

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS GOSPEL COMMUNITY?

What is a Gospel Community?

Gospel Communities (GC's) are smaller groups of people committed to each other and to the lost – their desire is to see the Gospel transform lives. Thus, GC's open their lives to one another (Acts 2:42-46) and are inviting to those who do not know Jesus. GC's are simply ordinary people doing ordinary things with a Gospel mindset, together.

At Element, we believe that what you see on Sundays is the tip of the iceberg - meaning that church really happens on a smaller, more intimate level where people live out the identity of Jesus found in the Gospel:

MISSIONARIES - We live actively as missionaries, sent to make disciples.

FAMILY - We are children of God who live and care for each other as a family.

SERVANTS - We are servants of God who serve others as a way of life.

LEARNERS - We are disciples of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others.

Gospel Communities are central to our vision to redeem the culture by bringing the gospel to the central coast and beyond.

To Clarify...A Gospel Community is not PRIMARILY:

1. A Small Group
2. A Bible Study
3. A Support Group
4. A Social Activist Group
5. A Weekly Meeting

Small Groups	Gospel Communities
Small Groups often tend to be a weekly meeting. People talk about 'small group night' –the evening in which they 'do' small group by attending a meeting.	A Gospel Community is about a shared life, a network of relationships, a genuine community of people.

Small groups are often centered around a Bible Study.	The Bible is central to the life of a Gospel Community, but the Bible is read, discussed and lived throughout the week in the context of a shared life.
Small groups are often insular and focused on the mutual care of the members.	Pastoral care is a feature of Gospel Communities, but they are also groups with a strong sense of mission. They can articulate their vision for mission and identify the specific people they are trying to reach.
Small groups are normally managed centrally by the church leadership.	Gospel Communities are given a mandate to reproduce organically and understand that they ARE the church.

Our hopes for Gospel Communities:

1. Have a clearly defined mission

- Articulate who you feel called to reach and where you will focus
- Call others to that mission with you
- Focus the movement of the group toward that mission
- Consider Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8 preceding Acts 2:42-47

2. Led by shared leadership

- GC Leaders see that they are leaders of Element, and that Pastoral Care within Element will happen through Gospel Communities. Thus de-centralizing Element as a whole and spreading the responsibility.
- Married GC Leaders will lead with Complementarian leadership where they know and live out the gender roles found in scripture.
- GC Leaders look for and help mentor apprentices to become GC leaders, and share the responsibility with them.
- Consider Titus 1:5-6, 1 Timothy 3:8, Matthew 9:36-38, Genesis 1:27-31

3. Be all encompassing

- Leaders and believers willing to share their entire lives with each other and those they are building relationships with for the Gospel (This means the GC does not meet just one time a week for bible study)
- GC's are open, available and inviting to anyone.
- GC's are diverse in people, including: age, marital status, life situations, gender, economic, racial and religious (as we are to be including non-believers, therefore those who do not agree with us or believe what we do)
- Consider 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

4. In submission to an Element Christian Church's coaches and overseeing pastors which would include oversight, coaching and connection to ongoing development tools and resources

- Each GC should have a clearly identified coach who provides oversight for the effectiveness of the GC
- The coach and Elders work together to identify appropriate equipping and development opportunities

5. They would be an accurate and effective display and declaration of the gospel to a people or culture that needs to experience the Good News of Jesus Christ

- The goal is not simply to get people to come to our our Sunday service (although important)
- The goal is to bring the church family to the mission field and live in such a way that preaches the gospel in deed and word
- Consider 1 Peter 2:9-23

6. They would live out the reality of being the Church together as they walk through life together and live out mission together

- We envision every part of our region saturated with the Church living out the Gospel in every place and in every way possible.
- Church would no longer be seen as an event people go to, but a people called by God on mission to display and declare the gospel and see all things restored to the Father

7. They would raise up indigenous leaders who would birth new GC's in the specific area or people group that is the identified mission

- Leadership development happens best in community – especially while leading people on mission (not just in a classroom)
- The measurement of our effectiveness isn't how many people are in the MC, but how many people come to faith, are growing in spiritual maturity and are equipped to lead others
- Consider Ephesians 4:11-14 and 2 Timothy 2:2

8. Possibly could lead to the development of new Church Plants and Biblically qualified elders being appointed to lead and oversee new GC's and Churches

- In all of this we are committed to planting more churches, NOT growing one big expression meeting altogether in one big building
- We must hold ourselves to the first mandate given to humanity which was restated through Jesus – be fruitful and multiply and fill this earth...make disciples of all nations
- This will require not only church planting, but the development and appointing of Biblically qualified overseers (elders) and lead servants (deacons)
- Consider 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9

Formed by and for the Gospel

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," Ephesians 4:11-12.

Jesus is the one who equips us to do His work. We are limited beings, and must remember who we are and what Jesus has done and is doing. Jesus is building His church, and He it is an amazing honor that He is using us to accomplish His mission. It is a very weighty task, none of us are good enough, but He does equip us with His gifts to further His kingdom, to use to build up the body. And we grow in these gifts everyday.

The Gospel will go out and change lives. It is slow and hard work and requires us to live differently outside of our comfort, but just imagine if Santa Maria and Central Coast starting to change by the Gospel and for the Gospel by small communities of believers, dedicated to Jesus and His mission.

Church is not an event. It's a Community.

Mission is not an event. It's a lifestyle.

We are called to live ordinary life with Gospel Intentionality.

-Tim Chester

Questions:

- Explain the difference between a small group and a Gospel Community.
- In what ways have your preconceived ideas of what a Gospel Community is affected your thinking or attitude towards GC's?
- What is the hardest part about what a GC is supposed to be for you?
- Can you clearly articulate a missional focus God has called you to?
- What is the importance of a leader in a GC?
- Are you willing to share your whole life with others?
 - What does that mean for you?
- What is the Gospel Story? How comfortable are you sharing it with others?

Resources:

Please note: We have found these resources helpful, but we do not necessarily endorse every aspect of them. or an updated list, and links to all these resources found online at ourelement.org/gccoaching

- **Element's of a GC Meeting** (PDF)
- **Watch Soma Video** (Video)
- **Total Church**, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis (Book)
- Listen/Watch to Total Church Audio/Video Conference Sessions
- **GC Leader Identities & Rhythms +Actions** (PDF)
- **Questions for Gospel Communities** (PDF)
- **Porterbrook Network** (Study)
- **Community** by Brad House (Book)

Plan of Attack:

In light of what you learned in this lesson, make an honest assessment of where you are at and where you would like to be before becoming a GC leader. Work with your mentor/coach to create a plan of attack for the next month. For example, consider setting a goal to read up on a subject or to begin to identify in your GC the areas of strength and weaknesses and the steps to help the weak areas. Be prepared to discuss your plans of attack with your mentor/coach.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE & CALLING OF A LEADER

Jesus has a compelling vision of how God's kingdom will grow. He is calling men and women from every nation and race to become His disciples and go into the world on His behalf.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) 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, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God has appointed leaders in the church to lead His people into mutual ministry with one another for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and reaching out to the world (Eph. 4:11-13)

What is a Gospel Community Leader?

The most Biblically appropriate description of the role of a Gospel Community (GC) Leader is that of a shepherd. Jesus saw thousands of neglected people in cities and communities who needed shepherds. Mat 9:36-38 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (37) Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; (38) therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." GC Leaders are shepherds, under the authority of our great shepherd, Jesus, with a vision and a plan to appropriately care for and lead people. As a shepherd, a GC Leader has three primary responsibilities: to care for the flock, to protect the flock, and to lead the flock. In this way, a GC Leader seeks to cultivate a shepherding community that is on mission to see lives transformed by Jesus.

Caring for, Protecting and Leading the Flock

Gospel Communities are the primary source of pastoral care at Element Christian Church. There are several reasons for this. First, it is impossible for the limited number of elders to provide appropriate pastoral care to the many members of the church. Second, Jesus has chosen to use the members

of the church body to minister to each other as they share life together in deep community. In this context, a GC Leader has a unique opportunity to know the needs, both physical and spiritual, of the group's members, and to seek ways to meet those needs within the community. Of course, some needs require a higher level of care. In order to provide appropriate levels of care to all members, all GC Leaders are cared for by a coach and an overseeing pastor. GC Leaders must then be people who sense a calling or passion from the Lord to care for, protect and lead people.

John 21:15-17 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." (16) He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." (17) He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Because Gospel Communities are the context for building deep relationships marked by profound honesty, GC Leaders are in a unique position to know the intimate details of their group members' lives. As such, a GC Leader should be prayerfully discerning in evaluating the words, actions, and motives of group members, seeking to protect them from accepting false teaching about God or themselves, and from worshipping false gods.

In addition to protecting and caring for the members within the group, it is also the role of the GC Leader to lead the group in mission. Primarily, this means looking outside of the Gospel Community, rooting the group's life in the culture of its neighborhood, so that people in the neighborhood would have the opportunity to see Jesus worshipped in the shared life of this community. The GC Leader must ensure that the group develops a missional focus in order to effectively engage unbelievers so that they might have the opportunity to meet Jesus and be transformed through relationships with his body.

Personal Attributes Required:

- Have a maturing and growing personal walk with Jesus that is intimate and satisfying. *John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
- Have a solid understanding from Scripture of who God is and what He is like.

- Ability to explain the power and purposes of the gospel, and to counsel others in its application to real life situations
- Lives an open and honest life of confession and repentance, both in prayer and in relationships
- Leads by example by being willing to share one's whole life and open one's home to GC members and non-believers
- Is a member of Element Christian Church
- Is committed to the purpose and reflects the values of Element Christian Church as outlined in the Member Covenant
- Has a humble demeanor and teachable spirit; is submitted to Element Leadership
- Solid reputation (above reproach) inside and outside the church
- Healthy family life that reflects the biblical qualifications of a leader and complementarian model
 - The husband leads his home in the areas of spiritual growth, management of the household, discipline of children, and ministry as a family.
 - The wife actively partners with her husband by submitting to his leadership, assisting him in his duties, caring for her husband and children, and involvement in ministry.
 - Have a God-honoring healthy sex life where each partner gives themselves to satisfy the other, and they are faithful to each other in mind and body.
- Willing to be judged with greater strictness as a leader in the church (James 3:1)
- Willing to disclose and discuss any past sins or issues that would disqualify or discredit one's ability to lead (this would include church discipline or criminal charges)
- Genuine love for people with demonstrated relational skills
- Good verbal skills and possesses the ability to communicate in such a way that is clear and understandable, with warmth, empathy, and graciousness
- Ability to both challenge and encourage others in their walk with the Lord

Responsibilities:

- Know each member of the group well enough to articulate a vision for his/her spiritual growth and encourage members in the use of their spiritual gifts for works of ministry

- Provides leadership for weekly Gospel Community meetings, typically in someones home
- Facilitates questions and discussion (around Sunday's sermon) to deepen our understanding and personal relationship with Jesus (groups are for discussion, not lecturing)
- Encourage and ensure healthy discussion, a safe and inviting environment, clear communication, and relationships among people in the group
- Encourages group life outside of the weekly meeting where various group members can share normal life activities with gospel intentions of discipleship and mission.
- Grow and replicate the group (and ultimately grow the Church) through mission and discipleship
- Develop/mentor apprentice group leader(s)
- Serve as a key communication link between members and Element pastors/coaches
- Seek opportunities for the group to interact with the neighborhood through service projects, social events, etc.

Commitment:

This role is a commitment to serve in a ministry leadership role with Element Christian Church. Our intent is that the time you spend shepherding your group will be a blessing both to you the members of your group, as well as fun and energizing. In addition, Element Christian will also invest considerable training and personal development time to strengthen your personal spiritual walk and your leadership skills.

A Gospel Community Leader Commits To:

- Perform Role Duties and maintain Personal Attributes as outlined above
- Will properly prioritize my time and manage my priorities to enable me to fulfill the commitment.
- Willing to be accountable and open to Biblical character standards in regards to: sexual purity, healthy relationships, personal relationship and walk with Jesus, financial responsibility, and positive reputation inside and outside of Element Christian. (We all are sinners and have struggles; so we don't expect perfection. We simply ask that you commit to walking in the light together with us.)

- Gladly submit to the leadership of your Coach and Gospel Community Pastor, and uphold the vision and values of the church
- Inform your Coach and/or Pastor of any major problems or difficulties you or anyone in your group is facing.

Questions:

Do I need the gift of leadership to be an effective GC Leader?

No. Many church leaders in scripture were referred to as “Shepherds.” Shepherding gifts usually involve encouragement, exhortation, and the ability to give guidance or direction. It requires certain relational skills and a certain temperament. Some with the gift of leadership don’t make good small group leaders. Those with “prophetic” gifts are typically good at speaking to and leading large groups. They cast vision and proclaim the Word of God. Often times they make average group leaders.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have a desire to shepherd and care for people?
- Do you like building relationships?
- Do you have a desire to learn the skills needed to lead a small group of people?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then you most likely have the necessary calling to become a GC Leader. A GC leader is someone who has a desire to see and serve the advance of the Kingdom/Church/Gospel. They feel a personal sense of responsibility for the disciple-making mission of Jesus in their city and the spread of the gospel through the Church.

What if I don’t currently possess the many qualities for competent spiritual leadership?

None of us possess all of the qualities of Christian leadership in their fullest sense. Each of us should be growing in Christ-likeness. However, it’s important that we each understand the areas in which we need to grow, and that we work with someone to help you grow in those areas. Two areas to seek personal growth:

Character – the right heart and mind to follow Jesus and lead others. Qualifications for a GC Leader will be in line with those mentioned for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3. A GC leader is someone who embodies the faithfulness and maturity expected of a leader in the church. There should be evidence of a fruit-bearing love for Jesus & others, an active fight against sin, and a desire to grow in Christ and see the gospel spread. Humility is huge. Growing as a faithful disciple of Christ is essential. (Note: this is not an elder position, but it is equivalent to a deacon position. This role will be how we identify, recognize, and raise up future elders. Gospel Community Leaders are to be viewed as godly, mature believers who are elder-“esque”).

Competence – the skills to effectively lead a Gospel Community. A growing ability to lead a community of disciples in and toward...

- Building their lives on the foundation of the Gospel
- Living with gospel intentionality
- Having a clearly defined mission
- Adjusting the life of their own family around community & mission
- Displaying and declaring the Gospel
- Planning for multiplication
- Birthing new Gospel Communities

What is the best way to make sure that I am growing and challenged as a leader?

We need to have relationships where you are accountable for your spiritual growth and maturity. Many of these will develop through your Gospel Community and other ministry associations, but each of us is responsible to lead ourselves. We must individually take the initiative toward developing mutually encouraging relationships with people. Leaders can’t sit back and wait for others to come and seek relationships with us. We must initiate them—it’s part of being a leader.

Questions:

- What excites me the most about being/becoming a GC Leader? What scares me the most?
- What examples of pastoral care have I experienced or received from a pastor, leader, or other believer?
- Is my love for God’s word growing? Do I increasingly desire to spend time in the Word and do I find myself drawing wisdom and strength from the Word daily?
- Am I humble enough to be encouraged, challenged, and taught by those who are leading me as well as those whom I lead?
- Are people comfortable being open and honest around me?
- What are two areas in my life where I most need to mature as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- Am I willing to share not only the gospel with my GC, but my life as well?
- Do I feel confident that I can lead people back to the gospel when they stray?
- Can I identify the areas where each member of my GC personally needs to grow?
- How will I make disciples who make disciples?

Resources:

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- **The Great Omission**, Dallas Willard (Book)
- **The Spirit of the Disciplines**, Dallas Willard (Book)
- **Leading Life-Changing Small Groups**, Bill P. Donahue (Book)
- **Everyday Church: Mission by being Good Neighbors**, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis (Book)
- **Forming and Leading Missional Communities** (Sermon):
www.acts29network.org/sermon/engage-forming-and-leading-missional-communities/
- **Being a leader who grows leaders** (Sermon):
www.acts29network.org/sermon/being-a-leader-who-grows-leaders/
- **The GCM Collective Resources** (Website):
<http://www.gcmcollective.com/resources/>

Plan of Attack:

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CHAPTER 3

THE GOSPEL AS A NOUN

In order to lead people in submission to God's word, Gospel Community leaders must have a solid understanding of the Bible and doctrine. They must be able to communicate that truth to others and be willing to correct errors in love when they arise.

God Rules through His Word

God rules through His word – we see this throughout the Bible. God *speaks* creation into existence out of nothing (Genesis 1). Through His word He brought order out of chaos and light out of darkness (John 1:1-3), and where His word is not heard chaos and darkness close in again (Jeremiah 4:23). Adam and Eve rebel against God's rule by rejecting His word – the serpent encouraged the woman to doubt and then deny God's word (Genesis 3:1, and v4). God speaks a word of promise to Abraham – the beginning of His plan to restore His rule and create a new humanity. God is faithful to His word throughout the Old Testament, even as God's people reject His rule again and again – His liberating, generous, and just law.

In Jesus, the Word is made flesh. The Word speaks and the waves are silenced and the dead are raised to life. The Word speaks and people leave everything to follow Him. He is both the promised messianic king and the Word by which God rules. Jesus does the *work* of the Father through His *words* (John 14:8-13). As Christians, we live with Christ as our King when we respond in faith to the message of His gospel; we submit to His good and gracious rule by submitting to His word.

This truth has big implications for church leaders – it defines their authority and it sets their responsibilities. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis note that this truth “defines the limit of [leaders] authority: they have authority only as they teach God's word. They should not exercise an authority that comes because of the position they hold or the force of their personality. It is through their teaching that leaders exercise the authority of Christ, the Head of the church.” (*Total Church*).

Similarly, this explains why a central responsibility of Biblical leadership is to teach truth and refute error. Departing from God's word is tantamount to departing from God's rule. This is why Paul chastises the Galatians for being bewitched by a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). This is why he repeatedly and soberly warns Timothy and Titus to be on the guard against wolves who

would distort the truth. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

Knowing God's Story

Clearly, a prerequisite for teaching the truth is knowing the truth. As leaders, we should know God's word and to be purposefully growing in our understanding. We should be disciplined in reading the Bible regularly, and even more disciplined in our interpretation of what we read.

We need to understand the narrative arch of the Bible Story – how the pieces of the story fit into the whole and how it is all about Christ. Some Christians have grown up in the church and they intimately know certain passages of the Scriptures, but have very little sense of how it all fits together into a whole.

Tim Chester writes that, “The Bible is not a manual of theology. You cannot look under ‘P’ for prayer to find out how to pray. The Bible is a story. It is an annotated story. It includes notes that explain the theological significance of the story and the practical implications of the story” (*From Creation to New Creation*). It is the story of God's great plan of salvation. It is the story of God's mission to save a people through whom and to whom he would reveal His glory. It is the story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. It is the story of God making good on His promise of a people who know God, a place of blessing, a king and a kingdom, and blessing to the nations.

Jesus is the hermeneutical key to the story. The whole Bible from beginning to end is about Jesus (John 5:39-40, Luke 24). And so we must be able to recognize the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Scriptures and able to vocalize that gospel.

Everyone is living within the context of some story – the story we believe shapes the kind of life we lead. We find our meaning within a context larger than ourselves. So, to be effective missionaries, our Gospel Communities must also know the story of the people they are trying to reach with the Gospel; where it affirms and where it departs from the Bible's story. In their eyes, what is wrong with the world (the fall), and what will make the world right again (redemption)? Where do they look for justice? What is ‘home’ to them? We must show how their story intersects the Bible's story. Similarly, to be effective family to one another and to point one another back to Christ, our Gospel Communities must know each other's stories.

The story we believe shapes the kind of life we lead – this is why false doctrine (believing a story that departs from Christ Jesus) is so deadly. This also means that we can recognize false doctrine by its fruits: Paul warns of the false teacher who “has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.” (1 Timothy 6:4-5). That stands in contrast to sound teaching: “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.” (1 Timothy 1:5-7).

Paul’s advice is simple: *“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.” (1 Timothy 4:7).*

Correcting error in love

False doctrine and erroneous understandings will almost certainly attempt to gain a foothold in your Gospel Community. We are fallen humans and the Father of Lies is hard at work. Sometimes the error is obvious – a new believer offers a bizarre explanation of God. Other times it is more subtle – people give advice that is partly Biblical and partly worldly. People offer interpretations of Bible passages that are partly true and partly wrong. It’s not surprising: Satan used half-truths from God’s word when tempting Adam and Eve, and deceitful interpretations of God’s word when tempting Jesus in the wilderness.

It is absolutely vital that leaders have the courage and conviction to correct erroneous understanding, rather than letting false doctrine slide by simply to avoid confrontation. It is not loving to allow people to continue to believe a lie, nor is it loving to allow your GC family to be led astray by a false gospel. We must fear God more than man.

However, it is also vital that we lead people back to the truth graciously. We are commanded to speak the truth in *love*. Do our corrections leave people feeling humiliated or stupid? Do they leave people afraid to speak up? We must correct error with humility and our motives must be a genuine concern for their good and growth, and love for Jesus and his gospel. Are we correcting to show off our superior knowledge, or because we want to feel like the leader? Are we jumping to wrong conclusions?

We should consider the time and occasions for our corrections. Sometimes, it is best to clarify on the spot. Other times, it may be more appropriate to follow up on an individual basis. Often we must first gather more information. Some people “think out loud” and what they say may not be their real conviction on the matter – merely a partially formed thought. The error may come from ignorance, or a lifetime of poor Bible teaching, or even a simple misstatement

at the end of a long day. However, other people come with an agenda – a theological pet peeve and the GC becomes their captive audience. These are the endless discussions that Paul warns will *“only lead to meaningless speculations, which don’t help people live a life of faith in God.” (1 Timothy 1:4, NLT).*

Paul gives Timothy advice for how to graciously address his congregation, *“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.” (1 Timothy 5).* He reminds us to be gentle with our opponents: *“The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.” (2 Timothy 2:24-25).*

Teaching others

Paul tells Timothy as young leader to be an example to the believers (1 Timothy 4:12). His life and character must stand in contrast to those of the false teachers. Thus, we must be submissive to the Scriptures. We must be teachable and humble, never pretending to know it all. We can’t approach the Scriptures with an agenda. We must be willing to admit it when we are wrong.

Beyond setting the example, we want our leaders to actively encourage others to grow in this area too. Leaders should strive to establish a culture within their GC where it is normal to learn from God’s Word, to discuss God’s Word, and to submit to God’s Word. In some small groups, the Bible is only ever discussed during “group night.” The unspoken rule is that the Bible only comes out at special times and places – but we see Jesus teaching not only in the temple, but on the road, over meals, and everywhere in-between. In addition to the time set aside to study the Bible, consider other ways you can make it ordinary to learn from God’s Word:

- When you have GC family over for dinner, ask them what they are learning from God’s word.
- When you meet up for a movie, discuss how the story it tells affirms or denies the Bible’s story.
- When you paint the living room together, ask follow-on questions from the Sunday sermon.
- When you write an email asking for prayer, explain how a passage from the Bible relates to a situation at work.

When Paul requires the ability to teach as a qualification for elders, he does not necessarily mean delivering a 30 minute monolog in front of a large audience. Leading a small group of people to a better understanding and application of God’s word – to being more fully shaped by God’s story – in the midst of normal life is certainly a form of teaching. By the Spirit’s work in us, it is a form of teaching that is in reach for most of us.

This lesson does not mean that we expect our leaders to seminary-level theologians. We do not expect our leaders to be able to speak on every minute point of theology. The stakes are high, but we can trust that God is sovereign; God can save despite imperfect doctrine (thankfully!). The criminal on the cross next to Jesus probably did not have the best scriptural knowledge. All he said was, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43).

Our prayer for each of you echoes Paul’s charge to young Timothy: “*But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*” (2 Timothy 1:12-14).

Questions:

For you personally:

- Can you summarize the gospel?
- Do you read your Bible regularly?
- Can you explain a simple outline of the Bible?
- Do you feel confident that you can interpret most Bible passages?
- Do you have a desire to learn God’s Word?
- Could you explain to a new believer the importance of the Scriptures?
- Are you willing to confront false teaching?
- Do you feel equipped for handling rebuke and correction graciously?

In your GC:

- Is there a hunger for God’s word and an excitement when it is taught?
- Are people often talking about how the Spirit is speaking to them through his word?
- Is the word of God often discussed outside scheduled Bible studies?
- Are people meeting up to read the Bible together?
- Is there evidence that the word is changing individual lives?
- Is there evidence that the word is changing the life of the community as a whole?
- Are people speaking the truth in love when others face pastoral issues?
- Are people looking to the truth about God rather than blaming their circumstances?

Resources:

Please note: We have found these resources helpful, but we do not necessarily endorse every aspect of them. or an updated list, and links to all these resources found online at ourelement.org/gccoaching

- “Gospel Fluency” by Jeff Vandersteldt (www.acts29network.org/sermon/gospel-fluency)
- SOMA on Story-formed way
- “The Heresy of Application” Haddon Robinson
- (www.christianitytoday.com/le/1997/fall/714020.html)
- Digging Deeper, Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach
- **How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth**, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- Total Church, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis
- Doctrine, Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears
- A good Bible commentary
- “What is the Gospel,” Jeff Vanderstelt, www.acts29network.org/sermon/what-is-the-gospel-vanderstelt

When Paul lists the qualifications for church leaders, the only skill is the ability to teach – rightly handling and applying the word of God (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Plan of Attack:

In light of what you learned in this lesson, make an honest assessment of where you are at and where you would like to be before becoming a GC leader. Work with your mentor/coach to create a plan of attack for the next month. For example, consider setting a goal to read up on a subject or to begin purposefully tell the story of the gospel with someone and relate their problems in life to the Gospel. Be prepared to discuss your ongoing plans of attack from the previous units.

CHAPTER 4

THE GOSPEL AS A VERB

Be Imitators of God

In the last chapter, we discussed the importance of understanding the gospel as a noun; of knowing the Bible story and recognizing sound teaching from error. We must have a handle on the scriptures, but James warns us that merely hearing the Scriptures is not enough. We must be doers of the Word (James 1:22). There is a big difference between the demons who know Jesus is Christ and king and the disciple who lives for Jesus as Christ and king (Luke 4:41). In Jesus' parable, there is a big difference between the respectable Priest and Levite who taught God's Word and the despised Samaritan who lived out God's Word (Luke 10:25-37). We must know the gospel as a noun – but we must live with the gospel as a verb. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears comment succinctly that, “we come to the Bible for transformation, not just information.” If we are going to lead others, we must first and foremost have a healthy, growing personal relationship with Jesus. That is non-negotiable.

We are called to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1). It is at the cross that we see the ultimate expression of God's character. So as imitators of God, we are called to take up our cross and follow after Jesus – to follow his sacrificial love, submission to God, willingness to suffer, and service of others (Luke 9:23). And so the imperatives of the gospel flow out of the indicatives: we love because we have been loved; we forgive because we have been forgiven; we reconcile because we have been reconciled; we serve because we have been served... and the list goes on. Our gospel communities should be exactly that – communities that exist because of the gospel, for the sake of the gospel, by the power of the gospel. They should be communities of love, expressed to one another and the lost. They should be communities of welcome, showing fellowship to one another and hospitality to the lost. They should be communities of glad servants and of passionate missionaries. They should be communities of forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, patience, justice, generosity, compassion, hope, and profound joy.

They should be *communities* – not merely a collection of individuals. Have you ever noticed how many times commands in The New Testament include the phrase “one another”? We are commanded to love one another, serve one another, be devoted to one another, accept one another, instruct one another, encourage one another, build each other up... and the list goes on and on. I counted 44 occurrences. *Those commands are not optional extras – rather, they are fundamental to what looks like to live as God's family – to*

bear the family resemblance of Jesus! They are the fruit of the Gospel at work in our lives. Gospel Communities are an excellent context for us to put those commands into practice. Because all too often in larger groups and larger settings, “fellowship” gets downgraded to a shallow chat over coffee; “family” gets downgraded to a theoretical relationship we have with 200 other people we barely know; and the “one anothers” get applied to people we like, but tend to conveniently exclude people we don't like or people who are not like us.

Discipleship is all about living a life that is consistent with the Good News, and pastoral care is all about helping people apply the gospel to daily life. As a GC leader, your calling is not merely look out for your own interest and growth, but to shepherd the members of your GC (1 Peter 5:1-4). We should be able to say with Paul *“like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).*

How? We pastor one another with the gospel, in everyday life, together, with grace.

Pastoral Care – With the Gospel

We must pastor one another with the gospel of grace, not the law. The gospel is good news, not simply cold hard rules to follow. When we disciple one another, we must show how the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus is good news for our specific situations. We must bring the gospel to bear. Because of Jesus' sacrifice for us, we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6). So while the law says “You must not...,” grace says “You need not...”

- You need not get drunk, because God is a better refuge.
- You need not fear the future, because God is in control.
- You need not crave his attention, because God has adopted you as a daughter.

We must pastor one another with the gospel, not merely advice. Advice has its place, but we must distinguish between advice and the gospel, because they carry different levels of authority.

Our problems are a problem of the heart (Luke 6:43). So, we must always trace sin and negative emotions back to the root cause in the heart. There may be complicating issues and external factors, but we need to get beyond the presenting issues to the underlying heart issue. And the heart issue is usually one of replacing the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1). We chose to believe lies and reject God's lordship over us, replacing it with idols that wreck our lives. So when we disciple one another, we must point each other back to the Truth, back to Jesus, which is good news.

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis comment that “Everyone’s behavior is shaped by what they believe. We can listen out for the beliefs that shape people’s behavior and shape their hurts and hopes. This then allows us to speak of the liberating truth of God which counters the lies upon which people build their lives and which eventually fail them in some way:

- God is great – so we don’t have to be in control
- God is glorious – so we don’t have to fear others
- God is good – so we don’t have to look elsewhere
- God is gracious – so we don’t have to prove ourselves

“Underlying so much of our sinful behavior and negative emotions is a failure to believe one of these truths at a functional level. Embracing, believing, trusting, delighting in the appropriate liberating truth therefore has the power to set us free from sin – though we need to recognize that this typically involves a daily struggle – the fight of faith. These four liberating truths offer a great diagnostic tool for addressing sin in our lives and in the lives of others.” (*Everyday Church*)

These truths about God are seen throughout the Bible story, but they reach their culmination in the cross of Christ. They are easy to assent to intellectually, but it is interesting when you begin to look at the behavioral signs of our disbelief. Consider the case of trying to do pastoral care while believing a lie:

The Truth	Contrary Indicators
God is great – so we don’t have to be in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You are overbearing ● You are inflexible or risk averse ● You are impatient with people ● You avoid responsibility
God is glorious – so we don’t have to fear others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You avoid confrontation ● You crave approval ● You behave differently around certain people ● You pretend or hide your true self
God is good – so we don’t have to look elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You feel ministry is a burden ● You often complain ● You make people feel a burden or duty ● You don’t stick at things
God is gracious – so we don’t have to prove ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You take criticism and failure badly ● You find it hard to relax ● You are proud or envy the success of others ● You make people feel guilty

(*Everyday Church*)

Similarly, Jonathan Dodson explains that “Nobody sins because they want to be deceived. We sin because we believe what sin offers is true. We believe that being sexually aroused will bring us personal satisfaction or being socially in the know will bring us meaningful acceptance. So, we look at porn and

gossip about others. If we really believed that porn and gossip were based on lies that don’t satisfy, we wouldn’t participate in them. Sin lies to us. We need to get in the habit of talking back with the truth. Instead of expressing faith in the lies of sin, we need to have faith in the truth of the gospel. The gospel is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is the heart-warming, mind-renewing truth that image of the glory of God in the complexion of Jesus is all we need to be truly satisfied, complete, and accepted. We receive it by faith, over and over again.”

Our job is to present that heart-warming, mind-renewing truth over and over again to our brothers and sisters.

Pastoral Care – In Everyday Life

The gospel applies to every facet of life – it answers the big, existential questions, but it also has profound implications for the nitty-gritty of life: how we spend our money, what we do on weekends, who we invite to parties, how we talk about our wives at work, even why we wash the dishes. We must continually ask ourselves: *Does this bring glory to God? Does this commend the gospel of grace or a law of works or a false gospel of cheap grace? Is this showing love to God and my neighbors or to me?*

So when we discuss discipleship in terms of Gospel Communities, we are not simply talking about one-on-one meetings where we catalog our sins from the past week, or where an older Christian offloads their knowledge on a younger Christian. Instead, we need to learn to disciple in everyday life, such as when we wash the dishes together, when discussing the sermon as a group, or when enjoying a BBQ.

We see in the great commandment, the *Shema*, that teaching and discipleship were done in the context of ordinary life – while sitting in your house, or walking down the road (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). In the Gospel accounts, we see Jesus teaching and discipling while eating, while reflecting on events, while walking down a road. We see Paul telling the Thessalonians that he loved them so much that he not only shared the gospel with them, but his life as well. (1 Thessalonians 2:8). The author of Hebrews warns us strongly that we need *daily* exhortation from other believers lest we become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). Everyday pastoral care – lived faithfully and done intentionally – helps prevent crisis pastoral care.

Pastoring in everyday life does not mean that every conversation needs to be an intense counseling session. Rather, it is opening up our lives and allowing others to see the Christian life modeled in the way we love our wives, raise our kids, and serve our neighbors; and they need to see Christian grace modeled when we fail those things. And they need to be reminded that the gospel is the reason for all of it. As leaders, one of the major ways we shepherd the flock entrusted to us is by being an example to them (1 Timothy 4:12).

While we ultimately want to address people's hearts, the presenting issues do need to be addressed. We need to encourage behavior that facilitates discipleship and demonstrates grace. We need to challenge behavior that is in opposition to the gospel. For example, we need to help people develop Godly habits such as personal and corporate prayer, fellowship with God's redeemed community, time in God's word, personal and corporate worship. Those activities are means of grace – ways that God speaks to us and changes us, ways that he addresses and reorients our hearts. However, when we restrict those activities to specially designated times or locations, we risk fostering "checkbox Christianity," where we tempt people to check the box of "church" or "discipleship" or "outreach" for the week and move on to "me time." Why not also teach and demonstrate these means of grace throughout the day and throughout the week – over dinner, or while painting a room or jogging, or before watching a movie?

That said, it is important that we *individually* consider the people we lead. Some people may flourish in a group setting, while others may open up more when talking one-on-one. Some people may take naturally to an all-of-life discipleship approach, while others may benefit from a more structured approach. We need to know our people personally. We need to love our people personally. We need to be prayerful, discerning, and wise. We may even need to change styles as people grow in the faith.

Pastoral Care – Together

Pastoral care is not just *your* job. To a degree, it is the responsibility of all believers. Paul used the same wording of 'teaching and admonishing everyone' of both his ministry as a pastor and of the congregation (Colossians 1:28, Romans 15:14). We are to mutually teach and admonish one another, just like Paul. Thus, we must teach our Gospel Community to disciple one another. We must train them and call them to bring the gospel to bear in their own lives, and in the lives of others.

Pastoral Care – With Grace

The issues we face are complex and our sin is deeply entrenched, so change takes time – often a lifetime. Pastoral care, therefore, needs to be full of grace. We cannot expect instant change, or we will be quickly disillusioned and burnt out. Even after hard-won progress is made, the next day brings new temptations.

As leaders, we are both shepherds and sheep. We are not perfect and it would be a sin to present the image that we are somehow extra holy (1 John 1:8). The temptation for leaders is to look like we to have our act together, to hide all our faults and weaknesses. But that commends legalism, not the gospel! What our people need to see is sinners saved by grace, growing in grace, daily becoming more like Christ. They need to see us repenting, confessing, and forgiving. Martin Luther wrote to pastors that "God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin,

death, and the world." One challenging implication is that we must be open to discipleship, rebuke, and correction – sometimes from the very people we are trying to disciple! That requires real humility and strength. It requires us to be people of grace who pastor with grace.

Discipleship – in our own lives and in the lives of others – can often feel slow, frustrating, and difficult. But here is the encouragement: God is not content to leave us in our sin. God is changing us. The Holy Spirit is sanctifying us. God has made us holy, and is making us holy. Jesus is the bridegroom who washes and beautifies his church with the Word. God is the one who initially softens our hard hearts to his love, and he is the God who continually re-softens our hearts and takes us deeper into his love. That is his good and perfect will for his elect. Because of that, we can go forward boldly with the gospel of Jesus Christ, letting its light flood the ugliest parts of our own hearts and the hearts of those we love and lead. And if God is for us, who can be against us?

Questions:

- Are you at risk of being a hearer of the word but not doer?
- When was the last time you were shocked by the gospel?
- What consumes your thoughts when you have alone time?
- Where do your thoughts go when you enter a social setting?
- How does the gospel affect the way you relate to ...
 - The way you spend your time and money?
 - The way you make decisions?
- When you face a personal challenge, where do you look for answers?
- Are you humble enough to be encouraged, challenged, and taught by those who are leading you as well as those who you lead?
- What are two areas in your life where you most need to mature as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- Are you willing to share not only the gospel with your GC, but your life as well?
- Do you feel confident that you can lead people back to the gospel when they stray?
- Can you identify the areas where each member of your GC personally needs to grow in the gospel?
- How will you make disciples who make disciples?

Resources:

Please note: We have found these resources helpful, but we do not necessarily endorse every aspect of them. or an updated list, and links to all these resources found online at ourelement.org/gccoaching

- **Everyday Church: Mission by being Good Neighbors**, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis (Book)
- **The Cost of Discipleship**, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Book)
- **Fight Clubs: Gospel-Centered Discipleship**, Jonathan Dodson (Book)
- **The Adventure of Discipling Others: Training in the Art of Disciplemaking** Ron Bennett and John Purvis (Book)
- **SOMA Audio on the 4 G's**. (Audio)
- **Tim's articles on the 4 G's** (Article)
- **All of Life is Repentance**, Tim Keller (Article) www.ourelement.org/downloads/sos/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf
- **Redemption: Freed by Jesus from the Idols We Worship and the Wounds We Carry** by Mike Wilkerson (Book)
- **Disciple: Getting Your Identity from Jesus** by Bill Clem (Book)
- **Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples** by Franchis Chan (Book)

Plan of Attack:

In light of what you learned in this lesson, make an honest assessment of where you are at and where you would like to be before becoming a GC leader. Work with your mentor/coach to create a plan of attack for the next month. For example, consider setting a goal to read up on a subject or to begin purposefully discipling someone in the GC. Be prepared to discuss your ongoing plans of attack from the previous units.

CHAPTER 5

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In the last chapter, we looked at the process of gospeling one another through pastoral care. This is discipleship, and is applied to believers (disciplining) and to non-believers (making disciples).

Mission is central to the church

God sent Jesus to earth to take on human form and live within the culture. He worked, ate, and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around Him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came so that all people, places and things could be restored to a right relationship with God. This is the Gospel (Good News). Jesus came and served the very people He wanted to save.

Before He ascends into Heaven, He gives what is known as the Great Commission: *“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.” Matthew 28:18-20*

So many times though in today’s church culture it is evident that we have lost sight that this mission is the central purpose of Jesus, which is Christ’s command to His church. We leave it up to an overseas ‘missionary’ team, or to the pastor on Sundays from the pulpit, or worse... to talk radio.

Acts 1 reminds us of this *“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.”* The Holy Spirit empowers us to do His work in our homes, neighborhoods and the city we are in, then it moves out to the surrounding areas around our city and then to the ends of the earth. But it starts with where WE are.

As believers, we are the church. And as the church, we are commanded to go and make disciples - to spread the good news of Jesus to those who do not know it. This does not mean that you sell everything and move to a 3rd world country (although it could). There are plenty of people right here in Santa Maria, the central coast of California who are lost and do not know Christ. People who need you to live as a missionary to, as you (just like Jesus’ model) work, eat and interact among the people of the central coast in such a way that

they see Jesus through you and experience what God is truly like. Through this community relationship they come to reconciliation with God.

Jesus said: *‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’ John 13:34-35*

It is all about **relationships**. It isn’t about holding up signs, protesting events or clinics, screaming or yelling. It isn’t about telling everybody you know that they are going to hell, or driving around with “Turn or Burn” bumper stickers. It is about living a life that embodies who Christ is. It is about being a person radically changed by the Gospel, that when questioned what is different, the only possible explanation is the power and work of Jesus Christ. It is about building and developing relationships with people, so that they can begin to trust your motives and you begin to identify their false truths, and share the Truth and how Jesus is truly the answer for all of their problems. It is about inviting them into your community, blessing them, serving them and praying for them. It is a life-long commitment, and only Jesus knows the outcome.

Lesslie Newbigin left the UK in the 1950’s for 40 years to India for missionary work. When he came back he realized the church had stopped reaching the culture and simply expected culture to accept the church and to change to become like them. He was floored at how inept the church was at reaching culture based on his experience and training as a missionary.

The church expects people to walk into their doors and change to fit their mold. *But Jesus sends us out...* As believers of Christ, we are the church, and we are to go to the culture, to understand the culture and to translate (not change) the Gospel into images and metaphors that the culture can understand so that they can receive it. In return, they then become God’s people: the church, and the cycle begins again.

Missionary Mindset

1 Corinthians 9:15-23 *“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 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.”*

It’s important to know the culture of the people you are trying to reach. Not everybody has your cultural history, educational, political, or economical background. Terminology might even mean something completely different to

you then it does to them, so words you use to describe Jesus might actually be turning people away, because they don't understand the words you're using.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but here are some overview demographics of Santa Maria: (*According to 2010 Census*)

- Santa Maria Confirmed Population: 99,553. Making us the largest city in the county.
- Estimated population: 161,227 in the Santa Maria Valley which includes Guadalupe, Orcutt & Nipomo
- Population Density: 4,255.3 people per square mile.
- Racial Make-Up
 - 55,983 (56.2%) White
 - 1,656 (1.7%) African American
 - 1,818 (1.8%) Native American
 - 5,054 (5.1%) Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino of any race were 70,114 persons (70.4%).
- 26,908 Households:
 - 13,223 (49.1%) had children under the age of 18 living in them
 - 14,616 (54.3%) were opposite-sex married couples living together
 - 3,962 (14.7%) had a female householder with no husband present
 - 1,901 (7.1%) had a male householder with no wife present
 - 1,754 (6.5%) unmarried opposite-sex partnerships
 - 190 (0.7%) same-sex married couples or partnerships
 - 5,079 households (18.9%) were made up of individuals
 - 2,431 (9.0%) had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older
- Median average age: 28.6 years
- Top 10 Employers:
 - Vandenberg AFB 4,300 employees
 - Mariane Medical Center 1,450 employees
 - SMB School District 1,400 employees
 - Hancock College 890 employees
 - SM High School District 871 employees
 - Bonipak 533 employees
 - C & D Zodiac 491 employees
 - Den-Mat 361 employees
 - VTC Enterprises 340 employees
- Unemployment: 14.9%. CA: 12.3%

Read more at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Maria,_California
<http://www.city-data.com/city/Santa-Maria-California.html>

Element's Vision for the Central Coast.

At Element, we want to bless our city and the central coast. We want to see lives changed by the power of Jesus. To see boys grow up to become men of God, reconcile and lead their marriages and raise their kids to do the same.

We want to make disciples who make disciples. Raise up leaders who are called to go off and start new Gospel Communities or plant new Churches. We want to grow so that we can be big enough to effectively bless our city.

It is our goal to plant 3 churches in our first 10 years as a church. Then those churches start planting churches, and together we start moving from *"Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

We believe that we can best accomplish this through Gospel Communities - people reaching out to their families, neighbors and coworkers. People who live together as a community studying and applying scripture. Actively living on mission will be more effective than any bible study or church service can be.

Jesus was in a Gospel Community... He had a small group of disciples that took on His identity - they were learners, who became like family, they served the culture with Jesus and worked beside Him on His missionary journey. And people were drawn into Jesus by the Truth and what these disciples were doing. They didn't just sit and listen to the teaching of Jesus; they were active, on mission with Jesus as a community.

Gospel Communities with a Missional Focus

A Missional Focus is simply a focus on a people group. It can be small or large, but reach out to a group of people around your GC that can be overlooked or who are "the least of these". It is a collective mission of the group, but it does not negate the need live on mission individually, that is to reach out to those in our lives whom God has placed.

As a community you start blessing this people group. Doing small things for a lot of people, and big things for a few people. This isn't a social action, where you fix up a school, it is about people and building relationships. Bless single moms, or military families where one spouse is deployed, or foster kids, or the unemployed, an area with a high population of Hispanics, or just reaching out to the neighborhoods where you live.

We are to think as missionaries in our current situation. Timmis & Chester says that we find it easier to be radical in our thinking when we plant ourselves outside our current situation, but we are as much a missionary here and now as you would be were you part of that team in a 3rd world country.

Be consistent, and be in for the long haul. Commit for several of years if it is appropriate to do so. There is one GC in England who focused on a low-income housing area and several members of the group sold their homes and bought homes within the community. Their mindset is to immerse themselves in that culture. They believe that it might be their young children who might have the biggest impact for the gospel in that area, and not them. That's commitment!

Mission through Multiplying

An important lesson to learn from Jesus and His disciples, is that a part of the great commission, Jesus sends the disciples out, and the disciples go separate ways. They don't stay together as one group, they go and take on their own disciples - their own gospel communities. This is an important lesson of multiplication. In order for more people to come to know Christ, sometimes that means that we'll be called to leave the comfort of our current situations. Somebody said that "For life to happen there first has to be a little death", I was telling my friend that who is a fire fighter, and he said yup... just like a fire... seems so wrong, but so much new life comes from it, that a little fire is very good.

It is our desire for Gospel Communities to raise new leaders from within who are encouraged to branch off and form new Gospel Communities.

Missional through community

Gospel Communities that are ordinary people, doing ordinary things, with a Gospel Intentionality. That means if you're going to be having dinner, you have invite some from your Gospel Community AND you invite a non-believer too. You're going to watch a movie, a party, at your kid's football game, at the grocery store, walking your dog... every opportunity is an opportunity to be on mission. It takes intentionality. It takes not living for yourself.

Our Approach to mission should involve three elements:

- Building relationships
- Sharing the Gospel Message
- Including people in community

Check out supporting document.

As you build up relationships in community, you get to hear and know people's story. They begin to open up and share their life with you and in return you can share the Gospel Story with them, applying it directly to their circumstance and their story. They can come to know how the Gospel is Good News to them through your GC by ongoing conversations and living life together.

Leading others on mission

Being missional is easy to agree in principle, but difficult to live out. It is a paradigm shift that takes your whole life. If you don't realize that this is exactly what Jesus did for you, and is now calling you to do... then you won't have a sincere heart. To lead others on mission, you first have to have a sincere heart for the lost. Then you have to live your life on mission, actively repenting to both God and to the GC for times when off track.

As the leader, you first take initiative, having people over for dinner, and inviting them to activities and to this shared life. Then set a vision for a Missional Focus and brainstorm with the group. Not everybody in the group has to feel

100% excited about the missional focus, some will be more than others, all will have parts to play. Brainstorm ideas together, bring in your coach for ideas and direction. At the end of the day, set the mission, set sail, and invite anybody and everybody to come along with.

Cesar from Soma Community Church said, "When we focused on community, we didn't accomplish community or mission. But when we focused on mission, we accomplished both community and mission."

Mission is central to the church, and to our Gospel Communities. It is not going to be easy. Situations may be hard, people may turn their back and we may be uncomfortable. But God is faithful and builds His church.

Father, Your Kingdom come.

Questions

- How often do you include non-Christians in your life and daily routine?
- Can you explain mission and why it is central to the church?
- What is the primary calling of Gospel Communities?
- Do you understand the Gospel Process?
- What is your Story?
- Can you explain the Biblical Story?
- Can you apply biblical truths to people's warped worldly view?
- What are the needs around you? Who are the people that you can be reaching out to?
- What types of people groups can your GC be reaching out to?
- In what ways can your GC be including non-believers?

Resources

Please note: We have found these resources helpful, but we do not necessarily endorse every aspect of them. or an updated list, and links to all these resources found online at ourelement.org/gccoaching

- Work Through Church Planting Questions (Article)
- **Gospel Identities & Rhythms** (PDF)
- **Meal with Jesus**, by Tim Chester (Book)
- **Integrating community and mission into your normal routine.** (PDF)
- Listen to Will's Europe Stories (Audio)
- **Everyday Evangelism**, Tim Chester
www.acts29network.org/sermon/everyday-evangelism
- **Making God's People the Heart of God's Mission**, Tim Chester
www.acts29network.org/sermon/making-gods-people-the-heart-of-gods-mission
- **Developing And Building Gospel-Centered Missional Communities** Jeff Vanderstelt, www.acts29network.org/sermon/developing-and-building-gospel-centered-missional-communities
- **The Missional Church**, Tim Keller (Article)

Plan of Attack:

In light of what you learned in this lesson, make an honest assessment of where you are at and where you would like to be before becoming a GC leader. Work with your mentor/coach to create a plan of attack for the next month. For example, consider setting a goal to read up on a subject or to begin purposefully living on mission with a neighbor or coworker. Be prepared to discuss your ongoing plans of attack from the previous units.

