

Below are 12 lessons on “missional church” principles. These are available for public use, with no copying restrictions. They are intended for the edification of the Church in our world today. May God bless you as you work through these concepts.

By

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Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson One: Biblical/Theological Principles

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will become familiar with the theological foundations of the mission of God (*missio Dei*) and reign of God as it is revealed in the Bible
2. Learners will explore how their view of church (ecclesiology) ought to be based on these foundations.
3. Learners will explore what these biblical foundations mean for evangelism and interaction with culture.

Introduction:

1. Teacher will emphasize the importance of understanding that mission begins with God. Notice examples from Scripture that involve God's initiative to work salvation:
 - a. Genesis 12:1-9 – God takes the initiative to work salvation by calling Abraham and sending him to Canaan. Notice the theme of calling and sending. This will be typical of the Biblical examples of God's missional initiative.
 - b. Exodus 3:7-12 – God calls Moses and sends him in mission to Egypt. Notice how other nations (Canaan, Egypt) and not just Israel are the focus of God's mission. The mission of God has implications for all people.
 - c. Luke 10 – The disciples are gathered up and involved in God's mission. Notice that mission begins by bidding God to send out harvesters. Notice that more occurs in the mission of the 70 than what Jesus commissions them to do (v. 17 – “in your name even the demons submit to us”)
 - d. John 20:19-23 – Jesus sends the apostles just as he was sent by the Father. (see v. 21). Notice how God's initiative involves salvation and sending.
2. Teacher will discuss Biblical understandings of the kingdom of God.
 - a. Teacher may want to address assumptions about kingdom. It is important to recognize that most Americans are not familiar with the implications of living within a kingdom. It may also be helpful to point out that the term “kingdom of God” is often interchangeable with the terms “reign of God” or “rule of God.”
 - b. Notice the verbs that Scripture associates with our relationship to the kingdom¹:
 - i. We are to *receive* the reign of God like a little child (Mk. 10:15; Lk. 18:17)
 - ii. We *inherit* the kingdom (Mt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21)

¹ James V. Brownson, et al. *Stormfront: The Good News of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003): 40.

- iii. We *enter* the reign of God (Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-24; Mk 9:47; 10:23-25)
 - iv. We are never mentioned as building or establishing the kingdom. That is God's work. (see Mark 4).
 - c. Receiving the kingdom involves accepting the generosity of the king. Inheriting the kingdom involves becoming an heir; that is a member of the king's house. Entering a kingdom involves conforming to the way of life established by the king.
 - d. The kingdom of God is not territory that belongs to God as opposed to territory yet unclaimed for God. The identification of kingdom with political territory is a concept rooted in Christendom rather than Scripture (see Lesson 2). According to Scripture, God has exalted Christ and made him Lord over all creation (Acts 2:32-36; Phil. 2:9-10; Col. 1:15-20). Those who proclaim the coming of the kingdom reign of God are witnesses to what God is doing in creation to establish his rule and to make his rule known.
- 3. Teacher will indicate the importance of the lordship of Christ. Like the concept of kingdom, this concept is often not fully appreciated.
 - a. The lordship of Christ is often reduced to individual concerns. When salvation is reduced to individualistic concerns, Christ is regarded as personal savior, or "Lord of my life." While individual confession of Christ as Lord is certainly not wrong, it is a limited perspective, and the church tends to ignore that God has exalted Christ as Lord universally. For example, Peter asserts that God has made Jesus Lord regardless of the acceptance or rejection of the crowd. He calls them to repent of their rejection of the objective reality of Jesus' lordship and not simply acceptance of a subjective experience of that lordship (Acts 2:36-41). When salvation is reduced to an individual activity, then the full perspective that embraces the whole of creation is lost.

Exploration

1. Teacher will explore the relationship between church and mission, keeping in mind the Biblical foundations established about mission: a) mission is God's initiative, b) we are those who have received, inherited, and entered into the kingdom of God, and c) God has exalted Christ as Lord over all creation.
 - a. *See the diagram in Appendix 1 for a visual of the following notes:* Begin with God and the world. Mission is more than just an adjunct activity of the church. Mission cannot be reduced to obedience to a command to evangelize. God sends Christ and Christ sends his church (John 17:18; John 20:22 – Trinitarian basis of mission). There is an effort on the part of God and his people to reconcile and be reconciled.
 - b. God rules over the entire world despite the fact that some reject that rule. The church is formed and made visible because God gathers the church from the world. A called out assembly and community that

becomes a sign to the world of kingdom. This church comes up from the culture, but is transformed within the culture – and at times it is transforming the culture. Since it remains in the world (though not of the world) it would not be accurate to draw a tight circle. Instead, this mission-shaped community exists in the world and has a dynamic relationship with the world that is in synch with God’s relationship with the world. Thus the church is turned “inside out” and sent out to make God’s presence in the world known. What you get is a centered set (not a bounded set) that is centered on God’s presence and activity.

2. The mission of God is logically prior to the church. Explore this by considering two phrases: “The Church has a Mission” vs. “The Mission has a Church.”
 - a. The Church has a Mission. How do we often describe the mission of the church? Mission statements? The great commission? Church work?
 - b. The Mission has a Church: The biblical view of the church is not a static organization that determines its own mission. Rather, God has a mission in this world and God is about his mission; he is calling and sending people caught up in that mission and they are the church.
3. Consider the implications of each view on the relationship between church and mission:
 - a. When we say that “the church has a mission,” we tend to view the church as a sort of machine that comes in a kit so that when we assemble it properly according to the instructions and turn on the power it goes to work. But the Bible never pictures the church as an independent institution that churns out a product or repeats a task under its own power.
 - b. The biblical view of the church is that it is the result of and witness to God’s mission: In the Bible, the followers of Christ are called “The Way.” (Acts 9:2) The church is the transformation of the old humanity into the new humanity (Eph. 2:15). The church is the result of God’s Activity – we are the fish caught up in the dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50), we are the sheaves of wheat gathered in harvest (Mt. 13:24-30; see also Luke 10), we are the mustard tree sown by the sower (Mk 4:30-32), we are persecuted believers on the run who tell the story that changes the world (Acts 8). The mission of God is a tidal wave breaking onto the shores of earth and the church is caught up in it. The mission of God is like a storm front moving into this world. The church is like a pile of leaves or a drift of snow gathered up by the wind. (See John 3:8) We are the visible evidence of God’s invisible activity in the world. The mission of God has a church.

Response

1. In this closing section, it is important to encourage the learners to apply the biblical principles to church life. Have the learners consider the real implications of the foundational concepts that have been discussed.
2. Divide the class into three groups. Have each group consider one of the following three sets of questions:
 - a. Group 1 – If mission begins with God, how does this challenge and shape our understanding of evangelism? What is our role in evangelism? What Scriptures inform your answers? How will you live out this understanding of evangelism and God’s mission?
 - b. Group 2 – What does our understanding of God’s reign (kingdom) have to do with our understanding of mission? What does it mean to live under the reign of God? What Scriptures inform your answers?
 - c. Group 3 – Many of us have heard the statement “Jesus is Lord of My Life.” What would it mean for your group/congregation to make the statement “Jesus is Lord of *Our* Life!” How does it change our view of the relationship of church and world to recognize that Christ is Lord over all? What Scriptures inform your answers?
3. Allow a specified time for group discussion then bring the three groups together. Ask each group to summarize their discussions. Challenge each group to discuss the real implications (“What are these texts challenging us to do/to be?”)
4. The teacher should write the important observations on a board and then note the common themes that come from the independent discussions of the three groups. What do these common themes suggest for living faithfully in God’s mission?
5. Conclude with a prayer for the congregation to continue maturing into the mission of God.

Appendix 1
God's Mission in the World
Gathering and Sending the Church



Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Two: Finding Our Way in the Story in Which We Find Ourselves

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will examine a Christian worldview that endures through every shift and change in cultural worldviews.
2. Learners will identify ways in which the revelation of God provides disciples of Jesus with a biblical worldview that is based on seeing the world the way God sees it.
3. Learners will distinguish the difference between a modern worldview and a post-modern worldview.
4. Learners will identify how influence and power were vested in Christendom from the fourth century through the twentieth century.
5. Learners will examine the tendency of congregations to entrench in a world of modernity rather than courageously take the gospel to the prevailing culture.

Introduction:

1. Teacher will observe that one's worldview includes the presuppositions, beliefs, and values that shape how one see reality and determines how one will think and act. Scripture endures through every shift and change in cultural worldviews.
 - The apostle Paul addresses the importance of living in whatever worldview one finds oneself as disciples of Jesus, with a biblical worldview based on seeing the world as God sees it.
 - I Corinthians 1:18-25 contrasts the wisdom of God with the wisdom on humanity. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligent, I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." Verse 31 instructs Christians to boast only in the Lord.

- II Corinthians 5:16 declares a Christian worldview, “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Through we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
 - Christians are to test every worldview according to Romans 12:1-2. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
2. Teacher will observe that scripture provides disciples of Jesus with a biblical worldview. Naturally Christians live *in* the world, but we are not to be *of* the world. How are disciples of Jesus to exist in the world, remain true to God, but not isolate themselves from living out the gospel in the culture in which they find themselves? Historians describe four major worldviews: classic, middle-aged, modern and post-modern, which have formed worldviews throughout the history of humankind. To investigate how today Christians will live out the mission of God in the culture in which we find ourselves, it is important to review the two most recent worldviews.
 3. Teacher will define a modern worldview by giving examples such as:
 - The Enlightenment (18th century) ushered in a worldview of rational thought and reason. Education, knowledge, literacy, belief, progress and scientific reasoning replaced the irrationality, superstition, and tyranny of the middle ages.
 - Churches of Christ began in the late 18th century firmly rooted in rationality, reasoning, and right beliefs. Early on, the movement invited all people to “come and reason together.”
 - Churches of Christ, established in the American frontier, emphasized Bible study, biblical preaching, and scripture memorization. Rational thought, biblical literacy, and an emphasis of always going back to the Bible were the hallmarks of the movement.
 4. Teacher will define a post-modern worldview by giving examples such as:
 - In the later part of the 20th century, philosophers and social scientists began to describe a worldview turning toward globalization, consumerism, fragmentation of authority, deconstruction, and relativism.

- Leaders in describing the worldview change claim that the golden dome of rationality collapsed. No single canopy emerged to replace rationalism. In a world of no absolutes, diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism carry the day.
- Leadership moved from hierarchical to sharing responsibilities through collaborative teams and empowerment.

5. Additional information to distinguish the difference between a modern worldview and a post-modern worldview is available on the attached chart (Attachment 1) The important thing to remember is that King David enlisted the men of Issachar because they understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” (1 Chronicles 12:32) As the biblical passage notes, Christians live to the glory of God, and are charged with living out the mission of God in the culture, in the dominate worldview in which they find themselves.

Exploration:

1. Teacher will identify the genesis of Christendom and provide a historical overview of Christendom from the 4th century through the 20th century.
 - Constantine the Great, Roman emperor in the 4th century, made Christianity the religion of the state, which until then had suffered persecution.
 - Instead of martyrdom and persecution, Christians were welcomed into the center of power and influence. Cathedrals, positioned near the city center, provided clergy with a strong voice in political affairs and in all aspects of society.
 - For seventeen centuries (4th through the 20th), Christendom enjoyed authority and significance in Western thought.
 - America, founded in the dawn of the Enlightenment, in the 17th century, emphasized freedom of religion. Clergy provided an influential voice in schools, government, and commerce. Currency proclaimed “In God We Trust.”

- As the worldview turned toward post-modernity in the late 20th century, Christendom's voice weakened and society began to marginalize Christendom. Churches became one of many influences in society, no longer providing a scared canopy.
2. Display the graphic found on Attachment 2, and invite the learners to identify ways in which they observe Christendom being marginalized in the 21st century. Possible responses include banning prayer in schools, nativity scenes removed from Courthouse lawns, and the Ten Commandments removed from some public venues.

Life Response:

1. Congregations today may reflect characteristics of modernity more than post-modernity. For more than a quarter of a century, Churches of Christ have asked questions about our identity as a movement. This period may have served as a time of forging a new missional identity for our movement. The book of Exodus tells of the people of Israel serving as slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years, and when freed by God through Moses, spent forty years wondering in the wilderness. Could it be that God was forging a new "identity" for his chosen people? Did he allow them to travel for years in the desert to rid themselves of their identity as slaves and take on a new identity of free people in the promised land? Could God have used the time to cause the people of Israel to claim the Spirit of God in living daily as his chosen people?
2. Could it be that the cultural turning from a modern to a post-modern worldview during the past thirty or so years has forged a new missional identity for God's people? One author, Alan Roxburgh, declares that rather than seeing our current state as failure and loss, some are claiming the Spirit of God is inviting us to rediscover a missional heart in unimagined and unexpected places.
3. Roxburgh goes on to say, "One fears that in North America, rather than hearing this call of the Spirit to embrace and listen to the voice of God in a place of strangeness, the churches are continuing to work hard at rediscovering modes of existence and symbols of power that will move them back to an imaginary center. A return to a remembered Christendom or the old detent with modernity is impossible."
4. Roxburgh challenges readers with the observation that, "The only meaningful way forward lies in understanding and embracing our new position in the culture, in society. We must live with confusion and humiliation, as a hopeful

people ready to discover the new things the Spirit will birth. The continued assumption of cultural symbols of power and success will only produce an inauthentic church with little gospel, much religion, and no mission.” (page 47)

5. Learners are invited to respond to Roxburgh’s claims about the current status of congregations in a post-modern world by answering the following questions:

- Which of Roxburgh’s claims do you agree with?
- Which of his claims do you disagree with or challenge?
- In what ways is our congregation successfully taking the gospel to the post-modern culture?
- Where do you see the Spirit of God leading us in regards to taking the gospel to this culture?

Missional Church in Post-Modernity

**“Understanding the Times”
I Chronicles 12:32**

Principle/Venues	Modern	Post-Modern Turning
Organizing Principle	Rationality	Relational
Personhood	Individuality	Community
Truth	Propositional/Right Answers (Absolutes)	Experiences/Story (Narrative)
Faith	Commitment to the truth of Scripture—nurture by church	Abstract concept, shaped by one’s own reality and understanding
Church	A place where something happens (Provider of “goods and services”) “Build it and they will come”	Living the reign of God as a community of disciples prayerfully joining together for missions, ministry and worship
Missions	Sending of missionaries to distant lands	Missional lives being lived by all of us in our families, marketplaces, in every context
Family	Husband (father), wife (mother), marriage, children	Pluralistic lifestyles (same sex attraction, co-habitation, traditional family, etc.)
Christian Education- “Bible School”	Informational (literacy), formal classroom, curriculum, manuals (rationality primary)	Relational, narrative, non-formal (small groups, retreats, children’s musicals, Bible Time Marketplace)

“ . . .

Spiritual Leadership	Administrators, Managers, Trustees, Protectors	Shepherds, Visionaries, Strategic, Missional, Authentic Lives,	
Christianity	Christendom, Center of Power and Influence	Post-Christian, Marginalized, Center moving to Africa, China	
Ministry	Centered in congregation, led by staff over each division	Every member a minister, living out practices of Jesus in all of life.	
Spiritual Formation	Dependent on Sermons, Sunday School, home devotionals, Lectureships, and Christian society	Events (feasts, celebrations, fasts as in O.T.), relationships, and journeying together	

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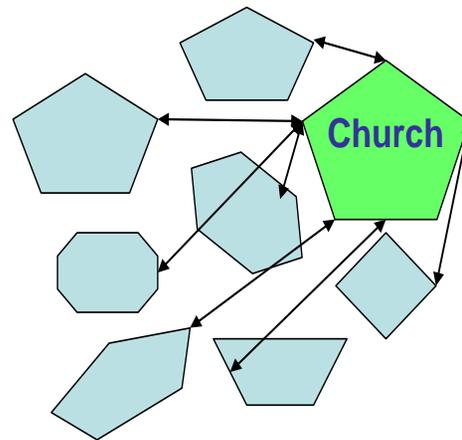
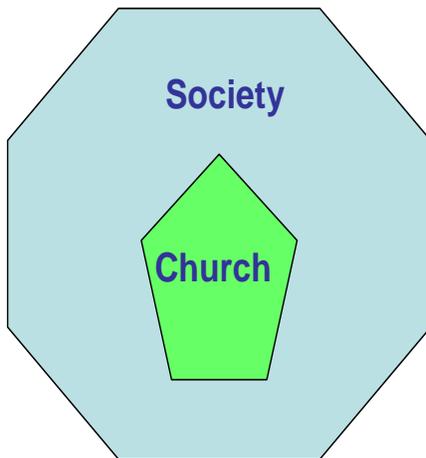
Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” (I Chronicles 12:32) “. . . you can tell the weather by looking at the sky, but you are unable to read the signs of the times!” (Matt. 13:6) David W. Wray, Abilene Christian University (2005)

Attachment 2

Powering Down...



The Marginalized Church



Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Three: Faithfulness to God's Calling and Taking the Gospel

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will examine God's mission of taking the gospel to every people and every nation.
2. Learners will explore what it means for the congregation to grow in living out the mission of God in the location where they find themselves.
3. Learners will seek to discern God's specific missional identity for them personally and for the congregation.

Introduction:

4. Teacher will examine passages which describe the mission of God to redeem the world to himself. Jesus' final words to the disciples are recorded in Matthew 28:16-20. He gathered with the remaining eleven disciples in Galilee before his return to heaven. His authoritative charge to the disciples declared their future mission. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
5. Paul articulates the message of God's mission in II Corinthians 5:17-21. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting the trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us, we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
3. God calls all people to him. The God who calls all people is most perfectly seen in Jesus Christ. It is our task to imitate him. Colossians 1:15-20 says it this way, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church, he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of Jesus."

Exploration

4. Scripture tells us that as clay jars we display his glory of God. It is not about us, but his all-surpassing power (II Corinthians 4:7) Using the theme of disciples being God's vessel as clay jars, the book **Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness**, (Lois Y. Barrett et al.) calls congregations to continue forging a missional identity in the 21st century. The word "missional" denotes every member of a congregation living as a missionary and minister in the contexts where we find ourselves. Rather than thinking in terms of a church's mission, the concept presented in the book encourages Christians to think of their identity as a "mission with a people." The book provides eight patterns of missional congregations that serve as an outline for the following eight lessons in this series. A brief synopsis of the book is attached (see Attachment 1).
5. Principle one, or pattern one, in Barrett's book speaks to the importance of a congregation developing an identity around the mission of God. Being a missional church is all about a sense of identity, shared pervasively in a congregation that knows it is caught up into God's intent for the world. It comes from having heard the still small voice that says, "You are mine. I have called you to me. I join you to my compassionate approach to the whole world for its healing. You are witnesses to what I have done and what I will yet do." (page 36)
6. Ask learners to respond to the "Where Are We?" question, in reference to our congregation. Record responses on overhead/white board, while learners record responses on attached sheet. (See Attachment 3)
7. Following the same pattern, discuss the "When Are We?", "Who Are We?", and "Why Are We?" questions and record responses.

Response

6. In this closing section, it is important to encourage learners to integrate the mission principles of scripture with the current missional identity of the congregation.
7. Divide the class into two groups. Assign each group one of the scenarios describing Church A and Church B. (Attachment 2) Each group will read the scenario assigned to the group and discuss it using the following questions:
 - a. How realistic is it to expect Christians attending a regional congregation to move into the neighborhoods near the church building?

- b. What are essential commitments a congregation needs to adopt to minister effectively to the people in their vicinity?
 - c. In way ways is this congregation living out the mission of God as described in scripture?
- 8. Allow 10 minutes for group discussion, then bring the two groups together. Assign one person from each group to summarize their scenario and observations for the rest of the class.
- 9. Conclude with a prayer for the congregation to continue maturing into the mission of God.

Lois Barrett et al. **Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004) Gospel and Our Culture Series

According to the authors of Treasure in Clay Jars, a missional church is a church that is shaped by participating in God's mission, which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, to restore it to what God has always intended for the world. Missional churches see themselves not so much sending, as being sent. A Missional congregation lets God's mission permeate everything that the congregation does – from worship to witness to training members for discipleship. It bridges the gap between outreach and congregational life, since, in its life together, the church is to embody God's mission (Introduction, page xi)

Seven researchers investigated nine congregations in various regions of North America. The missional team identified eight impulses or patterns evident in the congregations, which included both large and small communities of faith. The study includes a diverse group of congregations – diverse in terms of geography, tradition, ethnicity, and size – who are seeking faithfulness to God's call.

The authors express concern that the book not serve as a “how-to-become-a-successful-church” book. Rather, they seek to establish principles to encourage church leaders on their journey toward becoming missional.

II Corinthians 4:2 ***But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belong to God and does not come from us.***

Church A

When Church A outgrew its facilities in one neighborhood in Detroit and moved it to another, it assumed that many of the members would now move into the new neighborhood. The new building was once a grand Packard showroom in a half-mile-square area that had once been housing for management in the hey-day of Detroit's automotive industry. Now the housing had become run down, and the area was known for its drug dealing, alcohol consumption, and downward economic spirals. Families were mostly broken ones. Despair had become the normal way of life. But the members of Church A knew that the divine intent was to bring healing and deliverance to this neighborhood, and the fortunes that landed them in this facility were not an accident.

Henry Lewis, the preacher for Church A, believed in the mantra of "Love everybody" in whatever context you find yourself. That means, when you establish your worship center in the middle of a new neighborhood, your new neighbors are the obvious prime candidates for the same "love everybody."

From the moment the move was confirmed, the idea of "loving everybody" from a comfortable commute didn't seem to make much sense to the people of Church A. At least half of the families found homes in the new community and lived alongside the "everybodies" that God was sending them to "love." One of the staff members was among those who left a comfortable house in the suburbs to move to the Packard community.

Shortly after the move, a new staff member, was added for worship and community development. He had been taught that the three Rs of Christian community development were relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution. He quickly joined many of the other staff and elders in relocating to the new location. If Church A was to be the healing presence of Christ in this neighborhood, anchored in this new worship center, it would be so as a community of new neighbors sharing life as other neighbors saw and experienced it.

Church B

Church B, in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn had experience a severe decline by the late 1950's. Originally a congregation of German immigrants, the character of the community had chanced. Increasingly Puerto Rican immigrants lived there along with many Jews. When the preacher arrived there, he knew he was ill-prepared for ministry among poor Puerto Rican immigrants. His first instinct was to seek permission to live in an apartment among them. His own sense of vocation was formed by reading about how God entered the human condition and in fact took up residence among the poor of Israel. That vocation has passed to the new congregation that formed and flourished. It is now a large vibrant Hispanic congregation. Their reason for being is to be "present with Christ in the Lord's Supper and present with the poorest of the poor."

Church B's understanding of its vocation is rooted in Phil. 2:5-11 – God leaving behind power and glory to take the form of a peasant in a land of poverty. Small group leaders meet together on Saturday mornings for reflection and discussion, where the focus of worship is the life-giving and life-saving sacrifice of Jesus. After their worship time they share lunch with a group of formerly homeless men who reside at a church facility. Obviously, this church seeks to be what it believes. It's vocation is to be the living incarnation of Jesus Christ. In other words, they say, "We are Matthew 25."

Where Are We?

Geographically, Socially, Culturally

When Are We?

In the flow of history and change

Who Are We?

Living out the gospel in our homes, workplaces, recreational venues

Why Are We?

Welcoming God's call, entering God's coming reign

Lesson Four: Biblical Formation and Discipleship

Outcome Objectives:

4. Learners will understand that the Bible has a formative role in the church's life and that all church members must learn what it means to be a disciple.
5. Learners will understand what it means for Scripture to be normative for Christian community.
6. Learners will explore the role of Scripture in missional formation and discipleship.
7. Learners will develop opportunities to practice the pattern of biblical formation and discipleship.

Introduction:

6. Teacher may open with a conversation starter. Ask the class to share with one another what they think of the old line: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Is this true or false? If it is false and words do hurt, what does this say about the power of words and the enduring nature of this old proverb?
7. Read Genesis 1 (read verses 1-5 if time is critical). Teacher will indicate that God uses words to bring creation into existence. Invite the class to respond to what this means about the power of words. Do our words have the power to shape reality? How much more then does God's word have the power to shape our reality and identity?
 - a. Give the definition of the following terms:
 - i. Normative
 - ii. Disciple
 - b. Discuss the following verse from the "treasure in clay jars" text in 2 Cor. 4:6 – "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."
 - i. Compare this to the translation from Peterson's The Message: *"It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful."*
8. Read Hebrews 4:6-13. Teacher may acknowledge that verses 12-13 are more familiar than the context starting in verse 6. Teacher will indicate that the context involves disobedience. Have the class indicate the adjectives, verbs, and images used to describe the word of God. Write these on a board.

Exploration

8. Teacher will explore the context of Hebrews 4:6-13 and the images used to describe the word of God.
 - a. What does the description of God's word as sharp, penetrating, dividing, living, and active tell us about the function of the word as it relates to obedience?
 - b. How are obedience and discipleship related?
9. Teacher Exploration Strategy: Teacher will adopt the role of a spiritual seeker or skeptic. Teacher will ask the learners: "Why should I study the Bible?" Have someone write down the answers that the class gives. In the role of the seeker (or skeptic) ask the class: "Why do you read the Bible for yourself?" Have someone write down the answers to these questions.
 - a. Compare the two lists. Do we read the Bible for the same reasons we tell seekers or non-Christians to read the Bible? Why or why not?
 - b. The purpose of this exploration strategy is to make the learners aware of assumptions that we have about the role of the Bible is evangelism and discipleship. Do we regard the Bible as containing information that converts must accept, or do we view the Bible as the living word of God which shapes all of us (converts and Christians) into disciples.
 - c. Some may indicate that they read the Bible to discover interesting facts or to stay in a routine. Compare that with reasons given for a seeker to read (i.e. to learn what God wants you to do/be).
10. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Why does Paul take Timothy back to what he has learned "from infancy?" How does the study Timothy learned as a child now contribute to wisdom? How often do we hear teachers say "Forget what you learned in Sunday School!" What is meant by this?
 - a. What is the use for Scripture? How does verse 17 summarize the connection between Scripture and discipleship?
11. Read Matt. 28:18-20. What is involved in the process of making disciples? (Note: baptizing and teaching). How long does this teaching last? What are the essential elements of this teaching?
 - a. Exploration Strategy for Teachers: Distribute cards and have the learners write on the card what they consider to be the "essential elements" of the teaching commissioned in Matt. 28. Encourage them to write down as many elements as they can. Invite discussion from the class: "Have we included everything? How long will it take us to educate on all of these?"
 - b. The purpose of this strategy is to demonstrate that training in discipleship is not simply a matter of knowledge but a discipline for one's life.

Response

10. In this closing section, it is important to emphasize that the role of the Bible in our life together is to shape us into the kind of people God wants us to be. *The goal of biblical teaching is obedience and discipleship and not just knowledge.*
11. Encourage the learners to go on “field trip” around the congregation’s facilities. Sometime (class time if practical) walk around your congregation’s facilities. Notice what Scriptures are on display. Gather samples of congregational literature. Notice what Scriptures are on display.
 - a. Why are these Scriptures on display? What do they say about our “vocation” (Recall Pattern 1)
 - b. How do they shape and form our life together? How should they shape and form us?
 - c. Are these scriptures “equipping us for righteousness?” Are they forming us into a called and sent people? Why or why not?
 - d. If not, what should we do to allow the word of God to judge our thoughts and attitudes?
12. Read Matthew 6:31-34. What would it look like for this word from Jesus to be lived out among our congregation?
13. How does being a disciple enter into these everyday situations: 1) buying a house, 2) purchasing a car; 3) choosing a career; 4) dining together as a family; 5) choosing what books to read, movies to watch; 6) the way you treat those who serve you; 7) the way you treat those you serve. (Please add your own everyday situations.
14. Consider the reasons you study the Bible. Is it for your own “benefit;” to gain guidance for a difficult decision; to build an argument? Is it part of a routine discipline? How might we go beyond these and dwell in God’s word so that it transforms and disciplines us?
 - a. Alternatively, imagine ways we might read the Scriptures together as a called and sent community. Teacher should invite the class to suggest ways we could collectively discern God’s word for us in our current context (recall pattern 1 – missional vocation).

Treasure in Clay Jars
Lesson Five: Risk Takers for the Sake of the Gospel

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will examine ways in which scripture often calls for Christians to exchange personal comfort and predictability for risk taking and dependence on God.
2. Learners will recognize the risks involved in being set apart from the world because of the gospel.
3. Learners will explore how the Spirit of God empowers believers to be risk takers for the gospel
4. Learners will gain understanding of the implications of personally becoming greater risk-takers in taking the saving gospel of Jesus to culture.

Introduction

1. The Teacher will remind learners that the gospels have a great deal to say about disciples of Jesus taking risks for the gospel and depending on God's Spirit to lead and guide. Just as first century people asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?", so too must we constantly be asking, Who is my neighbor and how are to respond to our neighbors? On one occasion when Jesus was asked to clarify what he meant by, "Love your neighbor as yourself," he told this story. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:25-37)
2. Invite the learners to think about a time when they stepped out of their comfort zone and became a risk taker for God in serving their neighbors. Ask the learners to share (about one minute or so) that experience with one or two other participants in the class. Invite some of the learners to tell the entire group a time when their conversation partner was a risk taker.

3. With the same conversation partner, ask the learners to tell which of the three individuals in the Luke 10 narrative they most naturally identify. Is it the “priest” who turned his head away from the danger and walked on by? Is it the “Levite” (spiritual leaders in the priestly tribe of Israel devoted to the sanctuary, I Kings, Ezra), who refused to get involved in a questionable situation? Or is it the Samaritan (mixed race considered by Jews as pagans, and thought of in the same way as they perceived tax collectors and sinners) who personally risked his security, generously gave of his resources, and went beyond what was expected to care for the injured man? Rather than ask for the response with whom they identify, ask, “What are the theological principles Jesus is communicating by telling this story?”
4. Refer to the fifth principle, or fifth pattern, in the book **Treasure in Clay Jars** which says, “The missional church is learning to take risks for the sake of the gospel. It understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord. It is raising questions, often threatening, about the church’s cultural captivity and grappling with the ethical and structural implications of its missional vocation.”

Exploration:

1. Ask the learners to identify ways in which they perceive Christians as being different or set apart from the world. Possible responses include how Christians use their time or resources, how they treat fellow workers, employees, how they speak, etc. Ask students to define and give examples of “the church’s cultural captivity.”
2. Ask learners to reflect on the risks involved in moving into a neighborhood with great needs, allowing homeless people to sleep in the buildings, or taking on unbudgeted expenses.
3. Taking the discussion one step further, ask learners to respond to this quote: “These congregations (in this study) seem to be living by a set of rules different from that of the dominant culture. Their priorities are different. They act against the “common sense.” They are trying to conform to Jesus Christ rather than to the surrounding society.” (p. 75)
4. Consumerism v. Being Present with the Poor
 - a. In Matthew 5:1-12 Jesus indicates “the poor are blessed more those with great financial resources.” Read the attached story (Attachment 1) and then use the diagram (Attachment 2) ask class participants to respond to the story by thinking of situations that didn’t turn out to be what they expected. For instance, an event that might have seemed to be unfortunate turned into a blessing or something that seemed to be a advantageous turned out to not be as expected.
5. Creative Generosity – How does a church responsibly respond to needs, some of which are ‘spur of the moment’, such as a natural disaster (reflect on ways in which God used the faith community in reaching out to Katrina evacuees), when those funds are not in the budget?

Response:

1. Use this case study to encourage disciples of Jesus to be greater risk takers for the gospel. *The congregation begins a ministry to “help the underemployed through personal academic and spiritual development” in their building. The socially marginalized population display poor interpersonal skills and conflict often arises among the group. The congregation equips the students with job training, personal and group counseling, biblical instruction, and Christian community. During their six week non-paid internships students work side by side with Christians in the work settings. The mentoring and spiritual formation which occur during those week lead many to confess Jesus as Lord and be buried with him in baptism.*

2. Invite learners to respond to these questions:
 - How can we encourage each other to be greater risk takers in taking the gospel into our culture?
 - In what ways does God’s Spirit empower and lead Christians when they are risk takers for the gospel?
 - How do we answer the question today, “Who is my neighbor?”



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE POOR

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family.

On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?" "It was great,

Dad." "Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked. "Oh Yeah" said the son. "So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon.

We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them."

With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are."

Too many times we forget what we have and concentrate on what we don't have. What is one person's worthless object is another's prize possession. It is all based on one's perspective. Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for all the bounty we have, instead of worrying about wanting more.
Take joy in all you have, especially your friends.

Rich

Poor

Once I thought I was rich. . . .



But I found I was poor.

But I found I was rich

Once I thought I was poor. . .



Lesson Six: Practices That Demonstrate God's Intent for the World

Outcome Objectives:

8. Learners will understand that the church's life together is missional because the character of that life together is what God intends for the life of the whole world.
9. Learners will understand how these practices are habits and characteristics of the church community and not simply responsibilities of staff or the focus of programs.
10. Learners will explore practices that demonstrate the character of God such as listening to/spending time with one another, actively helping one another, bearing with one another, hospitality, crossing relational barriers.
11. Learners will explore how these internal and communal practices are meant to be lived out before "the watching world."
12. Learners will develop opportunities to practice the pattern of biblical formation and discipleship.

Introduction:

9. Begin by reading the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Emphasize 17:23. Why does Jesus want unity? *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.* Indicate the missional focus of unity.
10. Teacher will direct the learners to "one another" texts that demonstrate practices of unity and love: Romans 12:9-13 (hospitality and bearing with one another); Romans 14:13 (resolving conflict, unity); 1 Cor. 1:10 (overcoming divisions); Eph. 5:19 (singing as a sign of unity); Heb 10:25 (spending time with one another/encouragement); 1 Peter 4:9 (hospitality). Note: Teacher may consider other "one another" texts or encourage learners to search for others. Ask learners to indicate the practice that demonstrates "one another unity" in each text.
11. Special Discussion of John 13: Teacher may choose to examine John 13 as Jesus' demonstration of and teaching about practices that demonstrate God's intent for the world.
 - a. John 13:1-17 is the narrative of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Teacher will emphasize Jesus' question to the disciples: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" How do we understand what Jesus has done? What does Jesus mean when he says, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."
 - b. John 13:31-38 is Jesus' new command. How is the practice of love for one another a demonstration of God's mission within the world? Teacher will indicate that the behavior of a loving fellowship is a witness to the watching world. ("Everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another.")

Exploration

12. Teacher will explore with learners specific examples of practices that demonstrate the work of God among the congregation to cultivate unity and love.
 - a. Exploration Strategy: Encourage the class to share examples or stories about the church being recognized for practices that demonstrate the loving character of God. If you are aware of some of these stories invite people to class who can best tell that story. This is the practice of testimony. Perhaps there is someone in the congregation who became a member because of they witnessed in your congregation.
 - b. Suggestion: If learners cite programs within the church, press them to get more detailed about their reason for naming that program. What is the character of those who work in that program? Is that program successful because of their technique or because of the attitude and heart? The intent here is to emphasize that it is in the quality of our life together before the world that we demonstrate God's intent for the world and not simply in the application of formulaic methods.
13. Teacher will focus on four practices of the church's life together that demonstrate Christ-like love as a contrast to cultural norms. These are: a) listening to one another/spending time with one another; b) helping one another; c) bearing with one another; d) overcoming cultural barriers.
 - a. Listening to One Another/Spending Time with One Another: Have each group member write a number between 1 and 10 on an index card indicating how busy they feel their current schedule is. (10 = extremely busy/overwhelmed). Now have the group line up according to their numbers. Ask the 10's (or highest number) to relate why they feel busy. Ask the middle number(s) to relate why they feel as busy as they do. Now ask the lowest numbers to repeat what the 10's said. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate: 1) That "busy-ness" is a cultural norm that makes it difficult for us to listen and spend time with one another, and 2) that listening to one another is essential to practicing the sort of "one another" relationship that Christ calls us to for the sake of mission. (Transition: How can we help one another if we do not listen to one another?)
 - b. Helping One Another: Ask the group to discuss the phrase "God helps those who help themselves." Is this phrase biblical? (Some might even assume this is a Scripture). Ask the group to give biblical or personal examples of those God helps. How do these examples demonstrate the reign of God? Ask the group to

discuss which is more consistent with the reign of God: actively helping one another or rugged individualism. Thought question: If we cannot be “one” by helping one another lovingly, can we really be “one” with God?

- c. Bearing with One Another/Reconciling Differences: Teacher will indicate that genuine relationships will bring difficulties. Read Mt. 18:15-20. What is the common goal of every level of the attempt to reconcile with the sinner? (Forgiveness and Reconciliation.) How does the practice of reconciliation and bearing with one another’s weaknesses demonstrate God’s presence to the world (cf. Mt. 18:19-20)
- d. Overcoming Cultural Barriers: Read Gal. 3:26-28 & Col. 3:11. Now invite class members to write down on index cards occasions when they became very aware of cultural barriers (discrimination, ostracism, class distinctions, or other barriers). It may be a personal experience or one they observed in any context. Tell the class that they should not identify themselves on the card. Now collect the cards, shuffle them, and redistribute them. Call upon class members to read what is written on the card they have. (Do as many as time permits). Ask the reader to relate how he/she feels about this experience of a barrier. Ask the class to recommend practical ways that unity in Christ overcomes these barriers. What can the church do to overcome these barriers and demonstrate God’s intent for the world?

Response

15. Close by singing “We Are One in the Spirit”

- a. Before the group sings this song emphasize the chorus: “And they will know we are Christians by our love.”

Lesson Seven: The Public Witness of Worship

Outcome Objectives:

13. Learners will perceive how worship is directed toward God rather than directed toward insiders or outsiders.
14. Learners will understand that mission and worship are closely connected.
15. Learners will explore the public and communal implications of God-focused worship.
16. Learners will explore how worship celebrates God's presence and God's promised future by focusing the church on both memory and hope.
17. Learners will explore how memory and hope inform our practice of communion, the ministry of the word, prayer, praise, and other worship activities.

Introduction:

12. Teacher will use the graphics in Appendix to introduce the biblical relationship between worship and mission²
 - a. By compartmentalizing the activities of the church we have begun to think too rigidly about what is for "insider" and what is for "outsiders." It has created an "us and them" way of thinking that hampers our participation in God's mission in the world. This rigid "us and them" way of thinking is seen most vividly in two typical misconceptions about the relationship between worship and mission.
 - b. Slide 1: Inside and Outside – The first, and probably the most prominent, view is a traditional one that for the purpose of discussion we will call the "Inside and Out" view. The inside and out approach views worship as the activity for those inside the church which spiritually empowers them for the task of mission which is limited to work "outside" the church.
 - c. Slide 2: Outside In – The "outside in" approach responds to the conventional approach by bringing the "outside" mission activity of the church "inside" to the worship assembly. In this approach the worship is regarded as either a presentation of the gospel or a platform to rally commitment to social action. This approach may be an attempt to unite worship and mission, but the relationship is still understood instrumentally – that is, worship is an instrument to accomplish mission. Bringing the outside in to the inside is sometimes called worship evangelism. But attempts at worship evangelism do not consider the unity of the two. Rather they attempt to

² For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between worship and mission see Thomas Schattauer, ed., *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

re-orient the focus of worship on the outsider. Notice however that the “us and them” thinking is still in effect. What remains is the false choice that worship is strictly for insiders and evangelism is strictly for outsiders.

- d. Slide 3: Inside Out: The trouble with both of the previous approaches is that they are flat. They are two-dimensional and do not account for God’s missional activity in the world and our participation in that activity. The “inside out” approach avoids the weaknesses of the other approaches because it understands mission as the mission of God toward the world rather than *the evangelistic efforts of the church*. Since worship takes place within the arena of the mission of God in the world, “the assembly for worship *is* mission.” The church worships because it is gathered up into the mission of God moving within the world. The church in worship reflects the reign of God in a public way.

13. Teacher will discuss the definition of the term *ekklesia*.
 - a. **ἐκκλησία** (*ekklesia*) – an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned, the legislative assembly.
 - b. Why would the early church choose this term to refer to their assembly. Terms with a more religious connotation could have been used.
14. Teacher will introduce the following texts that indicate that worship is a public witness to the reign of God as well as an arena for identity formation before the presence of God.
 - a. Genesis 12:1-9. God calls Abraham to participate in his mission within the world. When Abraham arrives in the land of the Canaanites he builds an altar to the LORD and worships.
 - b. Exodus 12:1-16. Notice how the Passover worship is public in nature. What does this worship communicate to the watching world? How does it shape the identity of the participants throughout generations? How does it proclaim the reign of God?
 - c. 1 Cor. 14:22-25. How is worship open to both “insiders” and “outsiders?” What should God-focused worship communicate to the watching world? (Notice the anticipated response of the unbeliever in v. 25).

Exploration

14. Learners will explore how worship proclaims the reign of God by discussing the symbols and expressions of allegiance and values that are present in various ways in our worship.
 - a. Exploration Strategy: Take a “field trip” into the worship center of your congregation (either mentally or physically). What symbols of allegiance are present? (Be sure and notice utilitarian items such as clocks). What rule or reign is being proclaimed through these symbols? What powers and principalities are acknowledged?

- b. Consider the order of worship for your congregation. Consider the words and phrases that comprise worship for your congregation. What allegiance and reign is being proclaimed? How would an unbeliever respond to what we proclaim in worship? (Notice: What we proclaim, not what might the unbeliever think about our style).
 - c. Consider how believers worship in countries that persecute Christian believers. What do the governments of countries that persecute worshippers understand about worship as a political act? Why would it be any different in the U.S.? [For information on persecuted churches see <http://www.persecution.com/>]
 - d. What symbols and expressions should we add to worship in this congregation to proclaim the reign of God?
15. Learners will explore how worship sustains and shapes the identity of the church that is gathered and called by God’s missional activity.
- a. What assumptions set the agenda for worship in our congregation? How do we decide the content and structure of worship?
 - b. What worship activities enable us to experience God’s presence in worship?
 - c. Discuss this statement: “The church’s worship is not about itself but about God.”
 - d. Do we typically view worship as being for our benefit or is directed toward God? How would God-directed worship actually benefit the church? Can you imagine ways that it might be more satisfying than worship aimed at “meeting our needs?”
16. Learners will explore how memory of God’s acts and hope in God’s promised future inform our worship.
- a. Exploration Strategy: Make a table with columns labeled memory, hope and witness. Rows with various acts of worship (add those that are particular to your context). See example.

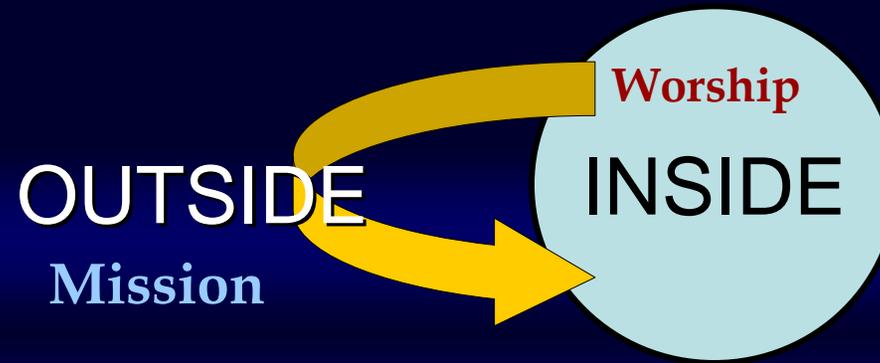
	Memory (What memory about God’s act or character does this worship act recall?)	Hope (What promise or hope about the future does this worship act inspire?)	Witness (What does this worship act communicate to “the watching world?”)
The Lord’s Supper			
Sermon			
Singing			
Confession			
Baptism			
[Add other acts]			

Response

1. Learners will discuss what it means for worship to be public without thinking of worship as “seeker-sensitive” or “worship evangelism” or “insider motivation.”
 - a. *Exploration Strategy:* Can you remember worship services in and around the time of 9/11? Tell these stories then reflect on the following: How did worship become very public then? How was it *ekklesia*, public assembly? How is this different from our assumptions about worship being private, internal, and spiritual (to the exclusion of physical)?
 - b. Imagine you are hosting your traditional Thanksgiving Dinner for family and new friends are joining you. Would you change anything for the sake of your friends? Would you continue with your traditions? How would you help your friends feel welcome even though they lack the understanding of your family traditions? How does the presence of new friends enable your family to appreciate their tradition? How does it renew and change tradition? How is God’s presence communicated at your Thanksgiving meal? Would the new friends understand that communication?
2. Pray for persecuted churches. What can we do in our worship to bless and intercede for those churches - publicly? How can their public witness inspire us in our public witness of worship?

Appendix: Slides

Inside and Outside



Outside In

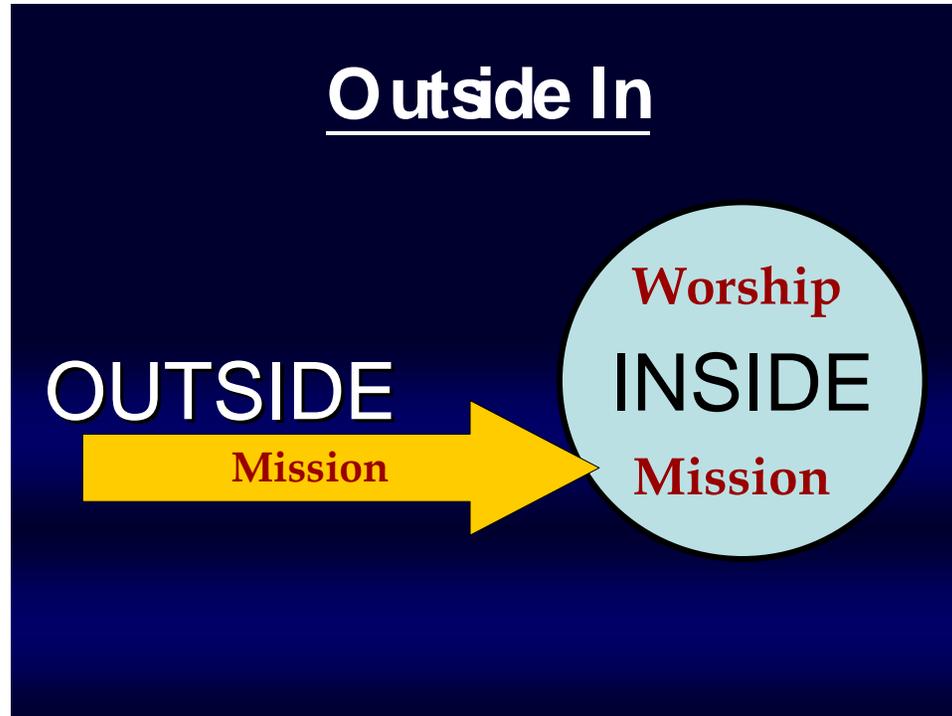
OUTSIDE

Mission

Worship

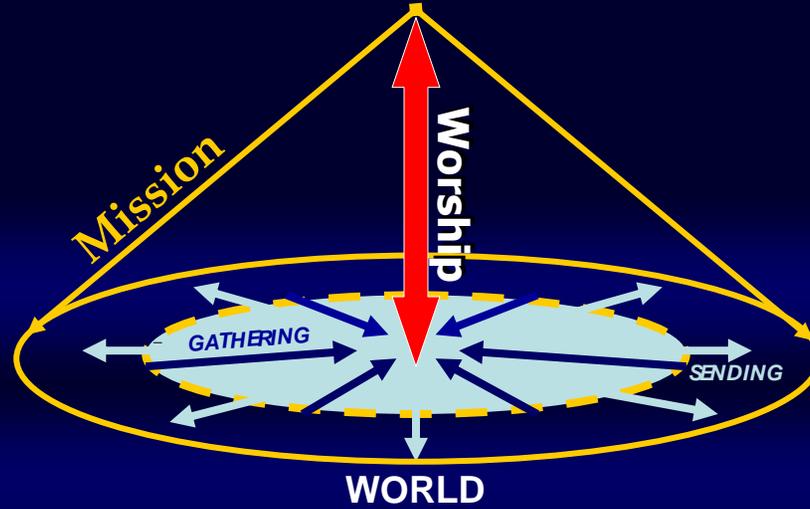
INSIDE

Mission



Inside Out

GOD



Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Eight: Dependence on the Holy Spirit

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will use scripture and theological reflection to explore the need for personal prayer in sustaining and motivating living missional lives.
2. Learners will grow in their dependence on corporate prayer as a source of strength for the missional congregation.
3. Learners will discuss the power of prayer in difficult and desperate situations.

Introduction

1. The teacher observes that Jesus' disciples knew he prayed often to the Father. When they woke up they knew to look for Jesus in solitary places where he prayed to his Father (Mark 1:35-36). The disciples wanted training in prayer so they asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). John's gospel records the lengthy prayer of Jesus in chapters 14-17. In comforting his disciples before leaving earth to return to heaven, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will come be with them. "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (John 14:15-18).
2. When Christians are unable to articulate their thoughts and heart desires in prayer, scripture reminds us that the Holy Spirit translates and intercedes. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:26-27).
3. "People sent on a mission who do not constantly pray are bound to lurch along in confusion and pain." Clay jars can break, except for the sustaining life of Christ who fills them. (Acts 21:5, I Thess 5:17) "The missional church is incapable of fulfilling its call, save for guidance from the Spirit of God and for the Spirit's empowerment of the church's witness to that reality." (p. 119)
4. Invite the learners to think about ways in which the Spirit of God is empowering the congregation to witness to gospel to the culture. Ask them to talk (for 2-3 minutes) to one or two neighbors sitting beside them in class about what they are observing

about the Spirit's leading and empowering the congregation to become more missional. Record some of the responses on the white board at the conclusion of the sharing.

Exploration

1. A curious reality in the past history of Churches of Christ relegated the Holy Spirit to the written words of scripture. Perhaps that is a manifestation of modernity when rationality provide an organizing principle for the worldview, and our congregations reflected that worldview. Scripture paints another picture of the work and role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:9-11)
2. The courage to be risk takers for the gospel in today's culture comes through the Holy Spirit that indwells and empowers. Wisdom to know how to go about living our lives as daily missionaries in our marketplaces is a result of the Holy Spirit's work in each of us. The eyes of our hearts recognize the many places that God is working in the world through insights provided by the Holy Spirit. Through prayer we constantly seek God's guidance, leading, and power to boldly live as people engaging the culture of the 21st century.
3. In addition to the Holy Spirit working in our daily lives, the Spirit is working in our congregations to move us out into God's world with the good news of the gospel. **Treasure in Clay Jars** makes the observation, "It was a key discovery in these churches (that is the congregations which were studied) that over the years they had lost the practice of depending upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. As one congregation phrased it, 'We have done a good job dealing with various tangible aspects of church life such as facilities and funding, but we are uncomfortable and inexperienced in dealing with the tough issue of being led by the Holy Spirit in present times.' That realization played a major role in the decision of these fellowships to discern God's call by recovering some of the ancient yet critical exercises of the faithful among them convening for the express purpose of approaching their God in prayer in order to hear God's voice." (page 122) Explore these questions with your learners:
 - As you look around in your personal life, where do you see the Holy Spirit working? In what ways is the Holy Spirit leading you missionally?
 - In what ways is the Holy Spirit working in and through the congregation?
 - How do congregations discern the voice of God, the leading of the Holy Spirit from all the voices that speak so loudly in today's culture?

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in personal and congregational prayer?

Response:

1. Using the case study (Attachment 1), process the implications for the case by writing on the white board, “What is at stake?” Then under that phrase write “Hillside Church Leaders,” and “Freedom Church of Christ neighbors.” Invite learners to brainstorm what is at stake for each of these groups.
2. Conclude the session by interacting with learners using the questions at the bottom of the case study.

Freedom Church of Christ Case Study

For more than sixty years the Elm Street Church of Christ met in the present location. Over the years the neighbor changed to reflect neighbors who were socially marginalized, and fewer and fewer people attended the Elm Street congregation. Finally the eight remaining members decided they could not sustain the building, and they voted to donate the facility to a Church of Christ less than two miles away.

The Hillside Church of Christ gladly accepted the donation of the building and began to immediately make plans to plant a vibrant congregation in that community. One Monday evening fifty members of the Hillside congregation met at the Elm Street building before walking the neighborhood. They reminded themselves as they walked in pairs to constantly pray for the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of their hearts to seek the ways in which God was already working in that area. A few Saturdays later they returned to the neighborhood and this time in pairs they knocked on the doors of every home within a mile radius of the building. They asked the question, “What kind of church do you want to be in this neighborhood?” People responded that they wanted to be a church that loved and worshiped God, who honored Christ, and who would address the drug, domestic violence, and prostitution in the area.

During the next week the minister to children at Hillside organized prayer stations at the Elm Street congregation. Church leaders were stationed near the pulpit, in classrooms, in the worship center, near the water for baptisms, and in other strategic locations around the building. Families came and moved from prayer station to prayer station asking God’s Spirit to create a new church in that neighborhood. Each leader asked for the Spirit of the living God to bless, anoint, and use the facility to the glory of God.

A few weeks later all the neighbors in the block surrounding the building gathered on a summer evening to share a meal, get to know each other better, and continue the conversation about what kind of church they wanted to be. The name Freedom Church of Christ was selected as they prayed that God would free the neighborhood of Satan’s influence and work.

- How will wrestling with the question of ‘what kind of church do you want to be’ shape and spiritually form the Freedom Church of Christ in the future?
- How is that question different from, “What type of church would you like for us to establish in this neighborhood?”
- When new churches are planted, how can they reflect the ethnic, social, and education levels of the area and remain faithful to biblical principles of what it means to be a holy people gathered to worship and serve God?

Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Nine: Pointing Toward the Reign of God

Outcome Objectives:

4. Learners will use scripture and theological reflection to explore the meaning of kingdom of God/reign of God/rule of God.
5. Learners will develop a sense of expectation and hope about the emergence of God's kingdom in the world.
6. Learners will discuss the church's role as an instrument, agent, and sign of God's reign.

Introduction

2. Note: See #3 under Exploration for a possible way to enter into this study.
3. Intro question: "What do we think of when we speak about kingdom?" Discuss these typical reductions or distortions of what kingdom means:
 - *Christendom* (refer to material in Lesson Two): Whenever the "kingdom of God" is associated with political boundaries or civilizations it is reduced to less than its biblical meaning. When we regard America as a "Christian nation" are we in fact borrowing a worldview from Christendom?
 - *Social justice and social reform*: When we equate the "kingdom of God" with programs or movements that attempt to change a particular society we have reduced the reign of God to less than its full meaning. Certain efforts at justice and reform may be "signs" of God's reign, but when the emphasis is on our efforts to "establish" or "build" God's kingdom we miss the fact that the kingdom of God exists prior to our efforts and his rule is established by his own sovereignty rather than our work.
 - *Church on earth/church membership*: When we equate the kingdom of God with a tangible, identifiable institution we reduce kingdom to less than its biblical meaning. This reduction tends to limit God's kingdom to the "citizens" of the kingdom. The rest of creation and humanity are regarded as part of another kingdom.
 - *Individual faith*: This reduction describes the kingdom of God as his rule in our individual lives. Common phrases born out of this perspective are "Christ reigns in me" or "when Christ rules in your heart."
 - *Heaven/Future reality*: Certainly the kingdom of God is coming, but in what sense is it already here? Notice that there is sometimes to assume that the kingdom has already come completely or is completely a future reality.
 - *Note*: These reductions and distortions are not "totally wrong" they are simply limited in their scope. They are insufficient perspectives because they have reduced the reign of God to something less than what it really is.

2. Consider the following Scriptures that speak of the reign of God. Review these and notice the scope of the reign of God.
 - **Luke 17:20-21.** What were the Pharisees expectations of the coming kingdom? What does Jesus mean when he says “the kingdom of God is within (or among) you?” [Note that “you” is plural in this sentence].
 - **Acts 14:21-22.** Notice that Paul and Barnabas encourage believers to endure hardship as they enter into the kingdom. What does this word of encouragement tell us about the kingdom of God?
 - **Romans 14:16-18.** What does this definition of what the kingdom is and isn’t tell us about the reign of God?
 - **Hebrews 12:28-29.** What is meant by “receiving” a kingdom? Who is establishing the kingdom? (God). What is our response to God’s initiative? (hope, encouragement, faithfulness).

Exploration

4. In the previous lesson we recognized that a curious reality in the past history of Churches of Christ relegated the Holy Spirit to the written words of scripture. Another curious reality of the past history of Churches of Christ is that it was considered illegitimate to pray “Thy Kingdom Come” or the Lord’s Prayer containing this phrase. The rationale was that the kingdom had already come on the day of Pentecost. This is the case in Alexander Campbell’s views and we might note that we have inherited his views.³ However, there is an alternate viewpoint with the heritage of Churches of Christ expressed by Barton Stone and David Lipscomb. Stone believed that the church gave glimpses into the coming kingdom, but he did not equate the two. Lipscomb anticipated a day when the kingdom of God would finally break into this world and consume all earthly governments – the best and the worst.⁴
5. C.S. Lewis referred to the world as “enemy-occupied territory” and Christianity as the “story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”⁵ Notice that Lewis doesn’t call this warfare. How do we sabotage the powers of the enemy that have occupied this world? How does Ephesians 6 inform our understanding of the conflict between the reign of God (the rightful king) and the powers and principalities?

³ For a discussion of Alexander Campbell’s dispensational views on the kingdom see Leonard Allen, *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ In and After the Modern Age*, Leafwood, 2004. pp. 36-38.

⁴ For more on Stone and Lipscomb’s apocalyptic views, see Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, Eerdmans, 1996. pp. 94 and 123.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Simon and Schuster, 1980. p. 51.

6. Matthew 6:33 is a familiar text about the kingdom of God. You may choose to sing the well-known song “Seek Ye First” at some point and then ask the group to reflect on what they have sung.
 - What would it look for the church to “seek first the kingdom of God?” Why is “righteousness” included with kingdom?
 - How might we point toward the reign of God as a sign of the kingdom or reign of God that is coming?
 - How does our presence in the world become an instrument of God’s in-breaking reign?
 - How do we serve as an agent of the in-breaking kingdom?
 - What would change about us if we held before our church community this question: “How can I (we) bring the influence, reign, and authority of God to bear here so that people can know him and glorify him?”⁶

Response:

3. Read **Romans 8:18-30** and respond to the following:
 - What is the scope of this text about future hope? What is at stake? Notice that all creation anticipates the reign of God? Why? What have the other “powers” done to the creation?
 - Do Christians participate even now in the reign of God? What is the meaning of verse 23?
 - How is our hope a way of pointing toward the reign of God?
4. Conclude with stories of how God’s reign is breaking into the life of your community.

⁶ This question is suggested by Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped By God’s Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*, Josey-Bass, 2004. p. 131.

Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Ten: Missional Authority

Outcome Objectives:

7. Learners will use scripture and theological reflection to explore the nature of authority and leadership in Christ's church.
8. Learners will recognize how missional leaders form missional community, focus on missional vocation, and foster missional practices.
9. Learners will recognize that authority beneath the reign of God is invested in a variety of leaders, rather than offices, and is given for the sake of cultivating the Christ-life in the church.

Introduction

4. Invite the group to discuss their understandings of the following phrases:
 - i. "Respect for the *office* of the president."
 - ii. "Reporting a matter to the authorities."
 - iii. "Developing the leader within you."
5. What do these phrases tell us about the understanding of authority and leadership in our dominant culture?
6. When we speak of leaders "in the church" to whom are we generally referring? (i.e. elders, deacons, ministers, ministry leaders). What qualifies these people to be leaders? Possible answers might include: training, credentials, experience, character, passion, wisdom, title, function, role. Indicate to the group that we have a variety of ways of recognizing authority and leaders. (You might also note that some of these ways seem more valid or carry more weight than others).

Exploration

7. Explore the source of authority within the church by reviewing the following Scriptures:
 - **Exodus 18.** Note that Jethro does not consider Moses to be the sole source of authority. He advises Moses to share his authority with other leaders. God is the ultimate source of authority and a multiplicity of leaders does not threaten that authority.
 - **1 Samuel 8:4-21.** What assumptions about authority and leadership do you observe among the Israelites? God affirms to Samuel that the people did not reject his leadership and a prophet, but that they rejected God's authority. Later God

chooses the kings of Israel – Saul, David, Solomon. The “succession of authority in Israel follows God’s will, not family lineage.

- **Matthew 28:18** – Notice that part of the Great Commission is the affirmation that God has granted Jesus all authority. Jesus gives authority over evil to his disciples (i.e. Matt. 10:1). Since all authority comes from God, leaders in the body of Christ are not to take advantage of this authority and dominate the flock (Luke 22:25-26).

8. Affirm that missional leaders are those who derive their authority from God. God has called them to lead in a particular way and for particular purposes. One of these purposes is to *form missional community*.

- **Read 1 Cor. 12:4-31.**
- What is the common source of the various gifts? (Holy Spirit, 12:11)
- What is the common objective of the various gifts? (The common good, serving one another for the sake of mission, 12:7)
- What are the different leadership roles mentioned in this text?
- Recognize that those entrusted with these various gifts are to work together just as a body with different parts works together. What does this tell us about the nature of our community?
- **Read Eph 4:11-16.**
- What are the different leadership roles mentioned in this text (4:11)? Who appoints these leaders?
- What is the hierarchy of these roles? (This is of course a trick question since there is no evidence that one role is superior to another).
- What is the common purpose of these various leaders? (4:12-13).
- Have the group list the words that demonstrate how leaders form missional community: “built up,” “unity in the faith,” “mature,” “the fullness of Christ.”

9. Explore another particular purpose of missional leaders regarding the common objective of missional leaders: to *focus on missional vocation (calling)*.

- **Read 2 Cor. 5:11-21.**
- What is Paul’s focus? Does he seem to have a clear understanding of his ministry and calling?(5:20-21)
- What expectations do we sometimes place on leaders that seem good but actually distract them from “leading” us to focus on the missional vocation of the church?

- How might our leaders hold us accountable to the vocation to which God has called this congregation? How might we support the leaders so that they keep us focused? (Adapt these questions if your group includes leaders).

10. Affirm that another purpose of missional leaders is to *foster missional practices*.

- **Read Phil 3:12-17.**
- Notice that Paul has a clear focus and vocation in mind (3:12-14).
- Notice that Paul is willing to make an example of not only himself, but also others who are mature and others who follow the pattern of the gospel life. (3:17)
- **Read 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1.**
- Ask your group to name the sort of practices Paul's attitude would foster?
- How would this sort of leadership lead the church through conflict?
- How would it keep us focused on God's mission?
- Paul seems to be interested in discipleship and spiritual formation rather than simple information. Discuss the people in your congregation that you follow because you see the example of Christ in their lives. How will you follow the pattern of that person's life?

Response:

1. Discuss ways that your congregation can affirm the leaders that God has given you. What are some simple ways that you can show your appreciation and more importantly your "follow-ship?"
2. How will you identify those who have been gifts to lead the congregation into being more faithful to God's mission? Are there members of your group/class that ought to be recognized? How was this done in Acts 6? Stephen and Phillip are among the seven recognized as leaders in Acts 6. What activities and practices are they engaged in following the text of Acts 6? Are they serving at tables? Are they involved in the mission of God?

Treasure in Clay Jars
Lesson Eleven: Principles With Which to Move Forward

Outcome Objectives

1. Learners will identify opportunities found in the North American culture, which is marginalizing Christianity.
2. Learners will understand the need to have direct immersion in missional experiences.
3. Learners will recognize the importance of matching learning with life experiences.

Introduction

1. Teacher will read Hebrews 13:11-13 to the class. “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.”
2. This passage suggests that we see our culture as a mission field and think of ourselves as missionaries. Rather than embracing power and influence in the culture, we live an exilic lifestyle. Mark Love (**Seeking A Lasting City**)⁷ provides five implications of practicing Christianity outside the camp. (See pages 162-164)
 - Take an exilic stance toward expressions of power and status.
 - Take an exilic stance in extending a welcome to all outsiders.
 - Take an exilic stance in being “anti-tribal.” Speaking for the racially marginalized, the exilic church refuses to be a tool of the dominant ethnic culture, calling all people to the cross.
 - Take an exilic stance, which breaks down walls of human division.
 - Take an exilic stance in embracing diversity as an esteemed value by all those in the community of faith (socio-economically, educated/uneducated, ethnicity, etc.)

⁷ **Seeking a Lasting City**, written by Mark Love, Doug Foster, and Randy Harris, provides a solid biblical/theological perspective on the church. Chapters 7-9 specifically address issues of missional church. Dozens of questions and teaching strategies are found in the final 40 pages of the book. The Abilene Christian University Press published the book in the summer of 2005.

Mark concludes chapter seven by declaring, “The church in a post-Christian, postmodern, post-denomination world is the exilic church, the missional church, the prophetic church, the marginalized church, the church of the cross that stands outside the city gates.” (page 175)

Exploration

1. Rather than establish a school to train disciples, Jesus invited disciples to interact with people they encountered in the culture. Immersion in an experience, followed by theological reflection, often produces the most effective spiritually forming opportunities.
2. Invite the learners to identify a time when they found themselves immersed in a missional opportunity, which transformed the ways in which they saw people, dealt compassionately with socially marginalized people, and felt outrage for those trapped in poverty and oppression.
3. Invite learners to identify what lessons the disciples would have missed if they were enrolled in an academy rather than going with him from village to village. (Direct learners to a few passages in the gospels where Jesus interacts with people. (good examples include: John 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, etc.) Ask the learners to reflect on some of the liabilities that we experience by often being rational and preferring study and discussion over immersion in the culture and living missionally.
4. Identify ways in which your congregation is providing immersion experience for adults (we often provide these opportunities for teenagers), which provide them with important spiritual insights.

Life Response

1. If you were going to design an additional neighborhood ministry for this church, what would it be? What are the needs of the neighborhood where you live? What are the needs of the neighborhood where the church building is located?
2. What skills/abilities do you have that could be used to minister to someone? What skills/abilities do you need to be equipped with in order to live more missionally?

3. What would be the advantage of arranging for class members to ride with a police officer throughout much of the night in the area around the church building?
4. What are some of your fears about living as exile people in the North American culture? What risks does it require? What lifestyle changes are important to consider?

Treasure in Clay Jars

Lesson Twelve: Principles With Which to Move Forward

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will examine biblical principles with which the disciples of Jesus took the good news throughout the world.
2. Learners will explore principles for taking the good news of scripture boldly into God's future.
3. Learners will encourage each other to live as ministers and missionaries in the 21st Century.

Introduction

1. Teachers will remind learners of the biblical mandate to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-29).
2. Elmer Towns writes in his book, **Getting A Church Started**, which is free at www.elmertowns.com that Jesus **commissioned** his disciples in John 20:21; he gave them a **strategy** in Matthew 28:18-20; he provided **content** (preaching repentance and forgiveness of sin is based on the resurrection of Christ) in Luke 24:46-48; and he gave them a **context** (Jerusalem to uttermost part of the earth) in Acts 1:8..
 - **Commission:** In its simplest form, Jesus explained, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). Since the Father has sent Jesus to “seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10), we are sent in the same manner as Jesus—by the Father, to seek and save the lost.
 - **Strategy:** The word “nation” in Matthew 28:18 is better translated every “people” or “ethnic group.” We are to go to all people groups with the unchanging message and put it into “cultural containers” to reach people where they are and take them to where they need to go.
 - **Content:** Luke 24:47 instructs disciples to proclaim “repentance and forgiveness based upon the resurrection.” Christ proclaims when he is lifted up all people are drawn to him (John 12:32).

- **Context:** Power from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) provided first century Christians with all that was needed to be witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. That same power today enables all of us to spread the gospel of Jesus with confidence locally, regionally, and globally.

Exploration

1. Teachers will find a helpful outline in Ed Stetzer's book, **Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age**,⁸ to encourage every disciple to take the gospel of Jesus to their local context, to the region in which they live, and globally to all people groups..
 - I. Church Planting in Jerusalem-"locally" (Acts 1-7)
 - A. Its Origin
 1. Born in prayer (1:12-14)
 2. Bathed in the Spirit (2:1-4)
 3. Begun with proclamation (2:14-39)
 4. Baptized in the name of Jesus (2:41)
 - B. Its Functions
 1. Doctrinal Teaching (2:42)
 2. Fellowship (2:42)
 3. Worship (2:42, 46)
 4. Prayer (2:42; 4:29-31)
 5. Benevolence (2:44-45; 4:34-25)
 6. Identification with the community (2:47)
 7. Witness (4:33; 5:42)
 - C. Its Growth

⁸ Broadman and Holman Publishers produced this book in 2003. Stetzer has planted churches in New York and Pennsylvania. A former seminary professor, he now directs the Nehemiah Project of North American Mission Board, helping recruit and training church planters.

1. Three thousand baptized at Pentecost (2:41)
2. People saved daily (2:47)
3. Multitudes added (5:14)
4. Religious leaders believed (6:7)

II. Church Planting in Judea and Samaria –“regionally” (Acts 8-12)

- A. Church planting done by Christians (8:1, 4)
- B. Mass evangelism (8:5-6:, 12)
- C. Village evangelism (8:25)
- D. Churches multiplied (9:31)
- E. Salvation extended to Gentiles (10:44-48)

III. Church Planting in the World-“globally” (Acts 13-28)

- A. Scattered laity started Jewish churches (11:19)
- B. Antioch became the great missionary church (13:2-3)
- C. Paul’s First Missionary Journey (13-14)
- D. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (15:40-18:22)
- E. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:17)

2. The life of Paul and the activities of the first century church demonstrate that early Christians believed in and practiced living missional lives locally, regionally and internationally.

Response

1. Writing in **The Shape of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church**,⁹ Frost and Hirsch make numerous suggestions for taking the gospel to the 21st Century world.
2. It is recommended that you develop the statements into an “agree/disagree” format, and invite the learners to state if they agree or disagree with the statement. A fun way to get agreement/disagreement is to have participants put their thumb “up” if they agree and put it “down” if they disagree. If they disagree, ask them to rewrite the statement in such a way that they could agree. (Attachment One)

⁹ This book raises enormous challenges for God’s people in North America. Our time is an era when the need for, and the relevance of, the gospel has seldom been less. If ever there was a time for missions locally, regionally, and globally, it is now.

Principles For Moving Forward Missionally

- | | | | |
|-------|----------|----|---|
| Agree | Disagree | 1. | The majority of learning and training must take place in one's workplace or mission setting, not in the church building. |
| Agree | Disagree | 2. | Since context is critical, most people will not learn to be missional unless they are out of their comfort zone. |
| Agree | Disagree | 3. | Learning to live missionally happens only when there is time for reflection and discussion with those in the community. |
| Agree | Disagree | 4. | Without coaching sessions from leaders in the faith community, it will be almost impossible for Christians today to have the courage to live missional lives in the 21 st Century. |
| Agree | Disagree | 5. | Church leaders cannot teach what they do not know and they cannot lead where they have not been. Leaders must lead missionally from direct and current experiences in their lives. |
| Agree | Disagree | 6. | People are not primarily motivated by information but by inspiration. |
| Agree | Disagree | 7. | Evangelism will spring up in our congregation when all Christians develop spiritual imagination for living missional lives. |