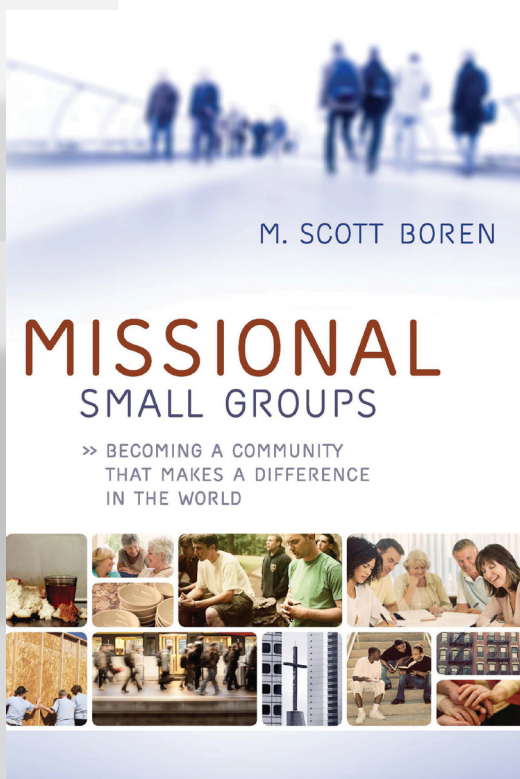


MISSIONAL SMALL GROUPS

A 13-Week Study
Guide for Developing
Missional Community



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Introduction

In my book *Missional Small Groups*, I introduce how life in missional community could be compared to learning how to play a guitar. To play a guitar, you learn to play very simple rhythms over and over and then allow them to develop into more complex musical patterns. Missional life might look complex to those looking in from the outside, but really it is comprised of very basic rhythms that are played over, and over, and over. These rhythms are: Missional Communion, our life together as a community before God; Missional Relating, our life together of loving one another; and Missional Engagement, our life together as we relate to those in our neighborhoods. *All three are “missional” because all three shape our lives for sharing the good news and making a difference in the world.*

Each of these rhythms can be developed by adopting a set of practices as a group. In chapters 6, 7, and 8 of *Missional Small Groups*, I introduce seven practices for each of the three rhythms. In this study, you will find a thirteen-step process to help a group experiment with and learn how to be missional by putting three of these practices into action. This expands what I introduced in Appendix A of *Missional Small Groups* in short form. This is not a list of ideas but a way for your group to reflect on and discuss what you hear God saying about the call of the group. This process depends upon the group listening to the Spirit of God and to the Scriptures. In other words, it is not a process of simply going out and doing something called missional.

Different groups will learn missional rhythms at different speeds. Some will pick them up quickly, while others will develop them slowly. Speed is not the key to effectiveness; consistent repetition is. Even the most gifted and creative musicians practice the basics repeatedly. One studio guitarist was asked how he plays with such excellence. He responded, “Every day I repeatedly practice the basic chords that a novice learns.” The goal of these studies is to help a group learn the basics and practice them consistently.

These studies work best if the group takes twelve to fifteen weeks to go through the first twelve steps. Then in step thirteen the group will determine next steps regarding what it needs to process further. For most groups, it will take intentional focus over a period of six months to a year in order for these rhythms to become second nature.

The short teaching segments can be downloaded as video files that can be viewed at www.mscottboren.com.

STUDY #1

THE IDEA
OF
MISSIONAL SMALL GROUPS

or

Let's Get Honest about Real Life

Personal Reflection

When we think about mission, the tendency is to think about what we do or what the group can do to make a difference in the world. Action is paramount. Doing something gets the attention. Being intentional becomes important. And as a result, the pressure can fall upon the leader to make this missional thing happen. I don't know about you, but the thought of trying to make a group missional or make people missional is more than daunting. It scares me. That's something I don't want to sign up for.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned as a leader is that God's mission is God's, not mine. Whenever I forget this, the pressure pours on me like wet cement, waiting to harden and tie me down to something I cannot do. No matter how hard I try, this pressure never actually produces the life and love that are characteristics of God's mission in this world.

But when I surround myself with the truth that God is on mission in our world to make a difference and that the Spirit of God is being sent into this world today to draw us into and empower us to live with God in this mission, then I get swept up in a breeze like a sheet on a warm summer day. Freedom. Freedom to be myself and be with God. Freedom to be loved and to love. Freedom to make a difference in ways that I thought were only possible in my dreams or in stories about other people who are much more radical than I.

Being missional is not about me, my efforts, and my willingness to be radical. If we start there, while we might very well get a lot done in the name of Jesus, I've found that we too often miss Jesus. You see, this is not about doing a lot of stuff, performing a certain set of actions, or trying to change the world. It is about being drawn into what God is doing in the world and becoming part of the story that God is telling. You and I are invited to be characters in the story, of which Jesus is the main character.

The life we live tells a story. The life we live as a group tells a story. When we try to change that story by doing radical things, we become the center of that story. Good things might happen. People might be blessed. But the missional story is not about this. It's about stepping out in the wind of the Spirit and allowing the life of God to change the story we tell. God is the primary character; we only play a supporting role. Yes, there are things we do, but our actions are never the primary plot of this story. We are only receiving and returning the love of Jesus, manifest through the Spirit in us. As we do this, we can make a difference, a lasting difference in the world. Missional is not so much something we do, as it is something we become.

If you have a desire to go deeper with this topic, read chapters 1–3 in *Missional Small Groups*, but especially chapter 3.

Opening Question

If you were a historian in the year 2200 and were given the task of understanding everyday life of the average North American in the decade beginning in 2010, what words would you use? (Allow ten minutes. It is often helpful to have a poster hanging on the wall and write down the various words contributed by the group.)

Teaching and Discussion: How Groups Can Change Our Lives?

Read the testimonies below about the four stories, one at a time, and then briefly respond to the questions.

The Story of Personal Improvement

We get together because life is tough in this world and we need a few friends. It is not always convenient for us to meet every week, but we do meet when we can. Usually we meet in short six- or seven-week periods or we meet a couple times a month. We get together, talk a bit about God or study the Bible, and share what is going on at work and in our families. I am not sure that we are close, but it is good to have a place where we can share a little about what is going on in our lives. Being in my small group has improved my life.

- What do you see going on in this kind of group?
Make sure that these questions don't take much time. The point is simply to get people talking. There is no need to go deeply into each question.
- What is the value of this group?
- What is the weakness of this group?
- What is the key value of this group to the individual member?
The key value is "personal benefit." If it is beneficial to the member, then the group will work. If not, then they will opt out.

The Story of Lifestyle Adjustment

This group has become a priority to us. We have adjusted our schedules to meet together at least every other week, but usually we meet weekly. In our meetings, we either study the sermon preached by our pastor or use a Bible study guide that we all find personally beneficial. We truly enjoy each other's presence, and we put a high priority on the group and the members in the group. We even do something social once each month. We rise to the occasion when someone has a need, and there is a sense that we are friends.

- What do you see going on in this kind of group?
- What is the focus of this kind of group?
Usually the focus of this group is meeting attendance. People adjust their lives so that they can attend the meeting.
- What is the key value of this group to the individual member?

The Story of Relational Revision

Our group has a weekly meeting, but I am not sure you would call it a meeting in a formal sense of the word. When we get together, it is the culmination of the rest of the week when we have been in one another's lives. It is a time of sharing what God has been doing, praying for each other, and talking about how God is using us in our normal lives. Yes, we do have a weekly lesson, but the leader usually asks only one or two questions from it. The most important part of our group, however, is not the meeting; it is how we are connected the other six days. I have never been part of a group in which people are so willing to sacrifice time and energy for each other. And this connectedness actually spills out into our neighborhood. It seems like we are always interacting with, praying for, and serving people who live near us. And in some ways, they are just as much, part of our group as those of us who call ourselves Christians.

I am not sure how I was able to do life before having this group. This might sound a bit utopian, but it is far from it. Sometimes it is hard. Recently we had to wrestle with some relational conflict and hurt feelings. In the past I would have run away from such encounters, but not this time. It was not easy, but we pressed through. We are still learning what it means to be God's family.

- What do you see going on in this kind of group?
- What is the focus of those in this kind of group?
 People in such a group are learning to do life together differently.
 The key is learning and foregoing any pressure to "arrive" at some kind of ideal.
- How is this kind of experience different from the first two?

The Story of Missional Re-creation

We have developed a way of connecting with each other and God that has resulted in some rather unpredictable developments. Two couples and a single person in our group live within walking distance of each other. So as a group we decided to adopt their neighborhood. We started with a block party. At first it was hard because no one knew us, but after the first party, we started becoming a presence in the community. Then one person started a summer children's Bible study, and as she got to know the neighbors and their needs, we began to pray. Now we have come around a single mom who has three kids, and we include her as much as we can in the life of the group. She has yet to fully understand who Jesus is, but we feel led to embrace her and the kids and see what God does in her life.

- What do you see going on in this kind of group?
- What is the focus?

This group has learned to do life differently than the world around it. Members have begun to adopt a distinct pattern and therefore they are not as dependent upon specific structures, curriculum, etc. They respond to needs around them and can become creative about how they respond to those needs.

Read 1 Peter 2:9. Three translations are included below to help you process what the Apostle Peter was saying about the church being unique, distinct, and set apart.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (KJV)

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light ... (NIV)

But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted. (Message)

- What does it mean when Peter calls us a “peculiar people”?
- How has our group been less than “peculiar,” simply a normal group that is simply an addition to our normal lives?
- In what ways has this normal group experience been beneficial?
- In what ways have you longed for more from the group experience?
- How can a group help people live in a way that is different from the normal life experience?

Between the Meetings Options

Here are some things that you can do between meetings each week. They are suggestions, not assignments. Refer back to this page and see what might work best for your group.

Option #1

On page 31 of *Missional Small Groups*, there is a diagram that helps people identify the specific patterns of life that shape how they live and relate. Take about ten to fifteen minutes to draw your own life pattern diagram and then reflect on what you see .

Option #2

Read the corresponding material found in *Missional Small Groups* that goes with specific study. Call one another or better yet meet for coffee and discuss it.

Option #3

Read 1 Peter 2:9 every day and use the following questions to shape your prayer time.

Read: Read the passage. What stands out to you?

Reflect: Reflect on what stands out. What comes to mind as you do?

Pray: Turn your insight into a prayer.

Wait: Wait on God. What do you sense God speaking to you?

Option #4

Reflect on this question: What do you long for from a community? To answer this question you might need some time to reflect and think. In fact, it might be helpful to reflect on this question multiple times.

STUDY #2

THE RHYTHMS
OF
MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

or

Let's Talk about a Different Way

Personal Reflection

In his book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby proclaimed the truth that God is at work in this world and that our job is to see what God is already doing and get involved. I remember when I was in college and I participated in a small group that studied his material. On the video teaching he often quoted John 5:19–20: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.” Then he would point out that if Jesus operated from this perspective as God incarnate, so should we.

For years I have wrestled with this verse. I did not question whether it was true or not. Nor have I had trouble understanding what it means. It seems simple and straightforward enough. Rather, I have struggled to understand what this actually looks like in real life. It seems very easy to quote a Scripture like this in church circles. But Jesus is not using religious talk here. He is not speaking of life in the synagogue. He is talking about seeing what the Father is doing in real life.

I took piano lessons for six years, but I did not actually learn much. I did not appreciate the music. I did not try to understand what was actually going on in the music. I kept the rhythms at a distance and never let them get inside me. Music for me was a weekly piano lesson and lots of black lines on a page. Sometimes I think this is the way we treat God while at the same time hoping that we can will ourselves into joining God in his mission. As a result, mission becomes an exercise in techniques. We want a list of rules for being missional so that we can do what God wants us to do.

Instead, God invites us into the music of his life. He sends us the Holy Spirit to live within us, draw us into his life, teach us to love one another, and empower us to carry his love to those who don’t have it. This is God’s mission in and through us to the world. This is what makes a difference. It’s what makes us stand out or be distinctive. Too much of what is called Christian in our world is really not that distinctively Christian. The words might line up with the Bible, but the patterns of our lives don’t allow the music to flow in and through us.

Imagine that all of us were invited to hear one of the great symphonies of Beethoven. While all of us might appreciate its beauty, those who know how the music works and understand a bit about Beethoven’s style would enjoy it to a much greater degree. The music would get in them because they know the rhythms. As we allow the Spirit of God to play God’s music through us, our ability to see what the Father is already doing increases. We develop a sensitivity to discern what God is doing and wants to do in our world. The music gets inside us and we become different. And as a result, the world around us changes too.

Chapter 5 in *Missional Small Groups* provides the background to this study.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What are the normal activities of our group?

(Write responses on a large piece of paper with a marker.)

Teaching and Discussion: Learning to be Missional

When groups decide to be more than a normal group that simply lives according to the patterns of this world, they enter into a time of learning what it means to be missional. This is not a time to adopt a program for becoming missional, nor is it simply a strategy to focus on being external or outreach-oriented. Instead, this is a process by which a group of people learn how the Spirit of God is moving through them to be on mission together. It is a process of learning to put into practice a lifestyle that is distinctively Christian. Here's a story that points out some key things that mark God's people as distinctive:

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." —John 13:1–5; 12–16; 34–45

- What stands out as that which makes us distinctively Christian?

Learning the Missional Rhythms

1. Missional Communion

A way of connecting with God together that shapes our life patterns so that we are no longer shaped by those of this world but changed from the inside out and thereby can impact people in our neighborhoods.

2. Missional Relating

A way of loving one another that stands in contrast to the typical relational patterns of the culture, a life of mutual service and self-sacrifice that is visible to others and impacts them.

3. Missional Engagement

A way of being with people in our neighborhoods (friends, next-door neighbors, family members, co-workers) that displays Christ's love in tangible ways.



Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you from this teaching?
2. How does the way we relate to God impact how we are on mission?
3. How do our relationships with each other impact how we are on mission?
4. How might adopting a few of these practices change our lives?
5. How might they change our group?

Getting Started

Start Simply

The place to start is to start simply. Before the next meeting, look over the list of 21 missional practices. There are seven for each of the three rhythms. Circle the three that you see as being most applicable to your situation as a group. Next week you will talk together and pick one from each rhythm, three total, to work on over the next few weeks.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of *Missional Small Groups* provide more insight and practical help for discovering how groups can develop these rhythms. Use the corresponding sections to help talk about how the group can begin living these rhythms.

Rhythms of Missional Communion

Worship

The church knows how to do formal worship. But what about worship in a living room? What about worship with friends?

Practicing the Presence

Nothing sets God's people apart like the presence of God. But do we actually expect to meet with God in our groups? If not, why not? What might it look like to meet with God regularly and go beyond the Bible study mentality?

Alone Together

How do we practice silence and solitude as a private discipline but do it together? Usually we think of this individualistically, but there is a way of being "alone together" before God. How do we practice this?

Listening Together

How does a group of people practice the art of listening to God together? How might God speak to "you" for "me"? And how do we create space for such an experience?

Simplicity

The way we spend our time and money relates directly to our worship of God. In our culture we idolize things. If we don't let others in on this part of our lives, we won't change this pattern.

Jesus's Meal

Traditions usually address this in one of five ways in their formal services. There is an alternative way of doing this around a meal, while at the same time not throwing out any of the current formal traditions of communion.

Sabbath

Our ability to rest relates to our ability to trust, both God and others. This practice seems to have shaped the Old Testament people of God as much as any other. What bearing does this have on us as a New Testament people? How can we practice Sabbath today in our 24/7 world?

Rhythms of Missional Relating

A Primary Group

Most people have lots of shallow relationships, but they lack a primary group of people who will walk with them and point them toward the kingdom.

A Safe Place

How do we create relationships that are safe, where there is both honesty and freedom along with accountability and challenge?

Saying Hello

Greeting one another well is about developing listening skills. Often this simple piece is overlooked by church leadership, and it undermines people's ability to relate to one another.

Pressing through Conflict

Relationships are messy. Of this there is no doubt. We must learn to work through conflict and refuse to give up on others. This requires some new relationship skills.

Face-to-Face Contact

Community in our culture must call for face-to-face contact. At the same time we must deal with the reality of how the internet and cell phones are impacting our ability to interact with one another.

Build Up Each Other

Encouragement that flows out of the heart of God through his people for others is essential to God's kind of community. What does this look like in practical terms?

Family Life and Small Groups

Too many times the group is seen as separate from the family connected to each group member. If true relationships are going to be developed, then the group must determine how to connect the two.

Initiation into the Community

How does a group practice baptism in a way that communicates that new Christians are being initiated into Christ AND into Christ's community?

Rhythms of Missional Engagement

Moving into the Neighborhood

One of the keys to engagement is just being present in our neighborhoods. This requires the risk of putting ourselves out there and beginning to engage other people.

Focus

We need to learn to say “no” to a lot of “good” stuff in order to be involved in God’s mission. This may mean saying “no” to some church activities so that we have time to engage the people and needs in our world.

Speaking Peace

We are present in the neighborhood as agents of peace in the midst of turmoil. What does this look like? What are some ways that work in our specific contexts to take peace to people?

Observe

What is God already doing in and through the people and systems around us? We don’t have to generate God’s mission. God is already at work. We only need to see what the Spirit is doing and get involved.

Hospitality

Opening up our homes to one another is essential to knowing each other. How do we do this in our time-starved world? How do we eat together in our fast-food world? We must address the reality of these questions.

Righting Wrongs

Ask the question: What does God want to do? There are injustices in our world that are crying out for God’s people to show up and offer justice.

Speaking the Gospel

Instead of a canned approach, we must learn to communicate Christ in relationships with others, viewing them as equals, not as people to be won over to our way.

Between the Meeting

Before the next meeting, look over the list of 21 missional practices. There are seven for each of the three rhythms. Circle the three that you see as being most applicable to your situation as a group. Next week you will talk together and pick one from each rhythm to work on over the next few weeks.

STUDY #3

**LEARNING
TO
PLAY THE MUSIC**

or

How Do We Get Started?

Personal Reflection

There are many different ways to read. We can read to gather information, we can read to be entertained, we can read to analyze an author's writing, or we can read to learn how to put something into practice. We read different books or parts of books in different ways. But in our modern culture, there is one form of reading that is often overlooked, devotional reading. This is the slow contemplative reading in which we listen not just to what the words are saying to our minds or how they might shape our actions, but to what they are saying to our inner being. Spiritual theologian James Houston writes,

This century [the twentieth] is possibly the first one in which action has been emphasized and valued more than contemplation. Today we do things. We think contemplation wastes time, produces nothing, and bumps awkwardly into our schedules. Devotional reading is a questionable priority for most successful people today. But are we "successful" Christians if we are so busy organizing and propagating the Christian faith that we really do not know God personally—or intimately? Christian devotional reading helps us find intimate union with God.

Over the next few weeks, you will be talking about various ways that your group can enter into God's mission. Before you attend the group meetings, it will be helpful if you read the section in *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you are discussing. As you read, learn to listen to what the Spirit of God is saying to you through the words. You might want to skim it quickly to get the big ideas, but then read it slowly and when something stands out to you or you sense something in your "inner sanctum," stop. Pray about it. You might journal what you are thinking. Then you might take some time to share with a friend what you have been contemplating.

Contemplation is not about having deep thoughts or about being a spiritual giant. It is simply a discipline of listening to the God who speaks to his people. Will you take the time to allow this book to be a conduit for God's voice?

Here are some questions to help you reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What is your favorite kind of music? Why?

Teaching and Discussion: Learning to Play the Music

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.
—Romans 12:1–2

- What stands out to you in this passage?

This reading is from the Message translation. Now read it from a more literal translation like NIV. There you will see the contrast between “Being transformed” which is something that happens to us from the inside out and “being conformed” which is something that happens to us from the outside in. Being conformed to our culture takes little effort on our part because all we have to do is go with the flow of how normal life works.

Transformation on the other hand requires focus, effort and practice. Inside change is something that the Spirit does within us as we put ourselves in a place of allowing the Spirit to change us. This is like learning to play a guitar. One does not pick up a guitar and just start playing it. A guitar novice must choose to put himself in a place that is conducive to learning to play the guitar. This place is called “practice.” When a group first tries to be missional, all are novices. To grow in mission requires focus, effort and practice. And the best place to start is break the task down into simple steps that can be practiced repeatedly.

This is the reason for choosing three simple practices that you can figure out how to do as a group.

Discussion Questions

1. Of the twenty-one practices on the list, are there any that we as a group do relatively well? How can we build upon what we already do?

(For questions 2, 3, and 4, make a list on a large piece of paper to see where group members' interests lie.)

2. Of the seven listed under Missional Communion, which two interest you the most?
3. Of the seven listed under Missional Relating, which two interest you the most?
4. Of the seven listed under Missional Engagement, which two interest you the most?
5. As a group, pick one from each of the three rhythms to begin practicing.

STUDY #4

MISSIONAL COMMUNION
PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Personal Reflection

Read the section in chapter 6 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Communion.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What is one thing you see God changing in your life?

Teaching and Discussion

- Read the Scripture passage from the practice the group has chosen from chapter 6.
- Share your responses to what you read about this practice. This sharing works best if people can read a short piece from the book that has sparked the response. This allows those who have not read to participate.

Discussion Questions

1. How might this practice change our group? Our individual lives?
2. In what ways might this practice help us have an impact upon the world around us?
3. What information about this practice would be helpful?
4. What is one way we could practice this during the next week?



STUDY #5

MISSIONAL COMMUNION
PRACTICE

LIFE HINDRANCES

Personal Reflection

Read for a second time the section in chapter 6 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Communion. Repetition is good. We don't typically read like this, but this is often the way God speaks to us. Try it and see.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

How have you seen God in the normal stuff of life over the last week?

Teaching and Discussion

Start off with a time of reflective reading. Everyone should get comfortable, take a deep breath and ask the Lord to speak to them through the Scripture reading.

- Someone read the Scripture passage corresponds with the chosen practice from from chapter 6. After reading it just notice what the passage says.
- Read the Scripture again but this time allow a few minutes of reflection on that passage.
- Now allow for some time for people to pray—aloud or silently—what they recognize in the passage.
- Share with the group what you see in the passage.

Discussion Questions

1. How successful were you in putting the agreed-upon practice from last week into action?
2. How did you feel when you succeeded? Failed?
3. What were some of the things in your life that hindered you from practicing it?
4. What kind of support or encouragement from the group would help you address some of these hindrances?



STUDY #6

MISSIONAL COMMUNION
PRACTICE

FORMING NEW HABITS

Personal Reflection

Read for a third time the section in chapter 6 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Communion. Remember, repetition is good.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What do you see God doing in your life to change you?

Teaching and Discussion

Reading the same section of a book repeatedly can feel futile, but it can be a way opening up unexpected truths we cannot see upon the first reading.

- Did you see anything this week you did not see before?
- Are there any additional Scriptures that have come to mind related to this practice?

Discussion Questions

1. What are some habits you do without thinking?
2. What has been the biggest challenge related to doing the practice your group has chosen?
3. How is God using this practice to change your life?
4. What is something you can do to help make this practice a habit?



STUDY #7

MISSIONAL RELATING
PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Personal Reflection

Read the section in chapter 7 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Relating.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What is one thing you see God changing in your life?

Teaching and Discussion

- Read the Scripture passage from the practice the group has chosen from chapter 7.
- Share your responses to what you read about this practice. This sharing works best if people can read a short piece from the book that has sparked the response. This allows those who have not read to participate.

Discussion Questions

1. How might this practice change our group? Our individual lives?
2. In what ways might this practice help us have an impact upon the world around us?
3. What information about this practice would be helpful?
4. What is one way we could practice this during the next week?



STUDY #8

MISSIONAL RELATING
PRACTICE

LIFE HINDRANCES

Personal Reflection

Read for a second time the section in chapter 7 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Relating. Repetition is good. Even if you think you understand the concepts, read it again and listen to what the Spirit might say to you.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

How have you seen God in the normal stuff of life over the last week?

Teaching and Discussion

Start off with a time of reflective reading. Everyone should get comfortable, take a deep breath and ask the Lord to speak to them through the Scripture reading.

- Someone read the Scripture passage corresponds with the chosen practice from from chapter 7. After reading it just notice what the passage says.
- Read the Scripture again but this time allow a few minutes of reflection on that passage.
- Now allow for some time for people to pray—aloud or silently—what they recognize in the passage.
- Share with the group what you see in the passage.

Discussion Questions

1. How successful were you in putting the agreed-upon practice from last week into action?
2. How did you feel when you succeeded? Failed?
3. What were some of the things in your life that hindered you from practicing it?
4. What kind of support or encouragement from the group would help you address some of these hindrances?



STUDY #9

MISSIONAL RELATING
PRACTICE

FORMING NEW HABITS

Personal Reflection

Read for a third time the section in chapter 7 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic that you chose for Missional Relating. Remember ,repetition is good.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What do you see God doing in your life to change you?

Teaching and Discussion

Reading the same section of a book repeatedly can feel futile, but it can be a way opening up unexpected truths we cannot see upon the first reading.

- Did you see anything this week you did not see before?
- Are there any additional Scriptures that have come to mind related to this practice?

Discussion Questions

1. What are some habits you do without thinking?
2. What has been the biggest challenge related to doing the practice you group has chosen?
3. How is God using this practice to change your life?
4. What is something you can do to help make this practice a habit?



STUDY #10

MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT
PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Personal Reflection

Read the section in chapter 8 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Engagement.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What is one thing you see God changing in your life?

Teaching and Discussion

- Read the Scripture passage from the practice the group has chosen from chapter 8.
- Share your responses to what you read about this practice. This sharing works best if people can read a short piece from the book that has sparked the response. This allows those who have not read to participate.

Discussion Questions

1. How might this practice change our group? Our individual lives?
2. In what ways might this practice help us have an impact upon the world around us?
3. What information about this practice would be helpful?
4. What is one way we could practice this during the next week?



STUDY #11

MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT
PRACTICE

LIFE HINDRANCES

Personal Reflection

Read for a second time the section in chapter 8 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Engagement. Repetition is good. Listen not for more information but for what you sense in your gut as you read.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

How have you seen God in the normal stuff of life over the last week?

Teaching and Discussion

Start off with a time of reflective reading. Everyone should get comfortable, take a deep breath and ask the Lord to speak to them through the Scripture reading.

- Someone read the Scripture passage corresponds with the chosen practice from from chapter 8. After reading it just notice what the passage says.
- Read the Scripture again but this time allow a few minutes of reflection on that passage.
- Now allow for some time for people to pray—aloud or silently—what they recognize in the passage.
- Share with the group what you see in the passage.

Discussion Questions

1. How successful were you in putting the agreed-upon practice from last week into action?
2. How did you feel when you succeeded? Failed?
3. What were some of the things in your life that hindered you from practicing it?
4. What kind of support or encouragement from the group would help you address some of these hindrances?



STUDY #12

MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT
PRACTICE

FORMING NEW HABITS

Personal Reflection

Read for a third time the section in chapter 8 of *Missional Small Groups* that corresponds with the topic you chose for Missional Engagement. Remember repetition is good.

Use the space below to reflect on what you read:

- Did you mark anything in the section that stood out to you?
- Reflect on what you marked and ask the Lord to speak to you as you reflect.
- Take some time to write down your thoughts.
- Turn your thoughts into a prayer asking God to expand his kingdom in you.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

What do you see God doing in your life to change you?

Teaching and Discussion

Reading the same section of a book repeatedly can feel futile, but it can be a way opening up unexpected truths we cannot see upon the first reading.

- Did you see anything this week you did not see before?
- Are there any additional Scriptures that have come to mind related to this practice?

Discussion Questions

1. Why are habits so hard to break? Why are new habits so hard to develop?
2. What has been the biggest challenge related to doing the practice your group has chosen?
3. How is God using this practice to change your life?
4. What is something you can do to help make this practice a habit?



STUDY #13

WHAT'S NEXT?



Personal Reflection

As I mentioned in a previous reflection, I took six years of piano lessons, but for the most part, the only time I ever practiced was for the thirty minutes that my teacher was sitting beside me each week. To say the least, the music did not stick. My sister, on the other hand, would sit down for extended times trying to figure out how to play all kinds of complicated rhythms. It goes unstated that she will inherit the antique piano one of these days.

Instead of music, I practiced baseball. When I was about ten, I had a contraption with a net that would bounce the ball back to me. My parents bought me this after I ruined our chain link fence and quite a few balls because I would not stop throwing a ball at the fence. I would throw the ball for hours in the backyard. I would walk around the house acting like I was throwing a ball. When I walked to the barn, I was always looking for a big rock to aim at something. Even though I have not played in years, I can still pick up a ball or a bat and do pretty well. And when I watch a game, I see things and appreciate the sport in all kinds of unique ways that someone who has not practiced cannot even see.

At the same time, my skills are rusty. I would probably rip all kinds of muscles if I went to the batting cage and tried to hit a good fastball. I still know the game, but I am out of practice.

You have had an introduction to some practices that make a difference in the world. But like playing the piano or a sport, the only way to develop and maintain your ability to live out God's mission in the world is to keep practicing these things that make a difference.

Sometimes they will result in quick impact that is visible and worthy of comment. But most of the time, our practices are small acts of love that when stacked on top of one another and over time—assuming that we keep practicing them—make a significant difference.

One of the changes you will discover is the reality that the biggest change has occurred in you. If you put a new habit in place, the way you think, love and live, will change. You will become different. It's not magical. And in most cases it takes more time than you thought it would, but by now you are well on the way. Don't stop now. Don't succumb to the pressure to learn more information or move on to something else. Find a way to make these rhythms more and more a part of your life.

Now it's time to talk as a group to see how you will continue practicing these rhythms.

The Group Meeting Agenda

Opening Question

How has our group changed since we began this process?

Teaching and Discussion

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. —Colossians 1:3-6

Celebrating and being thankful for what God is doing in you stirs faith for the next steps. Look at this passage and talk about the various things for which Paul was thankful. Spend some time sharing the things about this group which stirs you to be thankful. Spend some time offering God thanks.

Discussion Questions

1. What impact have we had upon our neighbors in this process?
2. How has this process been different than you expected?
3. What has been the biggest challenge?
4. What has been the most rewarding?
5. How can we continue developing these practices into habits?
6. What's next for our group?
(For this last question, take another look at the list of mission practices from Study #2. You don't need to focus on the practices to the same degree that you have over the last 13 studies, but you can choose three more to focus on and begin to build aspects of them into your life as a group.)

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