was clearly made known as seen in some of the final words of our Lord. Before the Lord Jesus ascended to be with the Father, He gave clear and consistent direction to His followers that they were to continue His mission of redemption by proclaiming the gospel to the world. The will of our Lord concerning the mission of His people can clearly be seen in the following four missional mandates.[22]

**Matthew 28:18-20.** This passage is known as "The Great Commission." Christ clearly reveals here that it is His desire and command for His followers to continue His mission in the world. Coleman points out that "on a mountain in Galilee He gave His great commission to, not only the eleven disciples (Mat 28:16), but also to the whole church numbering then about 500 brethren (1 Cor 15:6)":[23]

> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

From this passage we discern an important aspect of what it means to be engaged in Christ's mission. At the heart of this "commission" is the imperative

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[21]Ibid., 995.

[22]Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 30.

[23]Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 91.

commandment to "make disciples" (Matt 28:19). This task is the main emphasis of this passage. The formation of disciples in all nations is the will of Christ.

From examining the book of Acts, it is clear that the early church set out to fulfill the commands that are included in this charge. Seen in the story of the first church are people being baptized and subsequently taught the doctrines of the Christian faith (Acts 2:41-42). Also in the book of Acts, the story of the expansion of the Gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles and from Jerusalem to the outer reaches of the known world is chronicled. As the church made disciples who in turn made disciples, the known world was penetrated with the gospel (Acts 17:6). Certainly the early church understood its mission in the world.

**Luke 24:46-49.** In this passage, Luke writes that just before the ascension, Jesus gave the disciples further direction concerning their ministry:

> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.' (Luke 24:45-49)

Luke provides for us another aspect of the mission. In this passage, the mission is the proclamation of what is in essence the gospel. We are given the mission to proclaim or literally "to preach."[24] The verb "be preached" is the Greek *kerrusso*.[25] It has the meaning of one who proclaims like a herald. The disciples were to be Christ's official heralds of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The content of that message is given. Christ suffered and rose from the dead, so we must respond with repentance for the remission of sin. It is significant that our

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[24]Bock, *Luke*, 1939.

[25]Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 58.

proclamation should be done, "in His name." "In His name" in the Old Testament indicated Yahweh's authority; this authority has now been transferred to Christ Jesus.[26] By that authority His church is sent out.

It is clear that this command was fulfilled in the ministry of the first disciples. In the first documented proclamation of the first church, Peter is seen proclaiming, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This gospel-mission is the same mission that should be at the heart of a church's ministry.

**John 20:21.** Each of the previous mandates reveals that Christ's will is for the church to make disciples by proclaiming the gospel to all people. This gospel was to be a proclamation of repentance, forgiveness, and the remission of sin in the name of Jesus. In John's gospel a different but important nuance concerning the nature of the mission of the church is observed. It is here that Christ is recorded as saying:

> 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' (John 20.19-21)

Jesus reminded them that He came to the world as a "sent" one. The term the Lord uses is the word commonly translated "apostle."[27] Christ was sent as the official apostle or messenger of God the father. Now Christ through this commission is drawing his followers into the unity and mission of the Father and of the Son.[28] Here mission is clearly seen as "being sent out."

Jesus lived in the world as one who was on a mission. As a "sent" one, Jesus came to fulfill the Father's will. Jesus spoke the Father's words. Jesus lived among

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[26]Bock, *Luke*, 1939.

[27]A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1932), 314.

[28]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 573.

people so that He could teach and reach them. Now Christ instructs His disciples that just as He was "sent" by the Father, they also must understand and recognize that they are being "sent."

It is important for the modern church to understand that they are to dwell in their communities as "sent" ones. Sometimes churches see themselves as a "sending body" and lose sight of their own mission. In other words, the existing church does not understand fully the fact that they are to exist in their mission field as "sent" ones. Instead the church begins to see "sent" ones as being missionaries that have left their church to serve in other places around the world. If the church is going to reach their communities for Christ, they must maintain as their corporate identity that they are missionaries to their community. Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit is still sending them to reach their neighbors for Jesus.

**Acts 1:8.** The fourth missional mandate for the church is found in the opening verses of the book of Acts. It is the key verse in understanding the expansion, growth, and power of the church as chronicled in the rest of the book of Acts. Here Jesus declares, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit are pervasive subject matters of our Lord in connection with the mission of the disciples. In this passage, the Lord makes it clear that the Holy Spirit was going to give His disciples power to be witnesses and missionaries even to "the end of the earth." The Lord specifically called the disciples "my witnesses." The word is *martures,* from which we get the English word "martyr."[29] In a literal usage, it means simply to be an eyewitness. For each of these men and countless disciples to follow, the name took on a new meaning as so many of Christ's

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[29]A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1930), 10.

followers would maintain their "witness" even unto death.

The theological truth found in this passage is that not only is the triune God sending the church into the world to be on a gospel-mission, but this same God would also by the presence of the Holy Spirit be with them and empower them in carrying out this great task. Polhill notes that, "the disciples were to be the true, 'restored' Israel, fulfilling its mission to be a 'light for the Gentiles' so that God's salvation might reach 'to the ends of the earth'" (Isa 49:6).[30] Mission in Acts is being a witness of the gospel.

From all of these missional mandates can be found at least four aspects of what it means to be on mission:

1. Mission is making disciples of all nations (Matthew).
2. Mission is proclaiming—making known the gospel (Luke).
3. Mission is being sent out (John).
4. Mission is being a physical witness of the Lord Jesus (Acts).
5. Mission is empowered by the presence and power of God (Matthew, Luke, John, Acts).[31]

Christ left His followers with the task of continuing the mission that was given to Him by our Heavenly Father. Christ's mission was to make possible, by His substitutionary death for sin and His glorious resurrection, the redemption of a people from every nation, for the glory of God.

In the book of Revelation, we see the result of this mission. People from every nation will be gathered at the throne of God, worshipping the Lamb. "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev 7:9-10).

The preeminent mission of the church is to embrace Christ's mission and work

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[30]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 85.

[31]Nissen, *New Testament and Mission*, 18.

to see, as the first Moravian missionaries would say, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering!"[32] Every church ought to understand that they have been sent on a gospel mission and that their primary mission is the task of taking the gospel to the world.

## The Nature of the Church

Many Christians have erroneously come to understand that most of Christianity can be summed up by what happens inside of a building that has come to be known as "the church." The only way we will have a greater impact in America with the gospel message is for all disciples to understand that "church" is not a place, but a people.

### The *Ekklesia*

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*. W. A. Criswell points out that in Greek usage, it literally means "the assembly" or "the called out ones." [33] It was a term to describe the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the right of citizenship for the transaction of public affairs."[34]

In the New Testament, the word "church" or "churches" is used 115 times.[35] *Ekklesia* is the most frequent term used to identify those who have accepted Christ Jesus as their Lord and who band together to carry out His mission and ministry on earth. The church is literally the assembly of people who hear Christ's call to salvation and service. Of this assembly Jesus declared, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of

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[32]John Piper, "At the Price of God's Own Blood" (Acts 20:28) [on-line]; accessed 20 January 2008; available from http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper89/05-07-89.htm; Internet.

[33]W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 97.

[34]Ibid., 97.

[35]Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, s.v., "church," "churches."

hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). From this verse we know that Jesus founded the church and that it is His desire is for it to continue His mission on earth.

One of the greatest hindrances churches in America face today is the lack of understanding that the average Christian has concerning the biblical term *ekklesia*. Many Christians think of "church" as the place they attend worship on Sundays or the institution of which they have become members.

Subsequently, many Christians do not possess a personal sense of being "sent" by the Lord Jesus (John 20:21). Evangelism has become only a ministry of the church to which they belong. Being on mission is an activity that has come to be seen as optional and something that only some Christians choose to do as they go on organized mission trips, engage themselves in evangelistic programs, or attend weekly outreach/visitation nights. The gospel-mission is primarily something left for others to fulfill.

An *ekklesia* is not an inanimate structure made by human hands complete with stained glass windows and a steeple. A Christian *ekklesia,* or church, is made by the work of the Holy Spirit and is comprised of all the disciples who identify with it. When this truth is properly understood, each individual disciple should come to understand that he does not simply "go to church" but that he or she is the church. The gospel-mission is not a program or a special training class; it is forever to be the lifestyle of each and every Christian.

**The Body of Christ**

God the Father sent the Son (John 8:42). God the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 14:26, 16:7-8). God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit sent and are continually sending the Church on mission into the world (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). The church has been commissioned to be God's "sent" people on mission to take the gospel to the world. The mission of God continues on earth as Jesus sends his people out into the world as the continuation of His mission. As Jesus was sent, so is the church to proclaim the gospel. Because our God is a missionary God, and

because our Lord was a missionary Savior, our identity is reflected in our being a missionary people. Therefore, mission is not merely what we do; it is who we are in the world.

Who the church is in the world is revealed by the biblical description of the "body of Christ." This image is used 16 times in the New Testament as a metaphor for the church.[36] In Colossians it is taught that Jesus is "the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). Just as a body is controlled by a brain, so Jesus is seen as having an "organic relationship over the church in which he exercised the control over his people."[37] Thus, the church is then Christ's body on earth, subjected to do his will.[38] Paul teaches in Ephesians: "And he put all things 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" (Eph 1:22-23).

As his body, the church continues to be the powerful presence of Christ Jesus in and to the world.[39] In a spiritual sense, we are Christ's loving, serving presence on earth. Richardson points out that "the church is thus the means of Christ's work in the world; it is his hands and feet, his mouth and voice. As in his incarnate life, Christ had to have a body to proclaim his gospel and to do his work, so in his resurrection in this age he still needs a body to be the instrument of his gospel and of his work in the world."[40]

This truth implies that the church must be filled with the Spirit of Christ and allow him to work through them. What we do is more about what Jesus does through us than what we do for him. If the body is not fulfilling the missionary mandates of Christ

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[36]Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 290.

[37]Peter T. O'Brian, *Colossians*, *Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 49.

[38]Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians*, *Colossians*, *Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 221.

[39]Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 80.

[40]Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology o f the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1958), 254, 255.

(Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:21-23, Acts 1:8), it is not in proper subordination to Christ the head.

Just as Jesus was God incarnated in human flesh, the church also follows Jesus' model as it exists in the world as his body to reach the world with the gospel.[41] Ed Stetzer refers to this principle as the "incarnational" nature of the church. As Christ was God incarnated, so the church is to be the incarnation of Christ's continued mission in the world. Stetzer explains that, "Incarnational describes what's actually happening. Just as Christ came to live among us, we dwell with the people around us. In many ways, we're like them. But we're changed, transformed; and because of that, we seek to change and transform."[42]

As church members understand that they are the hands and feet of Christ in this world, they will seek the Holy Spirit's direction and empowering to take the gospel with them in their day-to-day lives. Then we will see our communities impacted for Christ in ways that many of us have never seen. As Jesus was the fullness of God incarnated and embodied in a human being, the missional church follows Jesus' model, learning from him how to embody the fullness of Christ carrying on his mission in the world.

**The Mission of the Pastor**

If Christians are going to understand the mission that they can and should have in the world, it is of the utmost importance that the church's pastors understand the biblical nature of the church and accept their role as taught in Scriptures. Pastors are to be teachers, theologians, counselors, encouragers, prophets, evangelists, and many other roles.

One of the most important aspects of the pastoral role is that of teacher. In the qualifications for pastors, it is clear that they must have an ability to teach (1 Tim 3:2).

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[41]Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism*, 31-32.

[42]Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 2.

Paul noted that elders labored in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 2:7). Pastors are the primary teachers of the gospel, and this function includes teaching the church to understand and accept the mission of making the gospel known to the world. Pastors should approach their ministry in and through the church with a gospel-mission paradigm. The pastor must be the "mission guide" of the church.

One of the quintessential passages that describe the role of pastors is found in the book of Ephesians:

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

The first truth observed in this passage is that the Lord "gave" these leaders to the church. This passage does not say that the saints were given to the leaders. Often pastors make the mistake of thinking that the Lord has "given" them a church or the Lord has "given" them a ministry. The Lord certainly has called us to serve and to lead. Pastors are called to a ministry. But we are supposed to be gifts to the saints, as the text points out, as equippers and edifiers. Pastors have an important responsibility to edify and equip God's people and help them be who God has called them to be and to do what God has called them to do.

Two phrases are used in this passage to describe the role of these leaders in the life of the church. The leaders responsibilities are *to equip the saints* and *building up the body of Christ*. The word that is translated "equipping" is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Francis Foulkes asserts that "it may be used, however, of 'perfecting' what is lacking in the faith of Christians . . . 'the bringing of the saints to a condition of fitness for the discharge of their functions in the Body.'"[43] "Building up" is the word *oikodome*.[44]

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[43]Francis Faulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 128.

[44]Ibid., 128.

The New King James translates this as "edifying." The church's leaders are to build, strengthen, and edify the body. These two phrases describe a process going on in the church where leaders are perfecting and building disciples as the disciples serve and engage in their ministry. As this process occurs, the church grows in maturity and fullness in Christ.

A major responsibility of pastors is to equip and train Christ's people to fulfill their ministry and mission in the world. Jesus modeled for us this kind of equipping ministry. He became a servant-leader and equipped and edified His disciples until the day He released them to carry on His mission. And even after that point, the Holy Spirit was given to continue to empower and enable the church to fulfill its mission in the world (Acts 1:8). Pastors are instructed to have this same kind of equipping ministry in the church. Pastoral leadership in the church is about empowering others and serving others.

## The Mission of Small Groups

In the Old and New Testaments are examples of how small groups are used to meet the needs of larger bodies of people. One leader or even a group of leaders will not be able to foster the kind of growth and personal attention that each person in the community needs. It is through small groups that individuals can be held accountable to grow in their understanding of what God's mission is for them.

### Small Groups Used by Moses

One example of the use of small groups in the Old Testament is found in Exodus 18. Moses had led the throng of people out of Egypt and into the desert. On the way to the Promised Land, they stopped to camp where Moses' in-laws were residing. When Jethro, the older, wiser father-in-law observed the leadership of Moses, he saw something that compelled him to give counsel concerning the administration of such a vast number of people.

Moses alone sat all day to consider the needs of the people. When Jethro saw

this pattern he came to Moses and pointedly asked, "Why are you doing this all alone?"[45] In this passage Jethro gave clear instructions concerning the need to divide the great masses of people into more manageable sub-groups.

> When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?' And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statures of God and his laws.' Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.' (Exod 18:14-23)

From this passage, we learn that Moses was attempting to do most of the work by himself. Moses was exhausted with the task of attempting to meet everybody's needs, and the people were burdened because their needs were going unmet. It was simply impossible for Moses to instruct, hand down judgments, and give counsel to everybody. Moses' own passion for his mission motivated him to spend much time and careful thought on every decision, including the time involved in praying and going before the Lord for direction.[46] He presumably treated no case too lightly and attempted to do the work himself. Despite his best intentions, the work was way too much for one man to handle.

In order to care properly for the needs of each person in any community, it is necessary for there to be an organizational structure that makes it possible. Jethro informed Moses that there was a better way to lead this massive group of people. Breaking

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[45]Noel D. Osborn, *A Handbook on Exodus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 438.

[46]Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 417.

the community into small groups was a better way to meet the needs of the people. Able, godly men were to be appointed, and Moses was then to become a leader of leaders. In order for any body to grow larger and at the same time continue to have a ministry that focuses on the individual, a multiplication of leaders is needed.[47] The whole must be broken down into parts, and each part must have a person who is responsible for its well-being.

Jethro's advice was basically to break down the mass of people into smaller groups so that each person would be cared for by somebody. Moses was to maintain the important role of being an intercessor before God, and he also was to continue to be the chief teacher of God's laws and statutes. Moses gave vision and direction to the entire community as he would "warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do" (Exod 18:20).

If a local church is going to embrace its gospel-mission fully, the pastor has to be the one to show the congregation "the way" and "the work." But the pastor will not be able to lead every individual personally in this endeavor. Small groups are the best way to give individual instruction, guidance, and care to every member of the church.

**Small Groups Used by Jesus**

Since the gospel-mission did not originate with the church but with Christ who is the head of the church, the wise course of action is to examine and learn from the methods employed by our Lord. We can learn from Christ Jesus how best to go about fulfilling the gospel-mission and put into practice the methods and strategies He employed.

We know that Jesus "made disciples." He then gave those disciples the command to "make disciples." In light of these facts, the obvious question for us should be, "how did Jesus make disciples?" The answers to this question should become the

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[47]John Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 251.

primary authority for the formulation of our discipling strategy.

A key element of the Lord's ministry is the strategy employed in which He took a smaller group of men and poured His life into them. The discipling ministry of Jesus occurred as He called twelve men out of a larger body of disciples to specifically be with Him and to learn intimately from Him (Mark 3:7-19).

The ministry strategy of pastors today should be built upon the methods employed by Jesus. In the gospel of John, we see that Jesus referred to Himself as a *poimen*, which is translated "shepherd."[48] Jesus shepherded His followers and transformed them into reproducible disciples:

> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So their will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:11-16)

This truth should help form the strategy that is employed in fulfilling the ministry as pastors. Peter builds upon this truth by instructing the elders in the church to "shepherd" the flock in view of their accountability to Jesus the "chief shepherd" (1 Pet 5:1-4). Because Jesus is the chief shepherd, it is wise to learn from Him how to carry out and fulfill the gospel-mission.

A single person can have only a limited impact. The Lord's plan to transform the world was to equip a group of people who in turn would reach others, who in turn would yet again reach others. Jesus poured His life into a few men who would later be given the mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.[49] Christ Jesus had a preaching, teaching, and serving ministry to the masses, but His strategy to reach the world was found in his training of disciples in a small group. After Jesus spent a night in

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[48]Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, s.v., "shepherd."

[49]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 24.

prayer, He specifically chose twelve men out of His band of followers to "be with him" (Mark 3:14-15, Luke 6:12-16).

Jesus used this small group relationship to instill within the heart of these men a clear sense of purpose and direction. Jesus' earthly ministry ended and started with a mission statement. Early in his ministry it was clearly established that he came to preach the gospel, heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind, and to proclaim a call for reconciliation with God (Luke 4:18-19). Right before His ascension, He issued His "great commission" to the disciples to go make disciples of the world (Matt 28:18-20). In between these great proclamations of mission, Jesus trained His small group of future apostles. The Lord conducted a type of supervised ministry with these men, sending them out to do what they had seen Jesus doing (Mark 3:14-15, 6:7).

Another important aspect of the small group as employed by Jesus is the function of teaching. Jesus is the master teacher, and He spent much of His time building, mentoring, encouraging, and rebuking these men. The gospels give us a look into Jesus as the teacher. Many churches employ a discipleship process that is institutional and classroom oriented. But Jesus demonstrates for us that learning is affective, not just intellectual, social and not just individual, informal and not just formal. In fact, most of the teaching of Christ was according to a peripatetic (while walking or traveling) model. He taught informally in the context of a small group fellowship of twelve men. This type of teaching is that which is designed to challenge the mind but also win the heart. These men grew in their knowledge of the Lord and their passion to follow Him.

The New Testament pattern is clear: Jesus called people to follow Him and then trained them and commanded them to go and make more followers. The gospel-mission is to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19), and the way Christ made disciples was through pouring His life into the lives of a small group of people.

**The Purpose of Small Groups**

When Jesus gave His final command or commission to the church, He made it clear that the mission was to "make disciples" (Matt 28:19). The word disciple (*mathetes*) literally means one who is a learner. W. E. Vine notes that "a disciple was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher."[50]

The church was not commissioned to make believers, converts, or mere church members. We are instructed to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the New Testament word that is predominantly used to identify those who are saved is "disciple." The word "disciple" or "disciples" is used 274 times in the New Testament.[51] The word "Christian" or "Christians" is used only 3 times, (Acts 11:26; 26:28, 1 Pet 4:16). And very tellingly, the word "believer" is not used at all, and "believers" is found only 2 times (Acts 5:24, 1 Tim 4:12).[52] Being a Christian is more than just believing the facts concerning Christ's death and resurrection. Being a Christian is to give oneself to a life-long pursuit of following Jesus as his disciple.

## Conclusion

The Bible is the narrative description of God's mission in this world. The mission of God is seen in the pages of Genesis. God's plan was to bless the nations through the formation of a chosen people. The mission of God is seen in the worship of His people. All nations will come and glorify the one true God. The mission of God is seen in the messages of the prophets. God's people are to be the vehicle by which the Lord brings forth a Messiah that will be a blessing to the families of all nations. The mission of God is ultimately manifested in His own incarnational undertaking of

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[50]W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: Mac Donald), 318.

[51]Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, s.v., "disciple," "disciples."

[52]Ibid., s.v., "believer," "believers."

redemption through the person Jesus Christ. And finally, the mission of God is continued in the life of His redeemed people. As Christ's *ekklesia* responds in obedience to the missional mandates of its Lord, they participate in God's mission.

# CHAPTER 3

# A MISSIONAL CHURCH

My desire is to see The Rock Church of St. Louis become a fellowship of disciples that have fully embraced the mission given to us by our Lord to reach our community with His gospel. The strategy for this ministry project was to use the small groups of our church to foster and facilitate a spirit of being "on mission" that will permeate the life our church. The biblical record is consistent and clear in recording the fact that Christ Jesus taught His followers that they also were to be a missionary people.[1]

Most Christians need to understand better the mission of God, the mission of Christ, and the subsequent mission of the church. As J. D. Payne aptly stated, "Many North Americans fail to understand the ontology (nature) and praxis (function) of the Church."[2] The pastors and church staff are not the only ones who are called to be on mission for Christ. In order for a church to have its greatest impact for the cause of Christ, it must recapture the vision of being a community of people who are joining the mission of Christ to redeem a lost people for Himself.

Evangelism must become more than just a ministry of the church. Evangelism must become more than just an activity of certain trained or gifted people in the church and be recognized as the ongoing mission that every Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit to do (Acts 1:8). This way of thinking moves the church toward becoming a missional community.

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[1]Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 29.

[2]J. D. Payne, "The Great Commission and Church Planting," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (Louisville: Pinnacle, 2005), 109.

The understanding that the church is called to be "missional" is a concept that is garnering much attention in America. Jim Thomas has observed that,

> On the one hand, *missional* hints at moving from church as a 'club' for Christians, to church as Christ's body, sent by God to reconcile the world to Himself. On the other hand, *missional* means moving from missions as an activity in which a few Christians are sent to foreign countries to convert unbelievers, to *mission* as God's most basic purpose, intended for all believers.[3]

The point is that there is a difference between being "mission-minded" and being "on mission." Too often, mission is considered to be an activity that is conducted only on foreign soil. Each church must embrace the truth that they are to be a missionary entity right in the middle of their lost and dying world.

## A Missional Paradigm

The usage of the term "missional church" is increasingly showing up in various books, articles, and journals. Being a "Purpose Driven Church" was the rage of the late 1990s and has continued to have a powerful influence to this day.[4] But now there is a growing interest in, and identification with, being "missional." Many church planters are identifying themselves as missional. Conduct a web search on the term "missional," and one will discover a growing presence of missional ministries and church planting networks (see appendix 1). Where did this missional movement begin?

Lesslie Newbigin was one of the early influencers of this growing missional movement. Newbigin was a British missionary who went to India around 1950. There Newbigin worked in a situation where the church was a missionary entity in a very non-Christian culture. When Newbigin returned to England thirty years later, he discovered that the West could no longer be considered a Christian culture. He also observed that the church had not adapted to a non-Christian society. Newbigin felt that Western

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[3]Jim Thomas, *The Missional Church* [on-line]; accessed 11 February 2008; available from http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=993; Internet.

[4]Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

churches did not fully embrace their mission in the lost culture.[5]

Newbigin observed that many churches did not have a strategic plan for evangelism. Of churches that did, evangelism existed only as a program among other programs. Newbigin asserted that the church in the West needed to begin to think like a missionary if it were going to reach people effectively with the gospel.[6] The church needed to develop a "missiology of western culture." The time had certainly come for the church in the West to become "missional."[7]

Newbigin stressed, "The task of ministry is to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the personal lives of all its people, for God's rule."[8] He goes on to explain, "It means equipping all the members of the congregation to understand and fulfill their several roles in this mission through faithfulness in their daily work."[9] Many churches have adopted the often heard "every member is a minister" principle. Newbigin essentially argued that "every member is a missionary." Newbigin explained,

> This emerging characteristic of mission drives the Church toward becoming a dynamic, growing, developing, reality. The same commands, experiences, images, and hope which empowered the disciples on the Day of Pentecost still goad the church to emerge to become what Christ has been creating.[10]

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[5]Tim Keller, "The Missional Church" [on-line]; accessed 3 March 2008; available from http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/missional.pdf, 1; Internet.

[6]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 1-2, 10.

[7]Ibid., 1.

[8]Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 238.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship, 1954), 43.

**Why Be Missional?**

Various studies reveal that America is increasingly becoming an unchurched mission field. The percentage of people who identified themselves as Christians dropped 9 percent from 1990 to 2001.[11] Furthermore, George Barna has reported that, "Since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15 percent. During that same period, the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million—a 92 percent increase."[12] If the mission of the church is to reach this country for Jesus, the statistics reveal we are losing ground.

The Rock Church of St. Louis is a fellowship of disciples that meet to worship in the heart of St. Louis. In the fall of 2007, we launched a second site in the inner city. Although there is still a part of America that is rural, conservative, and often Christian, these characteristics do not apply to St. Louis, as well as many other metropolitan cities in our country. Michael Wolff described the dichotomy that exists in America, with the first characteristics describing much of St. Louis:

> In other words, we are at the fundamental schism in American cultural, political, and economic life. There's the quicker-growing, economically vibrant but also more fractious and more difficult to manage, morally relativist, urban-oriented, culturally adventuresome, sexually polymorphous, and ethnically diverse nation. And there's the small town, nuclear-family, religiously-oriented, white-centric other America, which makes up for its diminishing cultural and economic force with its predictability and stability. This is not by any means a new schism. There have always been two countries.[13]

Christians are finding themselves increasingly in a culture that is not Christian, and in some places even anti-Christian. Furthermore, people from all over the world are coming to make America their home. Missions no longer can be seen as something that

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[11]Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 8.

[12]George Barna, "Number of Unchurched Adults Has Nearly Doubled Since 1991" [on-line]; accessed 27 February 2008; available from http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateBarriw&aBarnaUpdateID=163; Internet.

[13]Michael Wolff, "The Party Line," *New York Magazine*, 26 February 2001, 19.

happens in another country. In St. Louis, for example, there are immigrants from fifty-four different countries.[14] We have 50,000 Bosnians living in a virtual "little Bosnia" in south St. Louis.[15] This new phenomenon has given rise to the use of the word "glocal" in describing the melding of a local and global ministry.[16] A great need exists to reexamine how we do church and to begin to think strategically about our mission in this new glocal situation.

The condition of the typical church has much to do with the fact that Christianity is waning in influence in America. Sadly, it is commonly reported that 80 percent of churches or either plateaued or declining.[17] William Easum makes the startling prediction that three out of four established churches with attendance of 80 to 200 will close in the next thirty years unless they transition into doing church differently.[18] These grim observations coincide with studies that reveal that a great majority of Americans simply do not go to church. *Outreach Magazine* compiled statistical information from various church researchers and pollsters and reported what they saw as "7 Startling Facts" concerning the church.[19] They are:

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[14]The World in St. Louis: A Cross-cultural Resource Guide [on-line]; accessed 21 February 2008; available from http://www.stlmhb.com/Documents/WorldInStLouis.pdf; Internet.

[15]Nancy Larson, "Local Bosnians Still Struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress More Than a Decade after Fleeing Their Home" [on-line]; accessed 4 March 2008; http://www.stlbeacon.org/health/local_bosnians_still_struggle_with_post-traumatic_stress; Internet.

[16]Bob Roberts Jr., *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

[17]Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 17.

[18]William M. Easum, "Warning! Turning a Church Around is a Dangerous Calling," *Net Results*, September 1999, 21.

[19]Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry, "Special Report: The American Church in Crisis," *Outreach Magazine*, May/June 2006; also available [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2008; available from http://www.outreachmagazine.com/library/features/06mayjuneftramericanchurchincrisis.asp; Internet.

1. Less than 20 percent of Americans regularly attend church—half of what the pollsters report.
2. American church attendance is steadily declining.
3. Only one state is outpacing its population growth (meaning growth in church attendance in relation to population growth).
4. Mid-sized churches are shrinking; the smallest and largest churches are growing.
5. Established churches—40 to 190 years old—are, on average, declining.
6. The increase in churches is only one fourth of what is needed to keep up with population growth.
7. In 2050, the percentage of the U.S. population attending church will be almost half of what it was in 1990.

The missional movement is in part a response to these daunting statistics. The missional movement recognizes that in spite of the fact that America has more mega-churches than ever, we are still losing ground in reaching people for Jesus. Eddie Gibbs notes that,

> The majority of church leaders throughout the Western world find themselves ministering in a rapidly changing cultural context that is both post-Christian and pluralistic. Consequently they are in as much need of missionary training to venture across the street as to venture overseas.[20]

There is a great need for a missional ecclesiology that will educate and equip the church concerning its primary purpose to reach America with the gospel.[21] As Mark Mittelberg noted, evangelism is one of the highest values in the church but possibly one of the least practiced.[22] The Rock Church needs to prioritize the mission Christ assigned to His people to proclaim the gospel to the world. In light of statistics that reveal the spiritual condition of our nation and our churches, it is appropriate for our church to begin to consider itself as a missionary entity and function accordingly.

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[20]Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 27.

[21]Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 27.

[22]Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 20.

If the church is going to recognize that they are to live as a sent people, it will be its leaders that help them to capture this vision and equip them for this endeavor. The church will always be sending others into the uttermost parts of the world, but it must also live as a sent people to the neighborhoods in which it lives. To think of the church simply as an established entity that is the sender of others robs the church of the gospel-mission imperative to join God in His mission to the people who live and work in our neighborhoods. Newbigin aptly explained, "More and more Christians of the old churches have come to recognize that a church that is not 'the church on mission' is no church at all."[23] Church leaders must begin to serve as the mission guides for the church. Pastors must come to see their churches as a fellowship of missionaries who need training, equipping, motivation, and instruction in how to take the gospel to their world.

**What Does it Mean to be Missional?**

The term "missional" is an adjective that describes the fact that a church totally aligns itself with the *missio Dei* (the mission of God). Christ Jesus prayed to the Father, "As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). This truth reveals that the church is to be missional, on mission, acting as "sent ones" in this world. The church is formed to continue the mission that began in the heart of the Father, was seen in the life of the Son, and is to continue in the Spirit-empowered endeavors of the church. My definition of a missional church is this: "A missional church is rooted in the understanding that it is an assembly of Christ-followers who are loved by God the Father, redeemed and sent by God the Son, and regenerated and empowered by God the Holy Spirit to continue the *missio Dei* on Earth, for the glory of God."

The basic premise of the missional church is that "missions" is not an organization or program of a church. The mission of God constitutes the very essence or

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[23]Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 2.

nature of the church.[24]

The missional church's methods and ministries are formed and implemented in keeping with a missiological ecclesiology. The missional church sees itself as being a body of people who are joined together for the purpose of being a part of the glorious *missio Dei.* This missional ecclesiology is rooted in an understanding that God is a missionary God. Therefore, its starting point is the missional nature of the Trinity (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). The missional church understands that they are God's sent people. As Orlando Costas states, "The Church is the agent of God's mission. The church is used by the Spirit as an instrument of God's mission."[25] Costas goes on to describe aptly the missional understanding of the church:

> The church is basically a missionary community, i.e., her fundamental character can only be understood from the perspective of God's mission to the world. There is an intrinsic, inseparable relation between the church as such and her calling. In other words, the church is a miraculous redemptive community. Not only is she the product of God's redemptive action in the world, but from the beginning she has been called to be the Spirit's instrument in the activity out of which she herself was born. Her participation in God's mission involves the transmission of a message imbedded in her miraculous experiences.[26]

Some may think that the entire missional conversation is much to do about nothing. One might wonder if the difference between being missional and being evangelistic is just a matter of semantics. The biggest difference of a missional church is seen in the ongoing work of leaders of the missional church continuously keeping the entire church rooted to its corporate purpose to take the gospel to the world. The missional church literally sees itself as a missionary organization.

Furthermore, this missional paradigm helps Christians avoid fallacies concerning the nature of the church, that cause Christians to lose sight of their personal

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[24]Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 31.

[25]Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1974), 7.

[26]Ibid., 8.

responsibility to share the gospel with the world. Jason Zahariades describes some of these common inaccuracies:

> Church as a place: For many people, church is a place you go. It is a facility, a campus or a building. The common phrase, "I'm going to church" summarizes this view. When a person is at the building or facility, they are at church. The implication is that when they are not at the building, they are not at church.
>
> Church as an event or spiritual activities: For others, church is something that happens. Church is defined by worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings or other ministries. Again the implication is that when one is not engaged in one of these events or activities, they are no longer doing or having church.
>
> Church as associated with a person: For others, church is an organization associated with a pastor or Christian leader. For example, people often say things like, "I go to Chuck Smith's church" or "I attend Jack Hayford's church."
>
> Church as offering programs or services: For others, church is determined by what the organization offers to meet needs such as youth programs, music programs, marriage groups, fellowship, discipleship, mission opportunities, etc.[27]

In a missional fellowship, the church is understood to be God's sent missionary people. As Zahariades explains, "That means when everything is stripped away—the building, the events, the activities, the leaders, and other identifying markers for the church—the people are the church and church is the people."[28] For a missional community, evangelism is part of the lifestyle of every Christ-follower. Evangelism and missions are no longer seen as a program or one purpose among others. The mission of God becomes the overarching identity of the body. The church is not the sender but the one that is being sent.[29]

In many cases, children's ministries, youth groups, Sunday schools, and small groups may grow, but they do not embody any sense of "mission" as a reason for their existence. Missions and evangelism become the function of another arm of the church.

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[27]Jason Zahariades, "What is a Missional Community" [on-line]; accessed 17 February 2008; available from http://www.theofframp.org/missional_comm.html; Internet.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission*, 14.

In this kind of church culture, the church often becomes the place that Christianity happens. Programs and ministries are formed to attract members and attendees. Intentional evangelistic engagement with the lost world outside of the church facility or the parameters of a church ministry is limited.

Often, there may be no plan or strategy to take the gospel into the culture. Most of the emphasis is instead placed on ministering to, discipling, and helping Christians. In this type of church, which is often driven by Christian consumerism, many lose sight of the fact that they are sent to be on mission each day and that the Holy Spirit wants to empower them to be missionaries to their city.[30]

In his book *The Present Future*, Reggie McNeal reveals different ways leaders think about the church. McNeal describes different paradigms that pastors can have that cause the church to turn much of its resources and focus inward. For example, he laments the use of the "every member a minister" idea. McNeal explains, "Every time I see the slogan 'every member a minister' I cringe. It usually means that there has been a lot of effort put into getting church members to get church work done."[31] He also describes why we should not be asking, "How do we grow this church?" but rather, "How do we transform our community?"[32] Being missional is first a shift in thinking about the nature of the church. Once a missional understanding is adopted, the way we do church begins to change. A missional church stresses community transformation over growing the church, turning members into missionaries over turning members into ministers, and recovering Christian mission over doing church better.[33]

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[30]Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 135.

[31]Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 45.

[32]Ibid., 24-27.

[33]Ibid., 48.

Being "missional" is more than just another movement; it is a return to a biblical understanding of who the *ekklesia* of Christ is and what it is called to be and do. At its core, missional is a shift in thinking that fosters a change in the way the church develops and implements ministries. Making this shift can be difficult for many who are accustomed to a church that is driven by a consumer mentality, i.e., we exist to get as many people in attendance as we can and meet whatever felt needs they have. This kind of church says that its mission is to reach the world, but most of its financial, human, and time resources are used to build, help, edify, and meet the needs of members.

The missional church fosters an understanding that each member of the church is on mission in the world and a missionary in this culture. That is what Jesus had in mind when he commanded His followers to go make disciples. In a missional church, the purpose of our creation is understood to be to glorify God, but the purpose of our existence in the world is our participation in the *missio Dei.* Christ did not die on the cross to prosper us and make us healthy and wealthy and to aid us in self-actualization or self-fulfillment. Christ died so that we could be redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, and sent to tell others the good news (Acts 1:8, Heb. 10:10, 1 Pet. 2:9).

In many churches, training in evangelism occurs in class 401 at the end of a discipling plan.[34] When a person joins a missional church, he is told from day one that the church exists as a missional community. He is invited to join the church in reaching their city for Christ Jesus the Lord. The missional church makes evangelism and participation in the shared missionary purpose of the church a foundational understanding of all members immediately.

## Characteristics of a Missional Church

We have observed that a missional church is rooted in the understanding that it is an assembly of Christ-followers who are loved by God the Father, redeemed and sent

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[34]See, for example, Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church,* 145.

by God the Son, and regenerated and empowered by God the Holy Spirit to continue the *missio Dei* on Earth, for the glory of God. Now we will examine foundational characteristics of a missional church. But first we should address some misleading notions of some missional leaders and writers.

First, in reading books, websites, journals, and sermons concerning what it means to be missional, one discovers a recurring tendency to claim certain characteristics as being "missional" when in fact these same characteristics are true of any healthy, evangelical church. On the other hand, these writers will also reject certain characteristics and portray them to be not "missional" and even contrary to what it means to be missional. Often the implication is that these rejected characteristics are present in non-missional churches. Yet, the fact is that any healthy, evangelical church would also disdain many of these same attributes. For example, on a web site, "Friend of Missional," that serves as a compilation of missional articles and also as a doorway to the online missional world, these examples were given to describe what a missional church is and is not.[35]

> A missional church is evangelistic and faithfully proclaims the gospel through word *and* deed. Words alone are not sufficient; how the gospel is embodied in our community and service is as important as what we say. A missional church seeks to put the good of their neighbor over their own. A missional church will give integrity, morality, good character and conduct, compassion, love and a resurrection life filled with hope preeminence to give credence to their reasoned verbal witness. A missional church practices hospitality by welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community. A missional church will see themselves as representatives of Jesus and will do nothing to dishonor his name. A missional church will be desperately dependent on prayer. A missional church will feed deeply on the scriptures throughout the week. A missional church will help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts and will rely on gifted people for ministry instead of talented people. A missional church is a healing community where people carry each other's burdens and help restore gently.[36]

What a Missional Church is Not:

A missional church is not a dispenser of religious goods and services or a place

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[35]"Friend of Missional" [on-line]; accessed 3 February 2008; available from http://www.friendofmissional.org; Internet. These paragraphs are summaries of the list of descriptions on the webpage.

[36]Ibid.

> where people come for their weekly spiritual fix. A missional church is not a place where mature Christians come to be fed and have their needs met. A missional church is not a place where "professionals" are hired to do all the work of the church. A missional church is not a place where the "professionals" teach the children and youth about God to the exclusion of parental responsibility. A missional church is not about big programs and organizations to accomplish God's missionary purpose. This does not imply no program or organization, but that they will not drive mission. They will be used in support of people on mission.[37]

One can repeatedly hear missional leaders claim everything virtuous to themselves and their movement and on the other hand attempt to attach many negative attributes to the non-missional church. I cannot think of any church, missional or not, that wants to be a "mere dispenser of religious goods." Furthermore, most of the descriptions of a missional church in the above list are characteristics that all conservative, evangelical churches aspire to. At times, missional churches can thus come off as being "anti-church churches." This tendency is a negative trait seen within the missional movement that could jeopardize the broader church's receptivity to their insights.

To be sure, there is a tremendous amount of misunderstanding concerning what it means to be missional. This confusion is, as we have seen, in part due to missional leaders who blur the lines in attempting to characterize what it means to be missional. Yet, there are some characteristics that are important to the missional movement.

**A Missional Church Is Incarnational**

The theological support for this distinctive has been fully covered in the previous chapter. The church is the extension of the *missio Dei*. As Jesus was God in flesh, the church is to be the presence of Christ Jesus on earth (John 1:1-14, 20:21). The mission of Jesus is now the mission of the church. Peter Wagner points out, "The mission of the church is so to incarnate itself in the world that the gospel of Christ is effectively communicated by word and deed."[38]

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[37]Ibid.

[38]C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 40.

The missional church understands that Christ has sent us, his people, to our culture to invite people to enter the kingdom of God. Many of us, though, have experienced the reality that most of the ministry of our church occurs inside the church building. Being incarnational means that the true work and ministry of the church are seen as being outside of a facility. Stetzer explains that, "A church that is incarnational is interested more in the harvest than in the barn. We have made sure the barn is clean, made sure it is attractive, made sure it is well organized."[39] The missional church is not concerned so much in getting people in the "barn" as it is in sending the "harvesters" into the field (John 4:34-38).

All Christians are salt and light where they live, work, and play (Matt 5:13). In the missional church, they are led to be on mission in their world. In other words, the church as the body of Christ must "embody," "enflesh," "incarnate" the good news of God's redemptive mission in their day-to-day lives. The Holy Spirit endues the church with the power to be the body of Christ in the world, and the church then "incarnates" or "enfleshes" the continuing work of God on earth.[40]

Being incarnational means that we no longer see the church service as the primary connecting point with those outside the church. Connecting with those outside happens within the culture as Christians act as missionaries in physically penetrating the world with their Christ-like presence. We must live, work, play, and minister redemptively in our culture.[41] Unfortunately, as Donald Tingle noted, "The well-intentioned tendency of Christians in America to withdraw from culture has only weakened our effectiveness in

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[39]Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 67.

[40]Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church,* 32.

[41]The missional church sees the task of evangelism as being fulfilled in the day-to-day lives of Christians. Missional churches typically are intentional about leading their people to immerse themselves in the culture for the purpose of building relationships with lost people so they might help them take steps toward a relationship with God.

communicating Jesus to the people we want to reach out to."[42]

The Lord Jesus serves as the perfect example of what an incarnational ministry can look like. Jesus came as God in flesh to be with people (John 1:1, 10-11). He told his disciples that his mission was to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus did not camp in the temple in Jerusalem and build a ministry around a physical location. Christ Jesus came to love the masses. Jesus went to the lost and served them. An incarnational ministry means that the church goes to people the way Jesus did**.** If Jesus came in our day, he would probably be just as misunderstood by the established church as he was by the Jewish leaders in his day (Matt 11:19, Luke 7:33-50).

The gospels tell us that Christ Jesus was a "friend of sinners" (Matt 11:19). He associated with tax collectors, prostitutes, the diseased, and the down and outers of society. The religious leaders despised him for it and called him a glutton and a drunkard because he attended the parties of the sinners (Luke 7:33-35). Socializing with these kinds of people ruined Christ's testimony before the religious leaders of His day. The missional church is also often misunderstood and maligned as it attempts to reach out to people in the same manner of our Lord.

At the heart of being incarnational is simply loving people like Jesus loved people, loving them enough to go to them. The missional church understands that Christians are to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus first came to physically dwell with mankind and to reach people with the Father's love. Jesus did not retreat from culture, but penetrated it. He was among the people, going to their parties, and reaching out to them in love. Christ socialized with people with whom the religious leaders of His day would have nothing to do.

Christians should be spiritually distinct from the world, but we are not called to

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[42]Donald S. Tingle, "No Distinction between Us and Them," in *The Gospel Unhindered*, ed. Doug Priest, Jr. (Pasadena: William Carey, 1994), 101.

be socially segregated from it (1 Cor 5:9-11). God wants us to be a living Christ-like influence in this world. Jesus drew close to people, and the missional church seeks to draw close to those who do not know Him. This endeavor is what it means to be incarnational—in the world but not of the world (John 17:16-18). The world is not something that the missional church seeks to be isolated from or to shun. The world is a place the church engages and penetrates as a missionary body spreading the love of Jesus.

The truth of this calling and manner of living is revealed in the intercessory prayer of the Lord on behalf of His followers:

> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (John 17:15-18)

**A Missional Church Is Contextual**

Churches can be biblically faithful to God's mission and at the same time work to relate to people in culture. The desire and effort to become relevant is not a compromise of the gospel. The mission of Jesus must be prioritized over our methods. Methods are formulated to fulfill the mission of reaching people for Jesus. Contextualization is basically formulating methods and strategies that best help the church fulfill the mission of Christ in its cultural context.

The missional church, as Tingle observes, attempts "to remove the 'extra' stumbling blocks of culture without removing the essential stumbling block of the cross. (1 Cor 1:23). Unfortunately, the stumbling block of the cross has too often been replaced by the stumbling block of the church."[43] Leonard Sweet observes, "The church's leaders have Alzheimer's disease. We still love them. We remember and pass on their stories. But they're living in another world. They're totally clueless about the world that is

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[43]Ibid., 101.

actually out there."[44] Sadly, many churches exist in their own world, oblivious to the fact that they are no longer relevant because they have ceased to contextualize their ministry to the changing world around them. They have become stuck in a cultural rut and either cannot or will not get out.

Being missional is about thinking and acting like a missionary in our culture. Being missional means thinking missiologically. Missionaries know that "they must have a profound understanding of their host culture before planning a strategy to reach the unique people group that exists in that cultural context."[45] Churches will, and should, look different in each cultural context. The gospel is unchanging, but the church must contextualize the gospel to the culture which we are trying to reach. The fact is that, "God's truth is not limited to any one culture. The gospel is for all humanity, but it is always received within a specific cultural context. This context includes a people's language, customs, heritage, worldview, religion, and all other things we find in a culture."[46]

For example, an urban church will look different from those in the country. Instead of relying on one model or one way of doing church, it is necessary to present the gospel to the community through the church in ways adapted for that particular culture. The church should contextualize its methods, strategically adapting its strategy in order to reach as many people with the gospel as possible. Paul demonstrated contextualization in his own ministry:

> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside

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[44]Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 29.

[45]Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 2.

[46]Tingle, "The Gospel Unhindered," 100.

> the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23)

If the church wants to be relevant and successful in its mission, it must understand, communicate, and demonstrate the gospel in a way that is contextual to its community. "For the sake of the gospel" (1 Cor 9:32), the church must have the heart of Paul to seek to be a servant of all people in order to reach them. The effective missionary studies and speaks the language of the audience's culture in order to communicate the gospel better.

There is no culture-free expression of the gospel. The church's message, the gospel, is inevitably communicated in linguistic and cultural forms particular to the church's own place, time, traditions, ethnicity, and many other factors.[47] Today, some are saying that Christians are as foreign in the post-modern West as they are in unevangelized lands overseas.[48] Considering the fact that America can no longer be considered a Christian nation, pastors should be equally skilled in exegeting both Scripture and the culture in order to understand best how to communicate the timeless truth in relevant and meaningful ways.[49] If we are going to reach people with the gospel, we must become aware of our cultural differences and plan accordingly.

Some may be tempted to think that culture and the need to contextualize are unimportant, but to think this way is being blinded to the history of the expansion of the church. For 2000 years, missionaries have sought to take the message across cultures. For 2000 years the gospel has remained unchanged, but the church has undergone

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[47]Darrell Gruder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 87.

[48]Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church That's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 34.

[49]Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 32.

constant change. One reason strategies and models change is because the world is ever changing.

It is important to note that the missional church may look different in its style and methodology from one place to another. A culturally relevant church in one community looks different from a culturally relevant church in another community. Stetzer makes a poignant challenge to pastors to think contextually in their culture without seeking to mimic blindly the model used by another pastor in another setting:

> Too many leaders pastor their churches in their heads and not in their communities. But the truth is, if you can't pastor the people God has given you (not the ones He's given Andy Stanley or Erwin McManus), then you don't love them. John Knox said, 'Give me Scotland or I die.' He had a passion for the people of Scotland. We need to have the same passion for the people where we are, and to love them and their culture (though parts of every culture should make you uneasy and call for a biblical critique—see Acts 17). The reason we engage culture is not to be cool, trendy, contemporary, or cutting edge—words that have become idols to us—but so that those who live in culture can hear the message of Jesus. That message is more than just 'come to Christ,' it involves how we live and structure our lives, and it matters deeply. Our churches should share the gospel message wherever they are and whatever their cultural context.[50]

**A Missional Church Is Spirit-Driven**

At the heart of being missional is the understanding that the *ekklesia* has received from the Lord a mandate to be a sent people to carry the gospel of redemption to the world (Acts 1:8). The church is sent by Christ and is empowered and led by the Holy Spirit to carry out God's mission. In order to be successful in this mission, as Orlando Costas has noted,

> The church needs to develop a spirituality of mission, learning to discern, discover, participate, be patient, and be dependent on God's grace. . . . As God gives birth to the church as the Christian faith community, the church is the object of God's mission, it is also the subject of God's mission.[51]

With this truth in mind, the most important aspect of the church is not what we do for the Lord but what He by His Spirit is doing through us. As Newbigin explained, "The active

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[50]Ibid.
[51]Costas, *The Church and its Mission*, 8.

agent of mission is a power that rules, guides, and goes before the church: the free, sovereign, living power of the Spirit of God."[52]

A missional church comes together to worship God and to be realigned with God's missionary purpose. A missional church depends on the Holy Spirit to direct and define the ministries of the church. The community confesses its dependence upon the Holy Spirit as it seeks the Spirit's will and direction. To be truly missional is to follow the Spirit's direction in making the name of Christ known and exalted in the world.

It is beginning to redefine "success" in terms of faithfulness to the Holy Spirit's calling and sending (Acts 13:1-4). The Holy Spirit is the executor of the *missio Dei* in the world today.

> Thus, just as Jesus Christ is the center of God's redemptive mission to the world—since it is through him that God made possible the reconciliation of mankind—so the Spirit is the executor of God's mission. In other words, he is the force that extends redemption, which has its center in God, out into the world. The ultimate goal of the Spirit's ministry is to fulfill God's redemptive purpose in Christ, namely, the creation of a new humanity.[53]

The church is the agent of the Holy Spirit, the great executor of God's mission. The missional church, through communion with the Holy Spirit has the ability to find and fulfill God's unique will for their fellowship. As Costas poignantly points out,

> [The church is a] mission community of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the church for mission and discipleship. It is also the Holy Spirit who pushes and surprises the church in mission, such as happened to Peter in his encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10. The work of the Spirit, inside as well as outside of the church, requires serious and profound thought. The Spirit works as a missional bridge, guiding the community of faith in its discernment of its mission, discipleship, and witness to the broader community and world. The Holy Spirit pulls the Christian community into new and exciting missional opportunities and challenges. This is a new theological dimension in missiological circles. The contribution of the Pentecostal tradition has been and continues to be important in the development of a theology of the Holy Spirit in the context of mission. To be a community of mission in the Spirit allows the church to live on the frontier of being a sign and agent of the mission of the kingdom of God; it confirms that the church is

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[52] Newbigin, *The Open Secret,* 56.

[53] Ibid., 7.

an object and a subject of the mission of God.[54]

Churches must safeguard against a reliance on its structures, traditions, programs, and organizations instead of the power of the Spirit of God. The missional church seeks to follow the Holy Spirit wherever and in doing whatever he may so desire.[55] The *missio Dei* of God the Father, the Son, and now the Holy Spirit is lived out in the life of the church. As the church seeks to commune with the Holy Spirit and follow his direction, it is then able to become more then a religious entity; it becomes truly missional.

## Conclusion

Being missional is something that every church can and should strive to be. America is increasingly becoming more unchurched. Most churches are declining or dying. Many churches exist as testimonies to past glory days. Christians increasingly just merely "go to church" without an understanding that the Holy Spirit wants to work through them in impacting their world for Christ Jesus.

The missional movement is a return to the understanding that as Christ Jesus came to earth as a missionary, full of the power of the Holy Spirit, drawing near to people to serve them in love and compassion, so the church is also sent into the world. A missional church is a Spirit-empowered, sent people who penetrate the culture with their loving presence while communicating the gospel in relevant ways.

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[54]Ibid., 65.

[55]David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 37-38.

# CHAPTER 4

# DEVELOPING MISSIONAL SMALL GROUPS

"Vision is about what could and should be, but life is about right this minute," as Andy Stanley so poignantly teaches in his book *Making Vision Stick.*[1] Stanley goes on to instruct leaders about their relationship to vision, "When it comes to making your vision stick, here is the most important thing to remember: You are responsible. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that people understand and embrace the vision of the organization."[2]

The ultimate vision that I have for The Rock Church is that we develop and champion a missional vision. Thinking missionally will significantly alter how we think about the nature of the church. Thinking missionally will also alter how pastors think about our roles and responsibilities in the church. When all church leaders begin to think missionally, the culture of the church will change. That is exactly what I was aspiring to accomplish with this project: the transformation of our church culture. The ultimate goal was and is to lead The Rock Church to be a community on mission in this world.

To fulfill this vision, each member needs to be guided to understand and participate in God's mission in this world. This "leadership" is essentially a process of fulfilling the Lord's command to "make disciples" (Matt 28:19). As described in Chapter 2, the Lord's plan to reach the world was to make disciples through the relationship he formed with a small group of followers. At the Rock Church, all of our small groups are called LifeGroups. Therefore, the purpose of my project was to follow the model of

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[1]Andy Stanley, *Making Vision Stick* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 15.

[2]Ibid., 17.

Jesus and use the LifeGroups of The Rock Church to hold people accountable to developing and maintaining missional lifestyles.

### Step 1: Leading the Church to Discover the Mission

The project of developing missional LifeGroups began on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010, and concluded July 4, 2010. We promoted this season in our church by simply calling it *Missio Dei.* The promotion began weeks before Easter. We branded this theme by using a picture of a single, bloody, pierced hand with the words *Missio Dei* written underneath. We placed this image prominently on the first page of our website. We also created "Invite Cards" to be used to invite people to attend our Easter services. Our platform was decorated and designed with the *Missio Dei* theme in mind, and each week our screen showed PowerPoint slides designed for the promotion. In May, we also started the process of promoting and filling our LifeGroups for the new *Missio Dei* study.

The first phase of the project began with a four-week sermon series on the *Missio Dei* (appendix 2). I felt that a series about the mission of God would be appealing to both Christ-followers and the unchurched. For the first time in the history of The Rock Church, we had an attendance that exceeded 700. And I, for the first time during my ministry, missed preaching on Easter because I was as sick as I can ever remember being! Steve Wilson, our Associate Pastor, still reminds me that he preached at our highest attended service. The message was entitled "*Missio Dei:* Jesus Came for You!" I did recover and was able to preach the next three sermons of the *Missio Dei* series. The *Missio Dei* series served as the foundation for the rest of the project.

The second message was entitled "*Missio Dei:* The Heavenly Lifeguard." I used the story of the Lord's encounter with Zacchaeus to illustrate that Jesus befriended sinners for the purpose of creating saving relationships.

The next message was "*Missio Dei:* Me a Missionary?" This message revealed the truth that Christians have been charged to continue the Lord's redemptive

mission. The final message, "*Missio Dei:* Becoming a Fellowship on Mission," introduced the church to the concept that The Rock Church is a missional community.

The overarching purpose of this series (and the LifeGroup discussion guides) was to lead the church to discover, define, and implement the mission of God in the life of our community. Various messages in the series also served as launching points for the implementation of steps in the process to lead people towards missional lifestyles. The goals of the sermons and discussion guides were

1. To teach people about the missional nature of the triune God.
2. To help people understand the nature of Christ's mission of redemption and salvation.
3. To help people understand the nature and mission of the body of Christ, the church.
4. To lead people to follow the example set by Jesus to seek the salvation of the lost.
5. To present a mission statement that will clarify and communicate our mission.

Throughout the project, we used sermon-based curriculum for our LifeGroups (appendix 3). The studies were based on the previous weekend sermon. Most of our LifeGroups were built using that model. The LifeGroup is the place where people can discuss the sermon, typically a message on Christian living or biblical theology, and how the principles work out in real life. I prepared the LifeGroup discussion guides during the four weeks of the *Missio Dei* series. During the project, we had twenty-two LifeGroups averaging 263 in attendance each week. Thirteen of the 22 LifeGroups fully participated in the project, averaging 169 in attendance each week.

Along with the sermon series, another important undertaking in this beginning phase of the project was the presentation and adoption of a mission statement. One way that churches clarify and communicate their purpose and mission is to formulate and promote a mission statement. The Rock Church did not have a mission statement. One of the goals of this project was to lead The Rock Church to adopt a mission statement that reflects an understanding of our purpose.

A main function of leadership is to define and defend the mission of the

organization in which they lead. Christian leaders, though, really do not need to define the mission, because Jesus already outlined our mission when he gave his four missional mandates (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-49, John 20:19-21, Acts 1:8). So, one of the tasks of church leaders is to communicate and implement this mission in a clear, precise manner.

I decided to take time to study and pray with the Pastors Team about the exact wording of a statement to be presented to the church. The Pastors Team consists of those men who have been designated by The Rock Church to be a pastor of The Rock Church. At the time of the project, the Pastors Team consisted of three full-time pastors, one part-time church planter, and one lay pastor. Before the project began, the full-time pastors went on a three-day, two-night retreat to pray and plan for the ministry year. We also took time to discuss the formation of a church mission statement. At the time, we had been reading various books on small group ministry. That is how we came across a book that had a major impact in the formation of our mission statement. The book is *Creating Community* by Andy Stanley and Bill Willits.[3]

We did not implement the book's model for a small group ministry, but we were greatly influenced by the chapters that described the formation of the mission, strategy, and values of North Point Community Church, where Andy Stanley pastors. Early in the life of the church, Andy led the leaders in a discussion focusing on three questions. The first question was "What do we want people to become?" The next question was "What do we want people to do?" The final critical question was "Where do we want people to go?"[4] Acquiring clarity on these three questions helped North Point Community Church develop and implement their mission, strategy, and values.[5]

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[3]Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004).

[4]Ibid., 54, 63, 72.

[5]Ibid., 54.

Taking Stanley's lead, we focused our discussion on answering the first two questions. We then formulated a mission statement that conveyed our answers to those questions. We basically concurred with the same answers that North Point's leadership presented in *Creating Community*. The answer to the first question is quite simple in light of the Great Commission: we want people to become disciples (Matt 28:18-20).[6] The answer to the second question is then informed by the goal to make disciples and by Christ's teaching concerning the Great Commandments (Matt 22:37-40). What do disciples do? What does a disciple look like? North Point describes a disciple as one who is growing in three vital relationships: "a person's relationship with God, with believers, and with unbelievers."[7] The third question, "Where do you want people to go?" dealt with North Point's small group philosophy. We did not feel that this particular topic was germane to the formation of our mission statement.

The mission statement that The Rock Church's Pastors Team formulated as a result of our study and discussion is "The Mission of The Rock Church is to Love God, Love People, and Change the World." This statement was presented to the church repeatedly during the four-week *Missio Dei* sermon series. At the beginning of each message, I took a moment to talk about my vision for The Rock Church to be a people who "Love God, Love People and are Changing the World." We placed on the inside of the bulletin a paragraph describing our mission that included the mission statement. Each week, the mission statement was prominently displayed on the worship center's screen.

The week 4 sermon was entitled "*Missio Dei:* Becoming a Fellowship on Mission." I walked through the mission statement, and it has been used from that point on. "Love God, Love People, Change the World" has been pervasively used in our publications and in our weekly gatherings. In many churches, a process like this would

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[6]Ibid., 57.

[7]Ibid., 65.

probably include sub-sets of people in the church family and an eventual vote. The Rock Church is an empowering, and permission giving fellowship, meaning we give people freedom to lead in the areas of their gifting, calling, and responsibility. In other words, we minimize voting as much as possible. For the most part, the pastors have the freedom to lead. In the case of the implementation of our mission statement, we merely presented the statement, cast vision for it, and implemented it in the life of the church. I have not heard one objection to the statement or the process. Not too long after the conclusion of the project, it was necessary to revise a large portion of our constitution and by-laws. The mission statement was placed in the Constitution during that process.

We also added a section in our new member's class that is simply entitled "The Mission of the Rock Church." Prospective members are taught that Christ-followers are called to develop a Great Commission and a Great Commandment lifestyle. The Great Commandment teaches Christ-followers how to live: with a passion to love God and to love people. The Great Commission teaches Christ-followers what to do: make disciples. Therefore, a follower of Christ will be a person who is growing in three vital relationships in his life: his love for God, his love for people, and his connection with God's mission in the world (Love God, Love People, Change the World).

### Step 2: Equipping LifeGroup Participants with Skills and Knowledge to Share the Gospel

The second step in this project was to lead people to connect with God's mission in this world. On Sunday afternoon of week 4 of the project, we had a LifeGroup Leaders meeting to equip them to lead during the rest of the project. Twenty-eight leaders attended the meeting. Either the leader or an assistant represented most of the LifeGroups.

In step 2 of the project, the LifeGroups used a curriculum designed to help

increase their skill in sharing the gospel in a pluralistic culture.[8] We also promoted and implemented the S2 Strategy to help LifeGroup participants maintain a missional lifestyle. The idea for this card came from the "invest and invite" evangelism strategy of North Point Community Church in Atlanta.[9] We had 26 LifeGroups during the course of the project.

The S2 Strategy was first introduced on week three of the project. S2 stands for "seek and serve." The sermon on week three described the missionary methods of Jesus. The text was Luke 19:1-10, the story about the interaction of Jesus with the tax collector, Zacchaeus. The lesson is that Jesus intentionally befriended lost individuals for the purpose of helping them grow in their relationship with God. In this story, people grumbled when they saw that Jesus was going to the home of a tax collector and sinner (Luke 19:7). After Zacchaeus had a change of heart and truly repented of his sin, Jesus declared, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus did not wait for people to come to him; he was on a mission to find people who desperately needed a restored or renewed relationship with God.

S2 Cards were made available to everybody beginning week 3 of the project. These cards are about the size of a business card. On the front, the card bears an S2 logo and the phrase "Seek & Serve." Jesus' quote, "I have come to seek and to save the lost" also appears on the front. On the back of the card is a simple outline of the S2 evangelism strategy. The back of the card reads, "Following the example of Jesus I am committed to living an S2 life: Helping people find their way back to God."[10] The bullets outlining the strategy are as follows:

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[8]Hal Seed and Dan Grider, *The God Questions: Exploring Life's Great Questions about God* (Vista, CA: Outreach, 2009).

[9]Stanley and Willits, *Creating Community,* 95.

[10]Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 21-23.

1. Seek and be aware of people who need a relationship with God and pray for them daily.
2. Serve people in order to build friendships.
3. Serve my two friends by sharing MY STORY and by inviting them to a BIG Event sponsored by the ROCK Church of Saint Louis.

Then at the bottom of the card is a place to write the names of two people that the Lord has placed on a person's heart. A graphic designer who is a part of our church family designed the logos and cards for us.

On week 5 we started *The God Questions* series, developed and written by Hal Seed and Dan Grider.[11] This also is a sermon-based, small group curriculum that connected the weekly LifeGroup session with the previous week's sermon. *The God Questions* was chosen to help our people begin to think like missionaries and to be equipped to share the truth of God's Word in our increasingly skeptical culture. Each week addressed common objections or concerns that people may have towards Christianity. Every sermon, reading from the book, and LifeGroup discussion addressed an important "God Question" that Christians hear when they begin to share their faith. The questions and titles of each chapter are as follows:

1. "Is God Real?"
2. "Is the Bible True?"
3. "Do all Roads Lead to Heaven?"
4. "How Can a Good God Allow Suffering?"
5. Other Great Questions: Isn't Christianity a Crutch for Weak People? What About Those Who've Never Heard About Jesus? If Christianity is True, Why is the Church Full of Hypocrites? What Happens to Me When I Die? Does God Change? What's the Purpose of the Church?
6. Closing Questions: What's the Purpose of Life? If God Would Grant Me Just One Wish, What Would I Ask For? How Do I Change My Behavior? What Does Loving God and Loving People Look Like? How Do I Get Started?

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[11]Seed And Grider, *The God Questions.*

## Step 3: The Implementation of a Strategy to Hold LifeGroup Participants Accountable to Maintaining a Missional Lifestyle

The LifeGroup Leadership meeting that was conducted on week four of the project was important. The LifeGroup leaders are essentially the disciple makers of the church. The LifeGroup Leaders have the responsibility of leading their group to becoming missional. These leaders also have the primary role of leading the individuals in their group to develop and maintain missional lifestyles.

Each LifeGroup Leader was given a job description that outlined his role and responsibilities (appendix 4). The main responsibilities of the LifeGroup Leaders in relation to this project were

1. Facilitate the discussion for each week's gathering.
2. Take a moment at each gathering to promote and pray for the names on the S2 cards.
3. Take a moment each week and ask the four missional accountability questions.
4. Ensure that the group plans and conducts at least one mission project during the semester.

The four missional accountability questions were

1. Am I reading the Bible daily?
2. Am I praying for the lost daily?
3. Am I abiding in Christ, seeking Jesus and rejecting sin daily?
4. Am I befriending the lost and connecting with God's mission daily?

Beginning in week 2 of the *God Questions* series and week six of the project, I supplemented the discussion guide with a weekly accountability question and an exercise connected to living a missional lifestyle:

1. Week 6: Are you letting God speak to you through his Word daily? The Exercise: Learning how to share your faith using A, B, C: Admit you are a sinner, Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead, and Confess that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. (Rom 10:9-10)
2. Week 7: Are you using the S2 card to identify and pray for the lost daily? The exercise: Writing "Your Story" and practice sharing it.

3. Week 8: Are you daily seeking to abide in Christ and to resist sin so that you can discern the Holy Spirit's leadership? The exercise: Share how the Holy Spirit may have opened or shut a door for you in the last week.

4. Week 9: Are you intentionally befriending those who need the Lord? The exercise: Discuss the opportunities you had in the last week to serve others for the purpose of being intentional about building relationships with those who need the Lord.

5. Week 10: The final week and chapter for *God Questions.*

### Step 4: The Implementation of a Missional Purpose in the Life of the LifeGroups

Step 4 was designed to complete the process of transitioning the LifeGroups from existing only for the primary purpose of Bible study to existing also for the purpose of helping people develop missional lifestyles. LifeGroups will hopefully become communities of people that are connecting with each other for the purpose of carrying out the mission of God in our community and even around the world.

The final step of this project included the ongoing application of the S2 Strategy, the continued use of the Missional Accountability Questions, and finally the actual implementation of missional endeavors. Weeks 11 to 14 of the project were designed for the LifeGroup participant to personally be involved in three missional endeavors.

The first missional endeavor of a LifeGroup participant was their ongoing commitment to follow the example of Jesus by living an S2 life. At this point in the project, I hoped that the individuals would have recognized and embraced God's desire for them to participate in the *Missio Dei.* The leader of each LifeGroup has been taught that the main purpose of the small group is to help people grow in their love for God, love for people, and in connecting with God's mission in the world. The LifeGroup leader was not asking people to merely join a Bible study, but to unite with others to participate in the *Missio Dei.* My passion is to help Christians learn to live as missionaries in their community.

The next endeavor was the missional event or projects that the LifeGroup was praying for and planning to do as a team. Each leader was responsible for leading the

group to conduct a missional project. Our people were very creative with these projects. The LifeGroup I participated in had a picnic in one of the popular municipal parks in our community. We played music on speakers, handed out free food, and gave bottles of water to those who were playing in softball games. We gave out information about the Lord and our church. Some in our group were able to talk to people about their relationship with God. It was an exciting day.

Other LifeGroups in our church also held what we called community picnics. The high school groups hosted a dodge ball tournament in our gym. The purpose was to get their unchurched and lost friends to come and hear about Jesus through the vehicle of a recreational event. Over two hundred kids showed up, and it was crazy. Our youth meet each Sunday night for a celebration service and after this event, we saw the attendance literally go from the forties to eighties.

We had a group that started helping our inner city campus with their monthly community meal. This meal is typically attended by the homeless and needy of the city. Another group connected with our prison ministry called Story-Link, and helped in packaging, stamping, and mailing books that inmates read on a CD for their kids or grandkids.

Our worship pastor started a missional group called "The Great Pizza Debate." He invited unchurched and unconnected people to join him each Friday as they went to different pizza places on a quest to find the best pizza in St. Louis. The real purpose of this group was not about pizza but to build friendships with people that needed to know the Lord. Three couples began to attend Sunday services because of the relationships that were made through this group. The story of one young man is of particular interest. He was a member of a biker gang, had a massive collection of pornography, and had a history of trafficking drugs. Through the relationship that he formed with others during this group, he began to attend services regularly and to attend a LifeGroup with his wife. We are praying for his salvation.

The final missional endeavor that everybody was encouraged to participate in was what we call a "Big Event." We borrowed this concept from Nelson Searcy as outlined in his book *Ignite.*[12] Searcy defines what he calls a "Big Day" as "an all-out push toward a single Sunday for the purpose of breaking the next growth barrier and setting an attendance record in order to reach as many people as possible for Jesus."[13] The idea is to create events designed for the people in your church to bring their lost or unchurched friends.

As noted earlier, the first Sunday of this project was also the culmination of the promotion of Easter as a big event. We produced invite cards and emphasized that our people should bring with them to church on Sunday somebody that needed to find their way back to God. We had the highest attendance ever recorded for a Sunday service.

My plan was to end the project with another big event. For weeks our people had been learning about what it means to be on mission to reach the people they know, where they live. This is an on-going strategy that we are going to employ to help people in our church help others to begin a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus.

For this project we connected the S2 strategy with the Big Event strategy. We repeatedly told our people that throughout the year we would plan big events for the people that they have been praying for. We promoted July Fourth as a Friend Day in our Sunday announcements and in several promotional newsletters. We had a patriotic service, and we encouraged everybody to make every effort to invite somebody to church. I then preached about the freedom that we are so blessed to enjoy as Americans and then talked about the fact that Jesus was also a freedom fighter. We did not have the attendance that I would have liked for a big event. Our attendance was 399, but I was

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[12]Nelson Searcy and Jennifer Dykes Henson, *Ignite: How to Spark Immediate Growth in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

[13]Ibid., 26.

pleased with the fact that people did invite people to the service, and we had a good number of visitors.

### Step 5: Evaluating the Project

Two tools were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The first evaluative tool was a survey (see appendix 5). The survey asked questions related to the missional practices of the church, the LifeGroup, and the individual. The survey was given to LifeGroup members on the first Sunday of the project. At the end of the project, the same survey was distributed to the LifeGroup participants.

Once the project was completed, I also met with a focus group to discuss their reflections concerning the project. The focus group was composed of leaders and participants. We met on a Wednesday night and spent about two hours reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the project. The focus group meeting and the results of the survey are evaluated in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

This project was only the beginning of what will be an ongoing process of leading all of our LifeGroups to embrace a missional purpose. There were ups and downs and positives and negatives to deal with during those three months. Much of that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The vision of the pastors of The Rock Church continues to be to lead all of our people to passionately live missional lifestyles as they are growing in their love for God and their love for people. This project was the first step on that journey.

# CHAPTER 5

# AN EVALUATION OF USING SMALL GROUPS TO HOLD CHRISTIANS ACCOUNTABLE TO MAINTAINING MISSIONAL LIFESTYLES

Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior left his apostles with clear directives. He commanded and commissioned them to these tasks: "Go into all the world, make disciples of all the nations, baptize them, and teach them to observe everything that I commanded you" (Matt 28:18-20). The responsibility for the accomplishment of these tasks is inherited by every generation of Christ's followers. Jesus even promised that he would give us his presence and power as we continued this mission "to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20, Acts 1:8).

A challenge for the church is the almost continual pull towards providing and participating in ministries that are directed toward growing, equipping, nurturing, and even entertaining Christians in a manner that is devoid of an evangelistic component. All too often, the church can become so inwardly focused that little is done to reach the lost. The intention of my project was to lead and equip Christians to actively participate in the mission of making disciples. I intended to lead all members of the church to embrace the mission of God as a team as opposed to the shortsightedness of seeing the work of evangelism as a task of pastors, a ministry branch of the church, or a ministry task that only mature, bold Christians do.

## Evaluation of the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to use the small group ministry of The Rock Church of St. Louis to hold people accountable to developing and maintaining missional lifestyles. We all have a part to play in God's mission; therefore, I am convinced that

connecting each Christian to God's mission is an important function of the church and its pastors.

One big question that pastors must deal with is simply how does one accomplish the task of leading every Christian to connect with God's mission, or, how do we equip and hold Christians accountable to living missionally? In other words, what is our strategy? A strategy is the way one chooses to accomplish ones mission or to achieve ones goals. After careful consideration, I determined that the small group ministry of the church was the best way to help Christians live missionally.

The primary reason my strategy was to use the small group ministry to develop missional Christians is because that is the very method that Jesus employed. Jesus chose twelve men from out of a crowd of followers to be with him and to learn from him (Mark 3:13-19). After Jesus was raised from the dead, he told these men to now "Go, make disciples" (Matt 28:19).

Jesus used his small group to define the mission, model behavior, delegate tasks, foster growth, incorporate a sense of teamwork, and eventually to send forth his disciples into the world to disciple others in the same manner in which they were discipled. My vision was to see our LifeGroups become the same type of disciple-making and disciple-sending fellowships. This would require a transformation in our way of thinking as a church. Our LifeGroups, whether they met on Sunday morning and functioned as a traditional Sunday school class, or met at a home during the week, could be described as Bible study groups that focused on the task of learning. Unfortunately, evangelism and mission were not an intentional function of the LifeGroups.

Another reason I decided to use the LifeGroups to hold our membership accountable to developing missional lifestyles is because of the scope of the work of missions. Our Church averages just under 500 in worship service attendance. One pastor could not adequately hold hundreds of people accountable to developing and maintaining a missional lifestyle. The LifeGroup ministry enables our church to have many leaders,

rather than just a few. The multitude of leaders, each over a small group, ensures that no one slips through the cracks. All members should have somebody who personally knows them, cares for, and oversees their growth.

The important question was, did this project fulfill its intended purpose? Were we able to use LifeGroups to hold people accountable to living missionally? There were two tools chosen to measure the success of the project. The first was the administration of a pre-project and a post-project survey (appendix 5). The second was a post-project, focus group meeting with eight of the LifeGroup members. Both provided some insight into the issues and successes of the project.

**The Surveys**

A pre-project survey was given to adult LifeGroup members on the first Sunday of the project. During the course of the project, there were thirteen adult LifeGroups that fully participated in the project. The average weekly attendance for the participating LifeGroups during the three months of the project was 169. Seventy-eight participants completed and submitted the pre-project survey. At the end of the project, the same survey as a post-project survey was again distributed to the LifeGroup participants. Fifty-five participants completed and submitted the post-project survey.

The surveys were designed to reveal what people believed about various topics related to missional living. The surveys also showed the actual participation rate of congregational members in missional practices. The survey also included questions that related to the work of the LifeGroup as a team. The success of the purpose of this project can be seen particularly by measuring the participant's level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements in the survey:

1. I believe the Bible teaches that every Christian is a missionary in their community.
2. I pray regularly for people who do not have a personal relationship with the Lord.
3. I regularly look for opportunities to invite people to church worship services.

4. I intentionally involve myself in relationships outside of my church family, for the purpose of helping people know the Lord.
5. My LG (LifeGroup) holds me accountable for spiritual growth.

One of the first tasks of leadership is to define the mission. Once the mission has been clearly defined, communicated, and properly understood, the team is ready for action. One of the major focuses of this project was to communicate clearly through the sermon series and corresponding LifeGroup lessons that all Christians should live as missionaries in their community. The pre-project survey revealed that 60 percent of the people either strongly agreed or agreed that the Bible teaches that every Christian is a missionary in their community (see appendix 5). This percentage was higher then I expected but possibly reflects the direction of my leadership over the past two years. Remarkably, after the project, 100 percent of the respondents concurred with this statement. The mission was clearly communicated and understood.

The questions listed above also reveal the actual participation of individuals in missional practices. The specific missional practices that LifeGroup leaders sought to hold their members accountable for were listed on the S2 cards:

1. Awareness of people around them that need a relationship with the Lord.
2. To pray daily for specific people.
3. Share a testimony.
4. To invite people to an evangelistic event.

Even without the use of the S2 accountability card, 84 percent of the people revealed that they pray regularly for people who did not have a relationship with the Lord. After the project, this percentage rose to 94 percent. Prayer is a major focus of The Rock Church. Every Wednesday night we have a Lord's Supper service and spend time in prayer for God's presence and power. In our worship services I will frequently ask people to take a moment to pray for people who need to find their way back to God. I sensed that The Rock Church prayed for the lost, but was still concerned that we were not intentional in seeking to lead them to a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The big change occurred with the practice of seeking to make friends with people who do not know the Lord and in inviting them to church. Fifty-seven percent of LifeGroup members indicated in the pre-project survey that they did not regularly invite people to worship services. After the project, 70 percent indicated that they sought opportunities to invite people to church. Before the project, 66 percent indicated that they were intentional about making friends with people in order to help them know the Lord. After the project, this number rose to 81 percent. I think there were at least two factors that led to an increase in these behaviors. First, we communicated repeatedly the power of a personal invitation. We also made invitation cards widely available to aid our people in inviting others to church. The S2 cards were also used weekly in the LifeGroup to remind members to invite people. Second, we promoted our July Fourth service as a day to invite their friends to attend.

The final survey statement that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the project relates to the perceived influence of the LifeGroup. Sixty-five percent of LifeGroup members agreed with the following pre-project statement: "My LG holds me accountable for spiritual growth." Eighty-one percent agreed to this statement after the project was concluded. I can only assume that the increase in concurrence with this statement is related to the accountability questions the leaders began to ask each week:

1. Am I reading the Bible daily?
2. Am I praying for the lost daily?
3. Am I abiding in Christ, seeking Jesus and rejecting sin daily?
4. Am I befriending the lost and connecting with God's mission daily?

Along with these questions, the S2 cards were referenced each week, and a prayer time was to be conducted for the people written on the cards.

In retrospect, I should have added questions to the survey that correlated with LifeGroup leader's role. The questions mainly focused on the disciplines and beliefs of the participants. After the project, I had a growing interest in the role and responsibility

of the leaders.

The surveys revealed that the purpose of this project was accomplished. LifeGroups were successful in leading members to pray for the lost, befriend them, and invite them to worship services. Missional lifestyles were being developed through the influence of this project.

**The Focus Group**

The focus group was conducted after the project was completed. Topics discussed were the evangelism training, use of accountability questions, S2 cards, mission projects, and the overall changes to the dynamics of the LifeGroups. The group was composed of 8 participants:

1. Male couples leader, 36.
2. Male college leader, 40.
3. Male college participant, 19.
4. Male couples leader, 28.
5. Male participant, 50.
6. Male youth leader, 23.
7. Male participant, 51.
8. Female participant, 58.

When it came to the discussion on evangelism, there was a wide-range of views. Participant 1 thought the training was great. He said the *God Questions*[1] helped him understand what skeptics were thinking, and how to respond to their doubts. Participant 2 echoed this sentiment and added that the training helped people in his group have confidence in the reliability of their own faith. Participant 7 mentioned that he preferred to share his faith naturally and that he appreciated the simple approach of using

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[1]Hal Seed and Dan Grider, *The God Questions: Exploring Life's Great Questions about God* (Vista, CA: Outreach, 2009).

a testimony and the A, B, C (admit, believe, confess) method. Participant 2 agreed and voiced his feeling that other witness training programs that he participated in seemed "canned" and involved in his words "an overload of required memorized stuff."

Participants 3 and 5 shared a different point of view. Participant 3 was in the college group, and expressed a desire to be trained more thoroughly. He would be interested in an ongoing class that taught apologetics and various ways to share your faith. As a college student, he relayed that he finds himself in different situations where he wished he were able to give a better defense of Christianity, or be able to answer some of the questions his friends threw at him. He wanted to be prepared to talk intelligently with atheists and evolutionists. Participant 5 voiced a similar desire for more training. He thought his group should have had less lecturing and more practice in actually sharing their faith. Unfortunately, participant 8 was in a group that did not implement all the components of the project. She did not receive the training, and her group did not use the *God Questions* material. They did conduct a mission project, which will be covered later.

The next topic discussed was the use of accountability questions in the LifeGroup. Participant 1 thought the questions were great and welcomed the practice of holding people in his LifeGroup accountable to living missionally, but he did not think people were open about their struggles and receive the support they needed because they were in a couples group. The other participants that were in a couples group then expressed similar feelings. The college leader, participant 2, had a different experience. He shared how his group was very open, and he shared that "once our students began to identify and discuss their struggles, many were able to begin gaining victory over sin patterns in their lies. They realized that others had similar issues and they began to support each other in their desire for victory."

We then talked about using the S2 cards and the big event that was conducted at the end of the project. Everybody had positive responses concerning these components. Participant 7 talked about how his group really spent time talking about and

praying for their identified friends. He personally led a Chinese woman to accept Christ as her Lord and Savior. His group was excited about this great answer to prayer. Participant 4 said, "My group really caught on to the vision of helping those in their sphere of influence take steps to Christ." He also said he loved the idea of having Big Events, and gave several ideas for the future. Participant 2 also said that his group began to be aware of people around them and wondering about their relationship to Jesus. Participant one's mission project was to visit various pizza restaurants over several Friday nights. They invited their S2 friends to join them and some did.

The conversation turned to the various mission projects that were conducted by the groups. Participant 8 was in the group that did not fully participate in the project. She said her group did meet to assemble care packages for a homeless ministry, but she did not know that the care package project was connected with a greater effort in the church to get everyone on mission. Every person in the focus group participated in a mission project. Along with the pizza night and the care package project, others shared about sponsoring a dodge ball tournament, assembling gospel bracelets for a Kenya mission trip, having a picnic in the park, supporting a senior adult ministry, and working at an inner city community meal for the homeless.

Participant 6 was a new member to our church, and he said that his LifeGroup was different from other Bible studies in which he had participated. He said, "Most small groups are about study and fellowship. The mission project gave us vision; it made us all feel like leaders. We felt like we had a greater purpose."

Participant 5 had similar thoughts. He came to The Rock Church from a mega-church in our city. He first came because of our "special needs" class that he wanted his son to join. He explained that once he got into a LifeGroup he realized that it was both a Bible study and a group seeking to be "on mission." He said, "This church and my LifeGroup are helping me be on mission." Participant 4 then described how the relationships in his group were strengthened when they shifted from fellowship and study

to also seeking to be "on mission." The only concern that he had was his need to be persistent as a leader in getting everybody in his group to participate in the mission project. His biggest challenge was coordinating the project with everybody's calendar.

We concluded our meeting by spending time talking about the strengths and weaknesses of transitioning the LifeGroups from being driven primarily by fellowship and Bible study to also becoming missional. Participant 1 said that the shift was refreshing and "helped people to move out of their comfort zone and into places where God wants us to be." He also said that we needed to be more intentional about continuing to plan big events because he thinks the project showed that people want to be on mission and feel like they have a purpose. Participant 3 said, "It was exciting to do something for Jesus, to be on mission." He also talked about the rough year the youth and college group had because one of our students had recently committed suicide. He said that because of the mission projects and events that the young people were participating in, that "the bad was turned to good because we were on mission."

Participant 1 also said that the past expectations for leaders were low and that we were getting low results. Now he feels that leaders feel supported and connected with the greater mission of the church because of our transition to becoming missional. Participant 6 concurred and said that the young people have a fire, but they were not intentionally trying to lead their friends to Jesus. Now that we have expectations, he sees the young people thinking about how to have more connection with mission in their lives.

Participant 8 did bring up some of the concerns of the older people in our church. First, he mentioned that the curriculum is more expensive when we do a special study. Second, he indicated that the older members did not like using course material that was not "Southern Baptist." Third, he said that the older people also felt disconnected from the excitement of the big event because they were mostly attending the first service, which is smaller and more traditional.

Participant 5 picked up on the topic of curriculum and expressed that the use of

the curriculum, the accountability questions, and then having a S2 time caused his group to focus more on the material than on building relationships with one another. Participant 2 then said that I needed to make sure that what I was preaching was not the exact same content they were going to discuss in the LifeGroup. He explained, "I felt like I was hearing stuff twice. It was redundant to have the sermon and the study be so close."

In light of the conversations that I had with these leaders and participants, I am convinced of two principles. First, most people want to be on mission. Participating missionally with their brothers and sisters gave them a sense of purpose and fulfillment. They felt that they were part of something significant. Second, most leaders will rise to the level of expectations. This project set new expectations for each leader and for the life of the groups. I was pleasantly surprised to hear how most of these participant's LifeGroups implemented each component of the project.

Finally, the focus group discussion led me to gain a deeper understanding and a new vision concerning the biblical principle of fellowship. The Bible teaches that our fellowship is connected to our shared relationship with the Father and his Son (1 John 1:3). Christians have fellowship with each other because each one of us has fellowship with God. That being said, I think our minds form similar images when we hear the words "church fellowship." We visualize potluck dinners, picnics, ice-cream socials, and many other gatherings that connect Christians with each other and with food.

After reflecting on the focus group's discussion about mission, accountability, and their experiences in planning and conducting missional events, I realized that a change had taken place. These groups were becoming a "fellowship on mission." They were experiencing a sense of community and fellowship, not as they ate together, but as they participated in the *Missio Dei*. At one point in his ministry Jesus told his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:34-35). The Rock Church of

St. Louis should have many "church fellowships." I want to lead us to see that our fellowship can be around the spiritual food of participating together in reaching people for Jesus.

## Evaluation of the Goals

The project for The Rock Church of St. Louis also included 5 main goals. Each of these goals was established to support the achievement of the overall project purpose. The pre- and post-project surveys were also designed to measure the level of accomplishment of each of these goals.

### Goal 1: To Lead the Church to Understand Its Missional Purpose

The main focus of the sermon series and the accompanying LifeGroup lessons was to teach our people that the triune God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world. This teaching series sought to help people understand that the church is the incarnational body of Christ in our community (John 20:21, Eph 1:22-23). This understanding leads the church to develop a missiological paradigm for engaging and relating to its local community. Furthermore, this understanding leads pastors to see every Christian as a missionary that needs to be equipped to connect with God's mission in the world.

The realization of this goal was to be measured by examining the responses to the following survey statements:

1. I believe the Bible teaches that every Christian is a missionary in their community.
2. The priority focus of the church should be meeting the needs of its members.

In the case of the first question, we have already seen that the post-project survey indicated that 100 percent of the participants agreed that they are to live as missionaries in their community. LifeGroup members clearly understood that Christians must have a missional nature.

When it comes to the participant's understanding of the nature of the church, it

is unclear if this goal was reached. The second question was intended to measure the participant's understanding of what the priority of the church should be. People were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that the priority focus of the church should be to meet the needs of its members. The first survey revealed that 41 percent agreed and 47 percent disagreed. The second survey showed little change because 45 percent still agreed and 43 percent disagreed. The next question could have been, "The priority focus of the church should be reaching the lost for Jesus." Then the participants would have had to reflect on whether the "priority" should be evangelism or edification. This was an omission on my part.

**Goal 2: To Adopt a Purpose Statement**

After four weeks of preaching about the mission of God and the mission of the church, I unveiled and communicated to the fellowship a purpose statement that reflects the church's understanding of its mission. I was really excited about this project goal. The Rock Church did not have purpose statement that was recognizable or used in the life of the church. The church constitution did have a lengthy purpose statement that was not being communicated. We really needed a statement that could be used to help members understand what we were trying to accomplish.

The mission statement that we began to extensively publicize and promote was "Love God, Love People, Change the World." This statement was drawn from the Great Commandments and the Great Commission (Matt 22:37-40; 28:18-20). Our purpose and mission was to make disciples who are growing in their love for God, their love for people, and their connection with God's mission in the World. We repeatedly communicated that God desired to use each of us to change the world. Ultimately, we decided to use the word "mission" instead of "purpose." A mission statement as opposed to a purpose statement seemed to connect with the whole missional imagery.

The pre- and post-project surveys had a place where the participant could write the mission statement of the church. Diverse answers to this question were given in the

first survey. There were about eleven references to "Whatever it Takes!" When I first became the pastor in 1998, we used this statement as a motivation to do whatever it would take to reach people and to turn around a stagnant, declining church. Several answers attempted to connect with the Great Commission. There was no discernable pattern in the responses.

In the post-project survey, 89 percent of the people wrote, "Love God, Love People, Change the World." The goal of adopting a mission statement was achieved. Our statement is simple, memorable, and descriptive of what we are seeking to lead every member to do.

### Goal 3: To Equip Small Group Members with the Skills and Knowledge to Share the Gospel

After careful consideration I decided to train and equip LifeGroup participants to share the gospel by using a published curriculum. Our curriculum was *The God Questions* book.[2] I preached a message on Sunday. The participants had daily readings and a discussion guide to be used in their LifeGroup that corresponded to my message. Each week I wrote a supplement that was used in conjunction with the discussion guide. The series was a basic guide in apologetics. The book also examines the major religions of the world and their competing truth claims.

The supplements that I wrote incorporated accountability questions and simple ways to share the gospel. My supplements taught how to share your testimony, the necessity of abiding in Christ in order to bear fruit, and the encouragement to intentionally befriend the lost to build bridges to share the gospel. The gospel presentation I taught was drawn from the evangelism training material *Got Life.*[3]

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Ken Hemphill and Frank Harber, *Got Life? Training G.E.A.R.* (Keller, TX: HeartSpring, 2000).

The attainment of this goal can be partly measured by the response to the following survey statement: "People in our church are trained and equipped to share and defend their faith." Before the project, 60 percent of the members agreed that people are being trained and equipped to share and defend their faith. After the project, that number increased only to 69 percent. This is rather perplexing to me. The *God Questions* was all about learning how to defend the faith. Each week, participants were to be led to learn about a different aspect of sharing the gospel. Maybe some of the leaders did not use the supplements as they were instructed. On the other hand, the simple witnessing techniques may not have been as thorough of an evangelism training as some desire.

Another question may shed some light on what people were thinking about having been equipped to share the gospel. In the pre-project survey, 80 percent of the members indicated that they would like more training in how to share and defend their faith. After the training and instruction that were given in the project, 83 percent stated that they essentially wanted more training in sharing and defending their faith. I am enthusiastic about this discovery. Our people want to be educated and trained in how to share their faith. Even after they had been trained, they had a desire for more. The study may have just whetted their appetite for more instruction on how to be on mission for Jesus in their community.

### Goal 4: To Implement a Missional Purpose in the Life of the Small Groups

My goal for our LifeGroups was to help them become more than a place of fellowship and Bible study. I wanted to lead our entire small group ministry in a transformation to become fellowships of Christians who are partnering with one another in the great mission to change the world for Jesus.

In order to accomplish this goal, two practices were added to the existing LifeGroup functions. First, each LifeGroup was expected to plan one missional project that the group would complete as a team. Second, each LifeGroup was expected to

reference the S2 cards each week in order to maintain a focus on helping people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The accomplishment of these new expectations depended largely on the guidance of the LifeGroup Leaders. LifeGroup job descriptions were distributed and explained before the project began at a pre-project leader's meeting (appendix 4). The expectations were communicated. The role of the leader was defined. Another leadership meeting occurred on the fourth Sunday of the project to prepare for the *God Questions* study, as noted in chapter 4.

The following survey statements can be used to measure the degree of success in implementing a missional purpose in the LifeGroups:

1. The leadership in my LG regularly emphasizes the need to share our faith with the unchurched.
2. My LG intentionally plans evangelistic mission projects.
3. The mission of my LG involves reaching the unchurched.

Only 46 percent of the LifeGroup members agreed that before the project their leader regularly emphasized the need to share faith with the unchurched. This number rose to 96 percent after the project was finished. The use of the S2 cards in each LifeGroup meeting had a significant role to play in fostering a missional mentality.

I had a vision of seeing each group work as a team to reach the people with the gospel. In the pre-project survey, 71 percent of the members indicated that their LifeGroup did not intentionally plan evangelistic projects. After the project that number dropped to 21 percent. Therefore, 63 percent of the LifeGroup members were in groups that engaged in mission as a team. This is a great improvement, but it reveals that some LifeGroups did not follow through in planning and conducting a missional project. The responsibility to lead the group to conduct a mission project was clearly communicated to each leader in their job description (appendix 4). Of the twenty-four LifeGroups, we know that 17 groups participated in a mission project.

The final measurement of success in achieving this goal is found in the

measurement of understanding of the purpose of the LifeGroup itself. Before the project, only 48 percent of the LifeGroup members understood the mission of the group to involve reaching the unchurched. After the project, 74 percent agreed that reaching the unchurched was a part of the mission of the LifeGroup.

There is evidence that some may be resistant to the transformation of their LifeGroups from Bible study fellowships to becoming a team of Christians that are engaging in God's mission. We did not formally ask for each LifeGroup to report on their participation in planning mission projects. I functioned as the LifeGroup administrator for this project. I should have been more proactive in communicating with the leaders about their projects to ensure that they followed through. I know of only one group out of 5 in the fifty-plus age group that conducted a mission project. The older groups that have had a long history of being the traditional "Sunday school" class were the most resistant to this project. For the most part, the survey revealed that many of our LifeGroups did make that transition and are taking the first steps towards becoming missional groups.

**Goal 5: To Develop and Use an Accountability Strategy**

This goal had with it the intent to develop the accountability strategy that was used in the small groups to hold members accountable to maintaining missional lifestyles. The accountability strategy that was devised had several components. First there was the weekly use of the S2 card. Next the leaders were to simply ask the four accountability questions. And finally, the group was expected to at least conduct a missional project as a team. For the most part, the success of this goal has already been described. The survey revealed an increase in percentage of participants that intentionally prayed for the lost. The survey also revealed an increase in the percentage of participants that were reaching out to the lost and inviting them to church.

The biggest oversight in this project concerns the absence of a strategy to hold

the leaders accountable to leading their groups to be missional. I will address this in more detail later.

## Strengths of the Project

Overall I am pleased with the project and what it has meant for the life of our church family. Because of this project, our small group ministry took the first big steps towards a major transformation. Many of our groups now have a missional component. Our LifeGroups used to meet only for fellowship, Bible study, and prayer. Now many of our groups see themselves as a team of disciples, working together to change the world for Jesus.

The S2 card was a major strength of this project. It is a simple tool that one can carry in a purse or pocket. The card serves as a reminder to think and act missionally. The leaders of the LifeGroups are able to reference the card weekly. Writing down names of people and praying for them daily help Christians become more aware of those around them that need a relationship with the Lord. The card also helps Christians to pray about and think about how the Lord may use them to help people take steps towards receiving Jesus as their Lord.

Requiring each LifeGroup to plan a missional project was a blessing. Most of the time, pastors plan evangelistic events and projects. These endeavors are directed to everybody in the church who would like to participate. Of course, we promote these endeavors and seek maximum participation. Participation usually involves the same people who have a heart for evangelism. It was exciting in this project to hear about the different evangelistic projects that were planned and conducted without the influence or help of a pastor. It was also good to see the creativity of our people.

Another strength of the project was the plan for the first four weeks. The *Missio Dei* sermon series laid the foundation for the rest of the project. The LifeGroup discussion guides led the participants to talk about their role in God's redemptive mission.

The church seemed to embrace the new mission statement: "Love God, Love People, Change the World!" People began to catch a vision for connecting with God's mission in the world. As an example, one of the leading young men in our fellowship shared with me how his LifeGroup was transformed by the addition of a mission component. They spent time praying for people like they had never prayed before. In his words, "We have a sense of purpose now that we did not have before." The mission statement also helped us to define our goal clearly to lead each Christian in our fellowship to grow in their relationship with God, people, and God's mission.

## Weaknesses of the Project

I observed two major weaknesses in this project. The first involves the big event that we planned. I am convinced that the use of big events throughout the year is an effective way of getting people motivated to invite people to church. July Fourth was just not a good weekend for such an event. The final week of the project was planned to culminate with a special Sunday for our people to invite as many people as they could to church. We especially wanted them to invite those that they had listed on their S2 cards and had been praying for. This year July Fourth was on a Sunday. St. Louis has one of the biggest Fourth of July celebrations in the country. Many of our younger people were with family. Our big event just did not turn out to be very big.

The other major weakness of this project is related to the lack of training, development, and accountability of the LifeGroup leaders. As often repeated, everything rises and falls with leadership. Most of our leaders did cooperate with the goals of this project. Nevertheless, there were groups that did not use the project curriculum. They insisted on staying with the LifeWay Quarterly: *The Bible Book Series.*[4] Some of the groups did not conduct an evangelistic or missional project. I did not have a strategy for

[4]David Briscoe, ed., *Explore the Bible: Adult Learner Guide* (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Recourses, 2010).

developing an ongoing, mentoring relationship with the leaders. It became apparent that I needed to spend more time creating relationships with our leaders to share with them my vision and goals for the mission of our church.

## What I Would Do Differently

First I would spend more time developing leaders. I would spend more time sharing and explaining not just what we where doing, but also why. In light of this project, I have developed a plan to have a "Leadership Gathering" every other month. I will be the leader, build relationships with them, and work to help them to catch the vision for leading all our people to connect with God's mission in our community and even around the world. Along with the regular gatherings, I needed coaches for every five to eight LifeGroup Leaders. The coaches could have contacted the leaders each week to ensure that they were fully participating in all of the components of the project.

The second change would be in the preparation for the project. I would begin the preparation for the project months in advance. I think that if I had spent more time with the leaders, I would have received better cooperation.

I did not force the issue with curriculum. The curriculum was a huge component of the project. It is not surprising that the LifeGroups that did not use the curriculum are also the LifeGroups that did not participate in the heart of the project. If I had it to do all over again, I would make the use of curriculum mandatory but also prepare for the project with several advance leadership meetings to attain support and buy in.

## Theological Reflection

My goal when I started this project was to simply develop a plan to lead as many people in my church to be active in reaching as many people as we could for the Lord. Like so many pastors, my eye was on the goal—the salvation of lost souls. I felt deeply that evangelism was the most important task of the church. However I struggled with the reality that evangelism in the churches that I pastored was being conducted by

only a handful of people that met each week for visitation.

Certainly there were seasons in the life of the church when we would have twenty to thirty people involved in evangelism on a weekly basis. These seasons were short-lived and coincided with a CWT ministry,[5] or in more recent years a FAITH ministry.[6] People went on mission to help people find Jesus, but eventually the program would wane, the people would drop out, and we would lapse back to just a handful of committed people participating on visitation yet once again. Evangelism did not permeate everything that the church did or involve every person in the church; it was just one program, one purpose among several purposes. Evangelism was an option as long as it was just one ministry alongside other ministries of the church.

I first encountered the term "missional" through the work of a new church planter in St. Louis. This planter was touting his church as being a "missional" church. The ministry was also embroiled in controversy concerning some of its practices and beliefs. Because the church was so close to our church, I decided to do some research on what this "missional" thing was all about. The result of my reading various books and then ultimately going back to examine Scripture was a total change in my understanding of the nature of the church and then its corresponding work. Much of this is a transformation in thinking that is outlined in chapter 3. Yet I do want to highlight some key theological reflections.

First, I used to think that the church had a mission. Now I have come to see that the church is the mission. This understanding is rooted in the Biblical revelation that the triune God is a sending God. God created and sent Israel into the world to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6). God the Father sent God the Son with the power of God the

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[5]Ron Johnson, ed., *Continuing Witness Training Apprentice Manual* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1982).

[6]Bobby H. Welch and Doug Williams, *A Journey in Faith* (Nashville: LifeWay, 1998).

Holy Spirit into the world to be the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the World (John 3:16; 4:25-26). God the Son sent and continues to send, with the power of God the Holy Spirit, the church into the world so that all nations might hear and respond to the gospel (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21, Acts 1:8). The church does not just have a mission; the church is the mission to take the gospel to the world.

Once a person comes to understand that the church is the mission of God, the understanding of what the church does and how the church organizes what it does comes into view. Evangelism can no longer be viewed as one purpose among others. Evangelism will not become one ministry among others. When we see the church as the mission of God in this world, then everything the church does has to be connected to the *Missio Dei.* This concept is reflected in our new members class:

> The Rock Church seeks to help people become authentic followers of Christ Jesus by passionately living missional lifestyles as they are growing in their love for God and their love for people. We are not asking people to merely join our church, but to unite with God's mission in this community and in the world! Our passion is to help everyday Christians learn to live as missionaries.

I have also grown in my understanding of the incarnational nature of the church. The Bible teaches us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). While Jesus was on earth, he was God with us. God came to us in human form to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Now Jesus clearly handed his mission to the disciples. Jesus told them that just as the Father sent him into the world that he was in like manner sending them into the world (John 20:21).

In Ephesians we are taught that the church is Christ's body in this world (Eph 1:22). The church is the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. Just as Jesus was the incarnation of God in this world, the church is the incarnation of Jesus in this world. This understanding has led me to think differently about the nature of the church and the nature of all of our ministries. A Sunday school class, Bible study, or even a ministry in the church that is not connecting with the mission of God to seek and to save the lost needs to be evaluated seriously and transformed with a missional purpose.

Another reflection concerns the methodology of Jesus in growing disciples as a team and then sending them out in teams (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1). The purpose of my project was "to use the small group ministry of the church to hold people accountable to developing and maintaining a missional lifestyle." My thinking was focused on the lifestyles of individuals. I did not give thought concerning the development of teams. As I look back on the project, I now see the power and influence that partnership played in the life of the participants. My thinking was that the LifeGroup could be a tool to help the individuals become a missionary in their daily lives. Now I see how the individual disciples become missionaries as they partner with others in a group.

I went back to gospels and the book of Acts and realized that, in the Bible, mission is not the endeavor of an individual, but of a team. Jesus called 12 to be with him (Mark 3:14). When it came time to send his disciples out on mission, he sent them in pairs (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1). The Holy Spirit appointed and sent Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries (Acts 13:1-3). When Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement, the Bible records "And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas" (Acts 15:39-40). The wording "Paul chose Silas" is telling. Jesus sent the disciples out in twos, we see the Holy Spirit sending out in twos, and Paul "chose" Silas to be with him as he continued his mission. The Scriptures reveal a pattern of missional partnerships. I would like to develop this as a strategy in the life of our church. The small group ministry is not just about empowering the individual for their personal life. Small groups do not just equip and send out missionaries. Individuals are empowered to be missionaries as they connect with others in teams.

The final theological reflection that I have to share is my deepened appreciation and dependency upon the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowered the mission of Jesus. Jesus taught the necessity of the Holy Spirit's empowerment for the mission of the church (Acts 1:8). The Father sent the Son.

The Son sent the church (John 20:21). The Holy Spirit led and empowered the Son, and he is also given to lead and empower the Church (Acts 1:8). In the book of Acts we see the recurring presence and power of the Holy Spirit in guiding, empowering, and essentially leading the mission of the first church (Acts 1:8; 4:31; 8:26; 9:17; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 16:6-7).

The congregation must work in concert with the Holy Spirit's presence and should pray to that end. God the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity that is the empowering presence in this phase of God's mission that is being fulfilled through the body of Christ, the church. Jesus taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit was going to come and take his place in leading, teaching, guiding, and empowering (John 14:16, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15). The Holy Spirit raises up leadership, gives direction, opens and closes doors, overcomes the menace of the evil one, and literally is the power behind every spiritual accomplishment of the church (Acts 13:2; 16:6-7; 19:11; 20:27).

## Personal Ministry Reflections

The most important detail that I learned about myself pertains to my role as a pastor in the church. During the course of this study and in the process of conducting this project, I experienced one of those revelatory moments where I suddenly had a paradigm shift in my thinking about my personal ministry in the body of Christ.

The stated purpose of my project was to use the small groups to hold Christians accountable to maintaining missional lifestyles. I saw myself as the equipping pastor who had the function of helping others discover and fulfill the various ministries that they were gifted and called to do (Eph 4:11-12). In relation to mission and evangelism, I desired to lead Christians to become mature disciples. Mature disciples are those who are in part obedient to the Great Commission by being personally involved in making other disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

Right in the middle of the project, I began to realize that we desperately needed mature LifeGroup leaders. Much of the focus of my project was on the participants of

the LifeGroups. The reality was that we needed leaders who had a vision for the mission of God in our community and in the world. We needed leaders who caught the vision of seeing each small group becoming a team of missionaries. We needed leaders who were mature disciples so that they could help make other disciples. The project primarily focused on using various methods to lead LifeGroup members to personally being involved in evangelism.

The big question that our pastors began to discuss one day was, "How do we develop more leaders?" I began to act like a manager and lead in the discussion of various leadership training programs that we could develop. Each of the methods we discussed in how to develop leaders involved creating a program, course, or class on leadership. After the meeting, as I was meditating and praying about this need, these thoughts occurred to me, "The entire project was designed to be the first step in helping our church transform itself to becoming a people who were seeking to live as missionaries in our community. This desire was connected to the understanding that Jesus created the church to be missional. Jesus spent three years developing twelve disciples to become the leaders of this missional movement that would literally change the entire world."

The next question was obviously "How did Jesus develop leaders?" If my goal is to make disciples, I should look and see how Jesus made disciples and emulate his methods. I have to admit that I have read Robert Coleman's *The Master's Plan of Evangelism* several times and have even written a book review on it for a class.[7] I must be hardheaded. I do not know how I could have been in the ministry for nearly twenty years and not be making disciples in the same manner that Jesus made disciples!

I reached for the Coleman's book and devoured it in one sitting. I was

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[7]Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993).

immediately convicted that I was a manager of ministries and not a personal discipler of men. I preached and taught the Word several times each week, but I did not have one purposeful, close relationship with a person that I was helping to become a leading disciple.

In his classic and significant book, Robert Coleman outlines the following steps that Jesus employed in his method of making disciples:

1. Selection.
2. Association.
3. Consecration.
4. Impartation.
5. Demonstration.
6. Delegation.
7. Supervision.
8. Reproduction.[8]

I bought several cases of Coleman's book. I had all of the men on the Pastors Team read it. We began to discuss what we were learning about ourselves, the modern church, and the methods of our Lord in making leaders. We all realized that we had become administrators and managers of ministries. I threw out the question, "Who have you intentionally developed a close relationship with for the purpose of helping grow to become leading disciples?" None of the pastors of our church was personally making disciples. No wonder we had a shortage of mature leaders in our church.

I now meet every week with eight men who want to become leaders in the body of Christ. I look forward to and cherish the time we spend with each other. Every one of our pastors is also leading similar discipleship groups.

## Conclusion

The Doctor of Ministry program has been a tremendous blessing to me and to The Rock Church of St Louis. Through the course of this program, I have learned much about myself and about ministry. I know the church has benefited because of the work and study that was required by this program in ways that they may never quite realize.

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[8]Ibid., 7.

# APPENDIX 1

## "MISSIONAL" DISCUSSION ON THE WEB

"Missional" is clearly a word of choice today for many writers and Christian leaders. In recent years we have seen many books with the word "missional" in its title. The Internet also offers many sites that are dedicated to missional education and discussion. Below is a list of Internet links that point to topics dealing with some aspect of the missional nature of the church.

Allelon: A Movement of Missional Leaders, http://www.allelon.org

Alan Hirsch, http://www.theforgottenways.org

Becoming Missional, http://www.becomingmissional.blogspot.com

Being Missional, http://www.beingmissional.com

Biblical Seminary, http://www.biblical.edu/index.php/missional-journal

Brother Maynard, http://www.subversiveinfluence.com

Ed Stetzer, http://www.edstetzer.com

Grady Bauer, http://www.missionalspace.com

Jamie Arpin-Ricci, http://www.missional.ca

Jim Thomas, "The Missional Church," http://www.urbana.org

J.R. Woodard, http://www.jrwoodard.net

Mennonite Mission Network,
http://www.mennonitemission.net/Tools/MissioDei/Pages/Home.aspx

Missio, http://www.missio.us

Missional Apologetics, http://missionalapologetics.com

Missional Church Center, http://www.missional.org

Missional Church Network, http://www.missionalchurchnetwork.com

Missional International Church Network, http://www.micn.org

Missional Lutherans, http://www.missionallutherans.org

Missional In Suburbia, http://www.missionalinsuburbia.com

Missional Network: North American Mission Board, http://www.missionalnetwork.org

Missional Outreach Network, http://www.missionaloutreachnetwork.com

Missional People, http://www.missionalpeople.com

Rick Meigs, http://www.friendofmissional.org

Rick Meigs, http://www.theblindbeggar.org

The Center for Parish Development, http://www.missionalchurch.org

The Missional Challenge, http://www.missionalchallenge.com

The Missional Network, http://www. roxburghmissionalnet.com

Tiffany Smith, http://www.missionalmayhem.com

Tim Keller, http://www.redeemer.com

Verge Network, http://www.vergenetwork.org

Vineyard USA, http://www.vineyardusa.org/site/content/how-to-be-missional-your-church

APPENDIX 2

MISSIO DEI SERMON SERIES

**Sermon 1—*Missio Dei:* "Jesus Came for You" (Luke 24)**

A. Introduction: *Missio Dei* (The Mission of God)
    1. If there is no resurrection (1 Cor 15:12-18)
    2. The four pillars of Christianity:
        a. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Lord
        b. The Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Lord
        c. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord
        d. The Return of Jesus Christ, the Lord

B. The Interrogative: What does Easter mean for you?
    1. The promise of Easter: Jesus came to offer you forgiveness (Luke 24:39, 46)
        a. The cross represents the promise of Easter
    2. Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29)
        a. The story of grace
        b. Jesus died for sins (1 Cor 15:3)
        c. You can be forgiven of anything
    3. The power of Easter: Jesus came to conquer death for you (Luke 24:39, 46)
        a. The empty tomb represents the power of Easter
        b. Who gives us power of the grave?
            i. Science
            ii. Philosophy
            iii. Medicine
            iv. Religion

c. Come to the grave of Jesus

i. A literal resurrection

ii. A physical resurrection (Luke 24:39)

d. My religion will not get me to heaven

e. My righteousness will not get me to heaven (Eph 2:1-9)

C. Conclusion

1. Jesus came for you so that:

a. You can be forgiven of every sin

b. You do not have to fear death

**Sermon 2—*Missio Dei*: "The Heavenly Life Guard" (Luke 19:1-10)**

A. Introduction:

1. The Easter Story

a. The story of God's mission

b. The story of God's love for people

c. People matter to God, so they must matter to us

2. Jesus came to help people develop a relationship with the Father

a. Love for the Father

b. Gave us an example in his love for people

c. He changed the world

B. Interrogative: How do you help people develop a relationship with the Father?

1. Seek Friendships (Luke 19:10)

a. If you want to connect with God's mission—Constantly look for way to develop friendships

b. Maladies Christians get that prevent them from participating in God's mission:

i. Comfortitus: We think church is in here

ii. Prejudice: We are friends with those that are most like us

iii. Holeria: We are judgmental towards "sinners" (Luke 19:7)

2. The Mission of Jesus (Luke 15)
    a. The lost sheep
    b. The lost coin
    c. The lost son
3. If we are to be like Jesus we will love people and reach out to people indiscriminately!
4. Serve People (Luke 19:5)
    a. In the Gospels we see Jesus feeding, healing, and helping people
    b. Being a servant involves:
        i. Faithfulness to be a good friend
        ii. Patience in seeking to understand the other person's needs
        iii. Genuineness in wanting to help them
5. Be Sensitive to the Holy Spirit

C. Conclusion

1. This week let us be alert to the Spirit's prompting, asking him to lead us toward the people with whom we are supposed to build bridges of friendship
2. The Lord came to seek and to save you. He wants to be your friend

**Sermon 3—*Missio Dei*: "Me A Missionary?" (Matthew 18:18-20, Acts 1:8)**

A. Introduction

1. Jesus came to the world on a mission
2. Jesus wants you to be his missionary

B. Sermon Idea: Three truths about our mission

1. The Authority of Jesus Commands us To Go (Matt 28:18)
2. The Plan of Jesus Tells Us How to Go (Matt 28:19)
    a. Making disciples.
    b. Disciples love God and love people (Matt 22:36-40)
    c. Disciples proclaim the gospel (Matt 24:14).

3. The Power of Jesus Helps Us as We Go (Acts 1:8).

C. Conclusion

1. Whatever the Lord gives you the authority to do, he also gives you the power to do it
2. Have you discovered God's purpose for your life?

**Sermon 4—*Missio Dei*: "Becoming a Fellowship on Mission"**

A. Introduction: God is a triune, missionary God

1. God the Father sent God the Son
2. God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit to empower God the Son
3. God the Son sends his followers
4. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to empower his followers
5. The Holy Spirit continues to empower and send Christ-followers, until the end comes

B. The Incarnation of God is Christ Jesus (John 1:1-13)

C. The Incarnation of Jesus is his Church (John 20:21, Eph 1:22-23)

1. The body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27)
2. The ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14-21)

D. Clarity of Mission for The Rock Church

1. A fellowship on mission
2. A fellowship with the Spirit
3. Love God, Love People, Change the World

E. Conclusion

APPENDIX 3

SERMON BASED LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES
FOR *MISSIO DEI* SERMON SERIES

**Discussion Guide 1—*Missio Dei:* The Mission Of Jesus**

**Getting Started (Complete before LifeGroup meeting)**

1. What insight, principle, or lesson did you learn from the weekend message?

2. Read John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:1-10, Colossians 1:1-20, Hebrews 1:1-4. Who is Jesus?

3. If somebody was to ask you, "What is God like?" What would you say?

**LifeGroup Discussion**

1. You have no responsibilities next Saturday. You can spend the day doing anything you like. What do you do?

2. What is a missionary? *Missio Dei* is a Latin term that means "The Mission of God." God is a missionary God. God's Nature is Trinitarian.

    a. The Father sent the son (John 3:176-17).

    b. The Son embraced his sent assignment (John 17:3).

    c. The Father and the Son send the Spirit (John 15:26-27).

    d. The Father, Son and Spirit send the church.

3. Based on the scriptures of the assigned readings, who is Jesus? So if somebody wants to know God, or to know what God is like, all they have to do is look at Jesus!

**Doctrines that are Foundational to Christianity**

1. The Incarnation. The four passages that you were assigned to read are called the Christological passages. They reveal the identity of Jesus.

2. The Atonement. The death of Jesus was:

a. Sacrificial for sin (Heb 9:26-28).

b. Substitutionary for sinners (Rom 5:6-11).

c. Saving for those who have faith (Rom 3:21-26).

3. Justification – to declare righteous (Rom 3:20, 28, Gal 2:16).

4. Redemption – to pay a ransom price for the release of a captive or a slave (Mark 10:45, Gal 3:13, 1 Tim 2:6

5. Regeneration – to become alive from death, or simply to enter a realm of spiritual life with God (John 3:3, Titus 3:5).

6. Sanctification – First it is to be set apart to God appositionally by sacrifice (1 Cor 6:11, Heb 10:10). Second, it is the process by which the Holy Spirit transforms us to be like Christ (Rom 8, Gal 5).

7. Repentance – means a change of mind regarding sin. It is a repudiation of the old life and a turn to God for salvation (Mark 1:15, Acts 2:38, 3:19).

8. Faith – is the means by which we receive the free gift of salvation that was purchased for us on the cross by Jesus. We exercise faith in the work of Jesus as he paid for our sin (Rom 10:9-10, Gal 2:16).

9. The Resurrection of Christ Jesus (1 Cor 15:1-12).

10. The Return of Christ Jesus (Mark 13:24-27, Rev 1:7-8, 2 Pet 3:9-10).

**Closing**

1. Pastor Timothy talked about the "Promise and the Power of Easter." Who do you know that needs to hear about these truths? Pray for them.

2. What is an important prayer need in your life right now? Pray for these.

**Discussion Guide 2—*Missio Dei*: Jesus Came to Seek and to Save!**

**Getting Started (Complete before LifeGroup meeting)**

1. What insight, principle, or lesson did you learn from the weekend message?

2. Read Luke 15. What are the things that were lost?

3. Read Luke 19:1-10.

**LifeGroup Discussion**

1. The first time I became aware of God's love for me was…

2. Share about a time when you were lost. What did it feel like? How did you get out of the situation?

3. What does Missio Dei mean?

4. In the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus, Jesus told us what his mission on earth was. What is it? (Luke 19:10)

5. Now read Luke 5:27-32. Based on your readings for this week, what kind of people did Jesus associate with?

6. Jesus was called a "friend of sinners" (Matt 11:19). Was this meant to be a compliment? Why did Jesus befriend this kind of people? Does the church continue this strategy today?

7. The way/method of Jesus could be called "Friendship Evangelism." Sometimes we can be guilty of two extremes when it comes to our relationship with the world:

    a. Christian Isolationism – the "Holy Huddle." (Discuss)

    b. Christian Immersion – the "Unholy Alliance." (Discuss)

8. Read 1 Peter 4:3-4. Discuss this question: How do we engage the lost like Jesus, and at the same time maintain our godliness? Is this a challenge to you?

**Closing**

1. Hand out the S2 Cards. Read through the card. This week begin to have open eyes to people around you that need to begin a relationship with God.

2. What is the biggest prayer need in your life right now? End the group praying for one another.

## Discussion Guide 3—*Missio Dei*: Me A Missionary?

**Getting Started (Complete before LifeGroup meeting)**

1. What insight, principle, or lesson did you learn from the weekend message?

2. Read the four Missional Mandates (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:8).

3. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. What do these passages teach about the presence of Jesus on earth now?

**LifeGroup Discussion**

1. What vacation or big trip (either as a child or adult) did you enjoy the most?

2. Here are some key truths from the Sunday message and from our readings. Read and discuss.

a. God is a missionary God. The Father sent the Son. The Son And the Father send the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are sending the church.

b. God's mission is to redeem people from every tongue, tribe and nation of this world.

c. The church is the means by which God accomplishes his mission today.

d. Like our Savior we are sent to live among people who do not know God so that they might see his Kingdom and enter in.

3. Read the following verses and discuss these principles. A missional church must therefore be at least three things:

a. Spirit-Driven (Acts 1:8, 13:1-4).

b. Contextual (1 Cor 9:19-23).

c. Incarnational (Eph 1:15-23).

4. In the Great Commission we are told by Jesus to "Go and make disciples." Do you see yourself as a missionary?

5. How much of what we do as a church is about "gathering" and how much is about "going?"

6. If a missionary were to move to our city, what would they do? How would they begin to take the gospel to our neighbors?

7. What are ways that you can live as a "sent one" in your life?

8. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. What are three things we might do as a group to share the gospel in our community?

**Closing**

1. Pray that God will use you as his missionary in your family, neighborhood, school, or workplace.

2. Have you identified people for your S2 card? Pray for these people.

3. What is the biggest prayer need in your life right now? Take time to pray for one another.

**Discussion Guide 4: Missio Dei: Becoming A Fellowship On Mission**

**Getting Started (Complete before LifeGroup meeting).**

1. What insight, principle, or lesson did you learn from the weekend message?

2. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What did Jesus tell us to "make?"

3. Read Matthew 22:34-40.

**LifeGroup Discussion**

1. What was the high point and low point of the past two weeks for you? Explain.

2. In light of the study of the past several weeks, what is the mission of the church?

3. What is a disciple? What does a disciple of Jesus look like?

4. Discuss the following statements Pastor Timothy made in his message Sunday.

    a. The Rock Church is moving towards being missional. Being missional means that we will live like missionaries in our city. (What could this look like?)

    b. In a missional church, everything the church is and does is aligned with carrying out the mission of God in our community. (What might have to change if this becomes a reality?)

    c. In a missional church, every church member is taught and led to understand that they are to personally connect with God's mission, that they are the hands and feet of Jesus in their world (family, community, and workplace). Are you ready to be a missionary? If you are not, who will reach the people that live and work around you?

5. Does your workplace have a mission statement? If so, what is it?

6. Mission statements are designed to give purpose, define direction, protect from distractions, and produce focus. Which of these is most needed by The Rock Church?

7. Things other than our Biblical mission can drive churches. Discuss. (examples: tradition, personalities, buildings, budget, or denomination)

8. Here is an excerpt from the message Sunday. Read and discuss what kind of impact our new mission statement could have in the life of The Rock Church.

*So from reading the gospels, we know that Christ commissioned us to make disciples. We also know that disciples are people who are growing in three vital relationships: their love for God, their love for people, and their connection with God's mission in this world. Therefore we can see that the mission of The Rock Church is to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commandments and the Great Commission. May we ever be a people that Love God, Love People, and Change the World!*

9. Read Matthew 22:34-40. How can you grow in your relationship with God? How can grow in your love for people?

10. What are ways that our group can "Change the World?"

**Closing**

1. Pull out your S2 cards and spend time praying for people who need a relationship with Jesus.

2. What is your greatest spiritual need right now? Pray for one another.

APPENDIX 4

LIFEGROUP LEADER'S JOB DESCRIPTION

Thank you for serving as a LifeGroup Leader at The Rock Church. As a LifeGroup Leader you will be viewed by those in your group as a leader in the church. As a result, we ask that you make the following commitments to The Rock Church Leadership Values:

1. Chemistry: I will embody and reflect the Mission and Values of The Rock Church and will follow and cooperate with the leadership of the Pastors Team.

2. Celebrate: I will faithfully attend worship services of The Rock Church on Sundays.

3. Connect: I will make my LifeGroup a priority by faithfully caring for and leading my group. As a result I will:
   - Pray for the people in my group.
   - Follow up with each person in my group in event of their absence.
   - Plan at least one fellowship event this semester.

4. Contribute: I will lead my LifeGroup to support the mission and ministries of the church by:
   - Being an example in my financial support.
   - Leading my group to *SERVE* during the semester.

5. Change the World: I will lead my LifeGroup to participate in the *Missio Dei* by:
   - Taking a moment each week to ask the four missional accountability questions:
     1) Am I reading the Bible daily?
     2) Am I praying for the lost daily?
     3) Am I abiding in Christ Jesus and rejecting sin daily?
     4) Am I connecting with God's mission and seeking to befriend the lost daily?
   - Using the S2 Cards each week during our prayer time.
   - Planning and doing one *MISSION* event as a group.

_____ _____

Name _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 5

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Pre- and post-project survey results

| Pre-Test—78 Respondents | | | | | | | Post-Test—55 Respondents | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Question | SA | A | U | D | SD | % | Question | SA | A | U | D | SD | % |
| Q1 | 36 | 10 | 2 | 18 | 12 | 58/42 | Q1 | 29 | 24 | 2 | | | 96/4 |
| Q2 | 48 | 15 | 11 | 4 | | 58/42 | Q2 | 17 | 33 | 3 | 2 | | 90/10 |
| Q3 | 17 | 61 | | | | 80/20 | Q3 | 21 | 34 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 63/37 |
| Q4 | 6 | 30 | 12 | 18 | 12 | 46/54 | Q4 | 29 | 24 | 11 | | | 96/4 |
| Q5 | | 11 | 11 | 49 | 7 | 71/29 | Q5 | 4 | 31 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 63/37 |
| Q6 | 42 | 27 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 54/46 | Q6 | 29 | 19 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 87/13 |
| Q7 | 38 | 34 | 6 | | | 49/51 | Q7 | 33 | 19 | 3 | | | 95/5 |
| Q8 | 4 | 28 | 9 | 37 | | 41/59 | Q8 | 10 | 15 | 6 | 24 | | 45/55 |
| Q9 | 36 | 29 | 6 | 7 | | 47/53 | Q9 | 19 | 26 | 4 | 6 | | 82/18 |
| Q10 | | 30 | 6 | 27 | 15 | 53/47 | Q10 | | 19 | 3 | 23 | 10 | 35/65 |
| Q11 | 7 | 30 | 9 | 32 | | 52/48 | Q11 | 10 | 32 | 9 | 5 | | 76/24 |
| Q12 | | | | | | | Q12 | 49 | | | 6 | | 89/11 |
| Q13 | 3 | 34 | 12 | 29 | | 48/52 | Q13 | 12 | 32 | 5 | 6 | | 80/20 |
| Q14 | | 47 | 9 | 22 | | 60/40 | Q14 | 6 | 32 | 7 | 10 | | 69/31 |
| Q15 | 32 | 31 | 12 | 3 | | 41/59 | Q15 | 25 | 26 | 2 | 2 | | 93/7 |
| Q16 | 5 | 42 | 13 | 18 | | 60/40 | Q16 | 35 | 20 | | | | 100/0 |
| Q17 | | 25 | 7 | 29 | 17 | 32/68 | Q17 | | 11 | 11 | 28 | 5 | 20/80 |
| Q18 | 24 | 42 | 5 | 7 | | 84/16 | Q18 | 17 | 35 | 3 | | | 94/6 |
| Q19 | 11 | 52 | 6 | 9 | | 80/20 | Q19 | 10 | 36 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 83/17 |
| Q20 | 14 | 38 | 9 | 15 | 2 | 66/34 | Q20 | 13 | 30 | 5 | 7 | | 78/22 |
| Q21 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 37 | | 42/58 | Q21 | 7 | 32 | 9 | 7 | | 70/30 |
| Q22 | 68 | 10 | | | | 100/0 | Q22 | 54 | 1 | | | | 98/2 |
| Q23 | 58 | 17 | 2 | 1 | | 96/4 | Q23 | 39 | 15 | 1 | | | 98/2 |
| Q24 | 46 | 15 | 1 | 16 | | 78/22 | Q24 | 38 | 14 | 2 | 1 | | 95/5 |
| Q25 | 6 | 45 | 9 | 18 | | 65/35 | Q25 | 11 | 34 | 8 | 2 | | 82/18 |
| Q26 | 7 | 45 | 4 | 22 | | 66/34 | Q26 | 10 | 37 | 4 | 4 | | 85/15 |
| Q27 | 4 | | 2 | 6 | 66 | 92/8 | Q27 | 2 | | 1 | 7 | 45 | 5/95 |
| Q28 | 7 | 41 | 11 | 19 | | 61/39 | Q28 | 18 | 29 | 5 | 3 | | 85/15 |
| Q29 | 32 | 41 | 2 | 3 | | 93/7 | Q29 | 20 | 30 | 3 | 2 | | 91/9 |
| Q30 | 66 | 7 | 3 | 2 | | 93/7 | Q30 | 40 | 12 | 2 | 1 | | 95/5 |
| Q31 | 1 | | 6 | 9 | 62 | 91/9 | Q31 | 1 | | 1 | 5 | 53 | 96/4 |
| Q32 | 34 | 36 | 3 | 5 | | 89/11 | Q32 | 22 | 27 | 2 | 4 | | 89/11 |
| Q33 | 19 | 28 | 14 | 17 | | 60/39 | Q33 | 25 | 27 | 2 | 1 | | 95/5 |

# APPENDIX 6

## LIFE GROUP SURVEY INSTRUMENT

# LifeGroup Survey

THE ROCK CHURCH
OF SAINT LOUIS

**LifeGroup Member's Survey**

**Agreement to Participate:**
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help the Pastors discern the missional nature of our LifeGroup leaders and its participants. This research is being conducted by Pastor Timothy Cowin for the purpose of completing a Doctoral Project. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions based on your knowledge of and participation in the LifeGroup ministry of The Rock Church.

Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

What is your sex?
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your age?
- ☐ 18-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60 and over

What is your marital status?
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Separated or divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Married

How long have you been a member of this church?
- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11 + years

THE ROCK CHURCH OF SAINT LOUIS

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions using this key:

**LG – LifeGroup**

**SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree U – Undecided D – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree**

1. People in my LG share their faith regularly.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

2. People in my LG pray for the unchurched regularly.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

3. I am growing in maturity as a follower of Christ Jesus.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

4. The leadership in my LG regularly emphasizes the need to share our faith with the unchurched.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

5. My LG intentionally plans evangelistic mission projects.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

6. I have a daily prayer time.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

7. The leadership in my church regularly emphasizes the importance of prayer.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

8. The priority focus of the church should be meeting the needs of its members.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

9. I have a daily time of Bible reading and study.

   SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

THE ROCK CHURCH
OF SAINT LOUIS

10. I have fears about sharing my faith with other people.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

11. The people in our church understand the church's mission and purpose.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

12. The mission statement of our church is:

_____.

13. The mission of my LG involves reaching the unchurched.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

14. People in our church are trained and equipped to share and defend their faith.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

15. The lifestyles of the members of my LG are different than the unchurched in our community.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

16. I believe the Bible teaches that every Christian is a missionary in their community.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

17. Our church is more interested in the needs of our members then in reaching out to unchurched people.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

18. I pray regularly for people who do not have a personal relationship with the Lord.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

19. I would like more training in how to share and defend my faith.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

20. Our church is very involved in ministry in our community.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

21. I regularly look for opportunities to invite people to church worship services.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

22. I believe the Bible is God's Word.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

23. I use the Bible to guide me in making decisions and in the way I live my life.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

24. I pray to discover God's will in using me to make Himself known to the unchurched.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

25. My LG holds me accountable for spiritual growth.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

26. I intentionally involve myself in relationships outside of my church family, for the purpose of helping people know the Lord.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

27. People can have a relationship with God outside of Jesus Christ.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

28. The leaders of my church encourage members to act as missionaries in our culture.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

29. I regularly ask the Holy Spirit to give me power to be a witness for Christ in my daily life.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

30. Hell is a literal place.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

31. People of non-Christian faiths may go to heaven if they live a good life.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

32. The main purpose of my LG is to help me help me grow.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

33. The main purpose of my LG is to help me connect with God's mission in the world.

SA□ A□ U□ D□ SD□

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ABSTRACT

USING THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT THE
ROCK CHURCH OF SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI,
TO HOLD CHRISTIANS ACCOUNTABLE TO
A MISSIONAL LIFESTYLE

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The purpose of this project was to use the small group ministry of The Rock Church of Saint Louis to hold Christians accountable to living missionally. Particular focus was paid to mobilizing members to be personally involved in evangelism and mission.

Chapter 1 explores the background of The Rock Church and current ministry challenges.

Chapter 2 examines biblical and theological insights for understanding the mission of God and the use of small groups.

Chapter 3 depicts the missional church and discusses its characteristics.

Chapter 4 describes the steps taken to use the small groups of The Rock Church to hold Christians accountable to missional lifestyles.

Chapter 5 is an analysis of data collected and a final evaluation of the purpose and goals of the project.

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