



Missional

A BIBLE STUDY SERIES

★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas



THE MEANING OF *Missional*

“Missional communities exist when we participate in God’s mission of reconciliation beyond the walls of the church through relationships and worship.”

INTRODUCTION

Before jumping to form a missional community, take time to wonder together what it looks like to live a missional life. The goal of this study and time of discernment is not to convert every member of the congregation into a missionary. Rather, it is to truly discern in community how each are called and to begin exploring your curiosity around missional communities. These studies are designed to meet the needs of your community. Please take creative liberties, as this is only meant to be a starting point.

MISSIONAL PROCESS

Going – Show up consistently to find out who is in your community.

Relationship – With whom do you want to partner? Who might already be doing God’s work where you can make meaningful connections?

Gather – Begin to form as a community.

STRUCTURE OPTIONS

Thread 1: 6 weeks total. 2 weeks on Going; 2 weeks on Relationship; 2 weeks on Gathering.

Thread 2: 4 weeks total. Week 1: Going. Weeks 2 & 3: Relationship. Week 4: Gathering.

NOTES FOR THE CONVENER

We have intentionally built flexibility into this Bible Study. This means you will need to rephrase questions so they sound authentic to your voice. Please make the appropriate preparations, including passage selection prior to each meeting.

The following questions are meant for individuals to reflect on their particular experience, while building connections in community. When asked for a reflection on a communal experience, the question will specify as much.

In building a scriptural study appropriate for your congregation, please consider pairing this work with Eric Law’s *Holy Currencies*; or a spiritual gifts assessment. Additionally, Brene Brown’s work on core values (brenebrown.com) may be particularly helpful with the section on relationships. Components of the Invite • Welcome • Connect (invitewelcomeconnect.com) program could be useful when talking through the section on gathering. If you need assistance finding supplemental materials appropriate for your context, please contact Jason Evans, jevans@epicenter.org

In addition to gathering to build community and study holy scripture, we suggest adding an element of worship. Each section offers suggestions for particular prayers or prayer actions. Please feel free to adapt for your context, or use any standard rite out of the *Book of Prayer Book*.

Going

WEEK 1

OPENING PRAYER

Ever living God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, *Amen*.

(For the Mission of the Church; *Book of Common Prayer*, p 816.)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- ★ Wonder together what hopes you have for engaging individuals beyond your immediate circle of friends and family in meaningful ways. Share what those encounters might look like.
- ★ Wonder together what perceived risks prevent you from engaging those individuals in a meaningful way.
- ★ Wonder together about the real or perceived fears about “going out.” Wonder together about real or perceived fears about “staying in.”

SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

Please choose one of the following passages to study per gathering. Read the passage aloud at least twice, preferably in different translations and from different voices in the group.

Luke 24:13-35, The Road to Emmaus

Luke 8:22-25, Jesus Calms the Storm

Luke 9:1-6, The Mission of the Twelve

Luke 9:28-26, The Transfiguration

Luke 10:1-12, The Mission of the Seventy

Luke 14:25-34, The Cost of Discipleship

John 6:16-21, Jesus Walks on Water

John 13:31-35, The New Commandment

QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE

- ★ In the story you read, what significance is given to movement? Wonder together how the story would have changed without motion from one place to another.
- ★ Wonder together how the purpose of Jesus’ ministry is changed or enhanced as a result of the story you read.
- ★ Wonder together about what was new for you in this story today. Share what part of the story came alive in a new way.
- ★ Wonder together about how this story might be speaking to your community.

PRAYER ACTION

Print out a black and white map of the five mile radius surrounding your church campus. Provide crayons or colored pencils to everyone in the group. Spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation inviting everyone to code the map by marking locations where they personally know residents or business owners, and locations that present opportunities. Use the map as a tool for prayer over the course of the next week. Begin the next session by sharing any revelations that might have occurred.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close with a time of thanksgivings, blessings and petitions in prayer.

Relationship

WEEK 2 & 3

OPENING PRAYER

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (For the Human Family; *Book of Common Prayer*, p 815.)

WEEK 2 INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

Choose 3-4 core values that are non-negotiable for you, meaning they show up in every area of your life. Reflect on how those values show up in the relationships in which you invest the most time.

WEEK 3 INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Take time to reflect on a relationship that took an unexpected form in your life. Share with the group how this relationship evolved into something other than what you expected.

- ★ Wonder together whether you would have been as open to it if you had known what was in store.
- ★ Wonder about connections that are meaningful in your life. Ponder what other possible connections you still long for. Brainstorm together what might be a first possible step in creating those desired connections.

SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

Please choose one of the following passages to study per gathering. Read the passage aloud at least twice, preferably in different translations and from different voices in the group.

Luke 1:39-45, Mary & Elizabeth

Luke 9:18-20, Peter's declaration about Jesus

Luke 10:21-23, Jesus Rejoices

Luke 10:25-37, Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:38-42, Mary and Martha

Luke 15:1-10, Parables of the Lost Sheep & Coin

Luke 15:11-32, Parable of the Prodigal Father

Luke 16:19-31, Lazarus and the Rich Man

Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus

Luke 22:54-52, Peter denies Jesus

John 3:1-15, Jesus and Nicodemus

John 4:1-21, 27-30, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

John 11:1-44, Lazarus

John 12:1-8, Mary anoints Jesus

John 14:1-14, the Trinity

John 21:15-19, Jesus and Peter

QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE

- ★ What do you imagine were hesitations or barriers for the individual with whom Jesus had the encounter?
I wonder whether Jesus shared similar hesitations. I wonder what degree of shared experience they had before and after the encounter.
- ★ Wonder together what change came about as a result of this encounter.

- ★ Wonder together about what was new for you in this story today. Share what part of the story came alive in a new way.
- ★ Wonder together about how this story might be speaking to your community.

PRAYER ACTION

Holy habits are simply actions that propel us towards living in a more intentional, missional way.

Several examples include:

Making introductions in settings where it is normally our habit to remain a stranger Ex: getting to know the names of baristas, grocery store clerks, yoga instructors, neighbors, etc., and ferring to those individuals by name.

Committing to sharing three meals a week with individuals with whom you do not currently attend church, and intentionally asking about his or her faith journey.

Spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation inviting everyone to pray about opportunities for new relationship in their daily life. Be as specific as possible – use names or locations for desired relationships. Ask everyone to share the intentions for new holy habits they will take on between now and the next session. Begin the next session by sharing what that experience was like. Where did those holy habits take root? How might you be more creative or resilient in the coming weeks if they did not take root?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close with a time of thanksgivings, blessings, and petitions in prayer.

Gathering

WEEK 4

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

(A Prayer of St. Chrysostom; *Book of Common Prayer*, p 102.)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Reflect on a time when you ended up participating in a gathering of which you did not expect to be a part. Share what that experience was like for you.

- ★ Wonder together about the judgements you knowingly or unknowingly place on others when learning with whom they gather. How do the choices we make about with whom and where we gather impact how we are perceived?
- ★ Brainstorm together the possible positive and negative consequences of simply gathering together as a group. Why might it be important? What are possible risks?

SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

Please choose one of the following passages to study per gathering. Read the passage aloud at least twice, preferably in different translations and from different voices in the group.

Luke 8:1-3, Women traveling with Jesus

Luke 8:4-8, 11-15, Parable of the Sower

Luke 9:57-62, Would-be Followers of Jesus

Luke 13:18-19, Parable of the Mustard Seed

Luke 13:22-30, The Narrow Door

Luke 14:7-14, Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Luke 17:20-37, The Coming of the Kingdom

Luke 22: 14-23, Institution of the Lord's Supper

John 6:1-14, Jesus Feeds the 5,000+

QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE

- ★ Wonder together about the intentionality behind the gathering in the scripture story you read. How did that intentionality impact the outcome of the gathering?
- ★ Wonder together about the message of hope from this piece of scripture. Is there a message of warning as well?
- ★ Wonder together about what was new for you in this story today. Share what part of the story came alive in a new way.
- ★ Wonder together about how this story might be speaking to your community.

PRAYER ACTION

The Eucharistic liturgy in which we participate every Sunday is shaped on four actions from the Lord's Supper: take, bless, break, give. The bread and wine are taken from the earth and placed on the altar as an offering. On behalf of the people, the presider blesses the bread and wine and gives thanks to God for these gifts. The bread is

physically and symbolically broken to remind us of the sacrifice Jesus made. Finally, the bread and wine are given to the people. We do not simply remember what took place at the Last Supper, we also bring to life these important actions in our midst making the offering a present reality.

Spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation inviting everyone to pray about what one action from this four-fold shape might become the focus for the initial gathering. How will it be a part of the gathering both explicitly and implicitly? Be as specific as possible. Begin the next session by sharing whether the vision for that initial action has changed or expanded.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close with a time of thanksgivings, blessings, and petitions in prayer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact, Jason Evans, Missioner for Missional Communities at 281.536.7435 or visit epicenter.org/missional.