

Becoming a Missional Small Group

What Exactly Does Missional *Mean*?

- “Being missional” is a way of describing the shift in thinking, actions, resources, and priorities of Christian churches and believers that are seeking to align themselves with God’s **redemptive** mission on earth.
 - You are either a missionary or a mission field! Every believer is a missionary sent out to their neighborhoods, workplaces, or wherever they are! It is the same when a small group of disciples come together.
- It’s not so much that the church has a mission, but that the mission has a church. “Missional Church”... it’s in that order—that a church has somehow bonded itself or identified itself as a **primary agent** of the mission of God in the world. (2nd Corinthians 5:20)
- Missional churches actively send out their members to carry out God’s mission in their various spheres of life. This creates a community of Christians who let their upward focus on God impact and permeate their orientation and activity during the rest of their lives. This means that our primary purpose in life should be to love insiders and outsiders with the love we received from God. We call this **living in the green**. (Acts 2:42-47)

Small Groups – Grassroots Mission Bases

- Small groups are a major aspect of our church. In fact, small groups *are* fully functioning churches. When a small group of believers are coming together under the banner of loving God, insiders and outsiders, the church is expressed.
- Small groups are **essential** to empowering God’s people in mission. Small groups **are not** meant to create new comfort zones for people. Rather, they possess the potential for emboldening believers to go *beyond* their comfort zones and to do things they never imagined themselves doing. Every small group can find a way to be missional in a manner that is natural for its own unique group dynamic.
- All disciples, especially a small group of disciples, carry within themselves the potential for world transformation. (There were only 12 disciples!)
- Small groups can play a tremendous role in doing the missional work of God, but they have to move both in thought and practice from being merely Bible studies, accountability groups, and prayer groups to thinking like and being mission bases. You have to change your and your members’ perspectives, actions, resources, and **expectations**.

It’s Not Easy, but Necessary... Obstacles to Becoming Missional

Obstacle #1 – The Desire to Replicate Sunday Morning Services

- **Starve** your small group of the Sunday morning mentality. People wrongfully outsource their primary gifting, calling, and function to the institution of the church and to “the professionals” in ministry.
- Small groups are places for laypeople to **reclaim** their rightful place in the mission of God, not a place to reinforce the false notion of having

“professionals” do it for us! Engage your small group members to be missional during the week and partake in missional activities as a group as well... don't just have them listen to you preach and then wait for next week's small group sermon!

Obstacle #2 – Security & Self-Centeredness

- In order to be missional, we must step out of our comfort zone. Once you step out of the safe boundaries and reach out to those outside your small group, you'll discover new passions and purpose in your small group and your lives.
- There is risk involved in stepping out. Dream big and don't be afraid to fail!
- Create outwardly focused goals that can only be met if God somehow shows up!

Obstacle #3 – Breaking “the Huddle”

- Sometimes **comfort** rules our small groups, not Jesus. We have to be willing to leave the safety of the living room and step out in faith or others simply will be robbed of the blessings God wants to give them through you. (**Genesis 12:1-3**)
- Football teams huddle up to plan, encourage each other, and to rest for a few seconds before running the next play. Huddles are necessary, but nobody ever won a game while in the huddle. Huddles are the starting point to a great play!
- We need to shift our thinking from Bible study to Bible **practice**. (**Matt. 7:24-27**)

Obstacle #4 – Compartmentalizing Being Missional

- *Every* small group at this church can be missional... **PERIOD**.
- It is not just for the “select Christians” who are evangelistic or justice-oriented.
- Being missional does not equate to a few days a year of altruism: it is a shift in thinking, priorities, and action that affects every aspect of your life.
- Being missional is a volitional choice that a small group makes. It's a **lifestyle**.

What Does Being Missional Look Like?

Get it Started

- Cast vision! Reveal the eternal importance of being missional to your group.
- **Pray!** Assess the strengths, gifts, and passions of your small group. What gets you stirred up? What does your small group have a heart for? Ask God how He wants you to utilize these gifts, passions, desires through prayer with the group!
- Focus on what you can do together as a small group that you can not do on your own that utilizes these gifts or passions.
- **Read Acts 1:8** - The Lord will show your small group how it can make a difference near or far, or sometimes both! He sent the disciples out to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. We are called to those who need Jesus in both felt and spiritual ways right here in Gainesville and around the world. Is your small group called to Gainesville, helping another country, a people group?

- Sidenote: Reaching out **attracts** the lost and puts you **in contact** with the least. Studies show that a small group reaching out to meet the needs of the poor and the community (both local and global) attract far more lost people to come alongside of them than simply promoting fun and games.

Get Specific

- Figure out a specific ministry, demographic, area, country, people group that God has put on your small group's heart
 - Examples – widows, Pine Ridge, orphans, Speed the Light, Indonesia
- Set a goal. It could be how to incorporate widows into your life, how much money you are going to raise for a cause, sponsoring a child, being intentional about building relationships with people downtown, etc.
- **Dream big!** There is nothing that God cannot do. (**John 14:13-14**)
- ACT. Step out. Watch God show up and provide while at the same time transforming your small group members' heart to desire more of the Kingdom. Being missional is like a virus that eventually affects everything you are and do!

Ways of Being Missional with Your Small Group:

- **Invitational:** Invite your VIPs and pre-believing friends to your small group
- **Event-based:** Link your group outreach to church events (like serving together during the weekend services or creating special outreach events)
- **Community Issues:** Identify needs in your community that touch your group's heart; then serve to make long term solutions as a small group (Begin an annual school supply drive for underprivileged kids, mentor at-risk kids together, sponsor a family in Pine Ridge financially and through prayer, etc.)
- **Sponsorship:** Support a child, a family, missionary, or mission agency
 - www.compassion.com is a great site for sponsoring children worldwide
 - <http://www.gfa.org/sgbi> – Gospel for Asia has a 0% overhead! They also have something specifically for Small Groups!
 - www.projctrescue.com – Pastor Mike spoke of this ministry that rescues girls from sex slavery and prostitution, loves them, and leads them to holistic healing through Jesus
- **Focused Prayer:** Adopt a people group in prayer and diligently pray for them!
 - www.joshuaproject.com gives in-depth info on unreached people groups
- **Mission Trips:** Contact a member of your church's pastoral leadership team and share that your group would like to go on a mission trip together. Learn about what your church is already doing and get a couple of recommendations on organizations that can help with the planning.

What Some First Assembly Small Groups Are *Already* Doing:

- Serving the homeless at Dorothy's Café in the Catholic Worker House downtown
- Sponsoring a children as a small group
- Prayer walking through their neighborhoods
- Setting a goal and fund raising for the ministry Speed the Light
- Starting a 24 hour prayer room as a tool for evangelism in their neighborhood
- Planning mission trips together to a country that is burdening their hearts
- Putting on art shows to raise money for digging wells in Africa
- Praying as a small group for their VIP cards (and seeing them get saved!)
- Going downtown to witness, outreach, and feed the homeless
- Fund raising for and then going to Immokalee as a small group
- Books for Bondage – selling back their text books and giving that money to combating sex slavery