

Reach Europe. Change the World.



## Prefield Training for GEM short-term teams

Five practices of missional community  
to help you think and act like  
missionaries



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# Communitas Overview

## INTRODUCTION

Are you ready for an adventure? Communitas is designed for people sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself.

This series is aimed to help build the five practices of missional community into each of us. Simply put, it is meant to help us think and act like missionaries.

People don't become missionaries by hopping on a plane and ending up in a place that is unique from where they grew up. You become part of God's mission by embracing the principles for life with God where you are and expect God will take you with him to where he's at work.

We'll be specifically exploring five practices of a missional community: apostolic mission, incarnation, dependence, Gospel mission both in seeking out and sharing with others, and organic systems or expressions of church.

## INSIGHT

To begin, let's watch a short video of Alan Hirsch as he explains the sense of the term "communitas" as it relates to us and our mission.



<http://bit.ly/fmMkg7>

## EXPLORATION

Please head over to your teams facebook group and answer the following questions...take the time to get to know one another better! Feel free to interact and ask questions about each other!

1. Are you currently working and/or going to school? Where and/or what are you studying?
2. What are you most looking forward to about your trip to Europe this summer?
3. When/how did you become a follower of Jesus?
4. What's your favorite restaurant? Why?
5. What are you listening to on your iPod right now?

6. Before your life is over, what's one thing you'd like to see, experience or accomplish?

## CHALLENGE

Your challenge this week and every week until you leave is to be intentional about developing community with other people on your team. We highly recommend connecting weekly via email, skype, a text, facebook, or for a cup of coffee.

## FACEBOOK TIME

After you've taken some time to go through the material above, please go to your community/team Facebook page and write a brief summary/reaction to what you've learned. Look at the comments of others and interact. Remember this is a journey done best in community.

# Communitas Part 1: Apostolic Mission

## INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite memories of life in Europe as a Father was when my wife would send me and my oldest daughter to get bread. I'd plop the little 3-year old in the kid seat on the back of my bike and we'd head off to the bakery.

While I was paying for the bread, the baker would roll up the warm baguettes in a sheet of paper and fold them in my daughter's arms. Then back on the bike I would pedal home as she sat in seat behind me enjoying the wonderful aroma and breaking off bits of the bread to nibble on.

She was on a mission with her father. She'd been incapable of accomplishing it without my constant presence and help. But we always returned with what was needed. And sometimes, a couple of chocolate croissants or other goodies ended up making their way home as well, because fathers are like that. At least our heavenly Father is.

Watch the following video by Alan Hirsch from the Verge Conference 2010.

<http://bit.ly/gUra2z>



## INSIGHT

**What is a missional community?** Take a few minutes to read through these descriptions of a missional community. What do you like? What sticks out? Do these descriptions line up with most churches in America? Why or why not? What will we need to do to line up with these descriptions?

"Maybe the most simplistic way to define a missional community is as a "missionary" community. Just like you might live and focus your time and energy in a foreign culture, learning, listening, and responding to the needs you see around you, so it is with a missional community here in your back yard. What will it take to get one started? Friends who love the lost as much as you do and who are committed to live in relative proximity so that you can architect your schedules around the needs of the culture." -Hugh Halter

"Missional communities are a sent people who connect with God, do life together and receive power from the Holy Spirit to partner with God to accomplish his purposes in our neighborhoods and in the world." -JR Woodward

## EXPLORATION

### THE FIRST PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY: APOSTOLIC (SENT) MISSION

We (followers of Jesus) have been sent into the world by God to follow Jesus on mission (see John 20:21). This is the very impulse of Christianity. Read Luke 10:1-4 and answer the following questions.

1. Read Luke 10:3 and John 20:21-22. How should this (the reality that we are sent people) influence the way we think about the church and what it means to be the church?
2. What does Jesus say about the "harvest" in Luke 10:2? Can you think of any pockets of people in your area that lack a vital kingdom witness (campus, city, neighborhood, special interest group, migrants, marginalized, etc.)?
3. Apostolic Mission demands action/obedience: "Go!" (See Luke 10:3 and Mark 8:34-38, read also Isaiah 6:1-13). Like the disciples we must be willing to drop our nets (everything) to follow Jesus on mission. Is there anything holding you back from completely surrendering to Jesus and His mission (convenience, money, expectations, career, family, safety, etc.)?

4. What does Jesus say specifically about the nature of the mission in Luke 10:3-4? How should this influence the way we think about our lives and what it means to follow Jesus on mission? What do we need to do to move our lives in alignment with these verses?
5. Spend extensive time praying the days ahead asking God to send more workers into the harvest field. Pray for the pockets of people in your (our) area that lack a vital kingdom witness.

## **CHALLENGE**

**Missional Assignment:** Identify a pocket of people/section of your city that lacks a vital kingdom witness and initiate contact (with immigrants, the marginalized, youth, etc). Spend extensive time asking God to show you where to go. You can also visit the site called MeetUp.com for more information about pockets of people in your area or simply Google interests you may have ability in to find people that share your passion or could use your expertise. Where is God sending you and your friends to actively join Him on mission?

## **FACEBOOK TIME**

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# Communitas Part 2: Incarnation

## INTRODUCTION

Incarnation has to do with the way that we posture ourselves in our community as followers of Jesus. Jesus wrapped Himself in human flesh and came to us and now He is sending us into the world to do the same. God proactively and intentionally first sought us out, and became an insider among us, because of His great love for us and now He invites us to join Him in reconciling all things back to Himself.

(Read Luke 10:5; John 1:14, 20:21; Mark 2:15-17)

"God became a man and entered the world through a birth canal just like the rest of us. He chose to come to us on our turf, rather than expecting us to rise to His. Jesus preached everywhere that the kingdom of God has come near. He came to seek and to save the lost, and He now invites us to join Him." -Neil Cole

"In fact, the entire story of Jesus is about a God who did not just want to stay "out there" but who moves into the neighborhood, a neighborhood where folks said, "Nothing good could come." It is this Jesus who was accused of being a glutton and drunkard and rabble-rouser for hanging out with all of society's rejects..." -Shane Claiborne

"You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." -Winnie the Pooh

Watch the following video by Hugh Halter from the Verge Conference 2010.

<http://vimeo.com/15648260>



## INSIGHT

**What is a Missional Community?** Take some time to read the following descriptions and characteristics of a missional community. What do you like/dislike? What excites you? What are you most excited about as we covenant to live out the gospel together on mission with Jesus?

"A Missional Community is a group of 20 to 50 people who exist, in Christian community, to reach either a particular neighborhood or network of relationships.

With a strong value on life together, the group has the expressed intention of seeing those they are in relationship with choose to start following Jesus through this more flexible and locally incarnated expression of the church. They exist to bring heaven to the particular slice of earth they believe God has given them to bless. The result is usually the growth and multiplication of more Missional Communities." -Mike Breen

Church is relational: "People frequently refer to church as either a building or an event, as in, "I'm going to church." One of the main pictures of church in the New Testament is that of family. You don't go to family--it's something you are. Obviously, healthy families get together frequently, but that isn't what defines them. In the same way, church isn't defined by meetings but by relationship together with Jesus at the center. "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst (Matthew 18:20)."

Jesus is King of His Kingdom and Head of His church: "The core skill within simple/organic church is that of listening to God and responding to what He says. (The Word is our yardstick here.) Christians often live as though Jesus is a constitutional monarch--head in name only. God delights to communicate with us, and our response is obedience. As we listen to Him, both individually and corporately, community and mission will result."

Church is missional: For centuries, church has been attractational ("Come to my church!" "Come and hear our special speaker!") But God has always intended for church to be missional--we go to the world with the Good News of the Kingdom. We can reach into every crack and crevice of society this way. Jesus told us to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), and He would build his church (Matthew 16:18).

## **EXPLORATION**

### **THE SECOND PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY: INCARNATION**

Mission requires incarnation (see John 1:1, 1:14). Incarnation has to do with the way that we posture ourselves in our community as followers of Jesus or how God sends us into the world on mission. Jesus wrapped Himself in human flesh and came to us and now He is sending us into the world to do the same (read John 20:21). God proactively and intentionally first sought us out, and became an insider among us, because of His great love for us and now He invites us to join Him in reconciling all things back to Himself according to His grace.

1. Read John 1:1, 14; 20:21. Jesus would not have accomplished the mission of God apart from his incarnation (see John 1:14). How should the incarnation of



Christ influence the way we think about the church and what it really means to be the church (the sent people of God)?

2. Read Mark 2:15-17. Why do you think so many Christians today lack meaningful relationships with non-Christians? What fears and stereotypes exist? What is currently holding you back from developing meaningful/intentional relationships with men and women who are far from God? What can we do as a missional community to reorient our lives and schedules towards intentional mission?
3. God proactively and intentionally became an insider among us (John 1:14). What would it look like for you/us (as a follower of Jesus) to be an "insider" in your/our city, neighborhood, interest group, or work environment?
4. What would it look like for your missional community to usher in the good news of the kingdom in a section of your city or among a pocket of people in your community? Or as Mike Breen puts it, what would it look like for your missional community to bring heaven to the particular slice of earth that you believe God has called you to bless ?

## CHALLENGE

**Missional Assignment:** Meet a friend, neighbor, interest group, or coworker for coffee or lunch at a place they frequently go to (on their turf). In other words, become an insider! If your friend or coworker has a favorite pub in the area, ask to meet him/her there for lunch, etc.

Remember that mission requires obedience (God told Abraham to "GO!"). Begin to think of concrete ways that you as a missional community can bless those in your community/neighborhood.

## FACEBOOK TIME

After you've taken some time to go through the material above, please go to your community/team Facebook page and write a brief summary/reaction to what you've learned. Look at the comments of others and interact. Remember this is a journey done best in community.

# Communitas Part 3: Dependence

## INTRODUCTION

As children develop and mature, part of a parent's role is to help their children by nurturing and encouraging INDEPENDENCE, self-reliance and autonomy. But spiritual maturity for Christians is measured by their level of DEPENDENCE on their heavenly Father.

We have been sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself. Living life on mission requires a deep dependency on God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself depended on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the mission of God and it is absolutely essential that we do the same as we follow Jesus on mission together.

Watch the following video by Neil Cole from the Verge Conference 2010.

<http://vimeo.com/14629986>



## INSIGHT

**What is a missional community?** Take some time to read the following descriptions and characteristics of a missional community. What do you like? What excites you? What questions or comments do you have?

"Ordinary people can make disciples and gather them together: Jesus was content to entrust the expansion of His Kingdom to ordinary, untrained people (Acts 4:13). People with no formal Bible school or seminary training are able to gather a few people over a meal to share life together, to delve into the Word of God, to pray for one another (Acts 2:42) and to seek to make disciples of those they come in contact with.

Luke 10 provides principles for reaching out. In many nations, rapidly multiplying, intentionally small churches led by "lay people" are having a major impact (church planting movements). They use Luke 10:1-9 as their pattern for crossing cultures and making an impact for the Kingdom. Finding a person of peace (receptive people) and starting church in their home rather than inviting that person to join our church, enables us to influence a new circle of people with the Gospel.

Simple is reproducible: Multiplication is more effective than addition but things need to be simple--simple is reproducible, complex is not. We can start a church by working with not-yet-believers, making disciples from the harvest. If these groups are to multiply, they need to be based on simple patterns." -Felicity Dale

"Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness results from getting the right Vision of reality and goodness, the right Intention and decision (to actually become like Christ), and adequate Means to carry out the intention." –Dallas Willard

"Christian spiritual formation is the process of transforming all essential dimensions of the self toward Christlikeness. It presupposes the birth from above and the constant action of the Holy Spirit. It also presupposes relentless action by the individual in obedience to the word of God." -Dallas Willard

"The life of Jesus was deeply characterized by solitude, fasting, prayer and service. Surely, then, the lives of His followers must be just as deeply characterized by those same practices." -Dallas Willard

## **EXPLORATION**

### **THE THIRD PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS DEPENDENCE**

Living life on mission requires a deep dependence on (communion with) God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself depended on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the mission of God and it is absolutely essential that we do the same as we follow Jesus on mission together.

1. Read John 14-16. What does Jesus say to His disciples about the role of the Holy Spirit? Write down EVERY adjective/description of the Holy Spirit found in John 14-16. One group take chapter 14...the second group take chapter 15, and the third group take chapter 16...speed read and write down your observations! Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes as you read the text. What did you find? What will be specifically helpful to you (and to US) as you (we) follow Jesus on mission? Break-up into 3 groups.
2. Read Luke 4:1 and 4:14. Why do you think Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit? How do you think he relied on the Holy Spirit? What examples do we have in the gospels? (see Mark 1:35-37)
3. Read Acts 1:8. Why was the Holy Spirit sent in Acts 2? How did God the Holy Spirit specifically “help” the church in Acts expand the good news of the Kingdom throughout the known world? Can you think of specific examples? How did the church in Acts rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish her mission (see Acts 1:8)? What did they do?

4. Read Acts 1:14, 2:1:1-4; 4:23-31. Do you see a connection between prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit? What's stopping you from organizing a handful of people to pray for a section of your city or for a pocket of people in your area and asking the Holy Spirit to give you what you need to accomplish the mission of God in your area? The church in Acts 4 needed boldness to move forward. What do you and your friends need from the Holy Spirit?

## CHALLENGE

**Missional Assignment:** Practice (experiment with) the Spiritual Disciplines this week. Follow the simple calendar below for a week and get into a spiritual rhythm. The Spiritual Disciplines create the context for communion with God so that we might experience His power and grace. The Spiritual Disciplines help us cultivate a "life with God".

It's important to establish a sense of accountability and community during this week as you learn to follow Jesus on mission together...depending on God the Holy Spirit as you go. Have someone from your group send out daily reminders and connect with members of your group throughout the week for mutual accountability and encouragement.

**Monday- Meditation:** Let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you. Take some time today to focus and meditate on a specific section of scripture (a promise, command, attribute of God, etc). Listen to the Spirit of God as you meditate on His Word. What is He saying to you? Psalm 119:15: "I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways."

**Tuesday- Solitude:** The practice of spending time with God without any others or any distractions.

**Wednesday- Prayer:** Take deliberate steps to pray regularly and with purpose. Praying through the Psalms is a good way to increase your "prayer vocabulary." Head on a prayer walk in your community and/or city. Pray for people and places (schools, etc.) as you walk.

**Thursday- Fasting:** Abstain from food, media, entertainment, or anything else that occupies your time and replace it with a spiritual activity.

**Friday- Study:** Memorize Scripture today and/or expand your universe of biblical study helps. Find tools that will help you understand the historical, literary, and cultural context of the Biblical narrative. Rehearse/review/practice telling the story/



narrative of God to your friends or family members. It's a great tool for introducing receptive people to the gospel of Jesus.

**Saturday- Service:** Practically meet the need of someone in your neighborhood or community.

**Sunday- Community:** "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

**Reading Assignment:** Dallas Willard- *Living A Transformed Life Adequate To Our Calling* (<http://bit.ly/FpzoM>)

## **FACEBOOK TIME**

After you've taken some time to go through the material above, please go to your community/team Facebook page and write a brief summary/reaction to what you've learned. Look at the comments of others and interact. Remember this is a journey done best in community.

# Communitas Part 4: Gospel Mission (Seeking)

## INTRODUCTION

We have been sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself. Gospel mission/movement requires the ability to find and locate receptive people, men and women who God is sovereignly preparing to receive and respond to the gospel message. That key to developing that ability is to listen to Jesus and do what he tells you.

"One day the Lord told me to walk a certain street about 20 minutes from our home. It took me a long while to finally take him seriously, but when I did, I quickly came across a low-income housing project called Springfield. "Start a church here," the Lord seemed to say. A group of us started praying for the housing complex, which has all the problems of inner-city government housing.

"One day my husband, and I were driving down this street with time to spare and we decided to prayer walk on Springfield. A heavy shower caused us to take shelter under a balcony where two Hispanic ladies were sitting. When they asked us what we were doing there, we told them we were praying for the area. They told us something of their story, and before we left, we asked if we could come to their house and pray for the needs of their family.

"Rosa, our person of peace, invited us to visit any time, and so for several weeks we dropped by briefly every few days and prayed for the needs of her family. God answered our prayers very quickly, and so we asked her if she would invite some of her family and friends to hear about what had happened. Long story short, within a few months there were around 30 of us meeting in her tiny apartment, almost all brand-new Christians. A new church had started in the home of a person of peace. We have been sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself. Gospel mission/movement requires the ability to find and locate receptive people, men and women who God is sovereignly preparing to receive and respond to the gospel message." -Felicity Dale  
*(More from Felicity is included in the appendix.)*

Watch the following video by Francis Chan from the Verge Conference 2010.

<http://vimeo.com/16151392>



## INSIGHT

**What is a Missional Community?** Take some time to read the following descriptions and characteristics of a missional community (by Roger Thoman). What do you like? What excites you? What questions or comments do you have?

**Letting go of old paradigms of church life.** This stage is described in a variety of ways from “taking the red pill,” to frustration with old wineskins to discovering what the Bible teaches about church life to... It is sometimes accompanied with periods of disorientation, wandering through valleys of confusion, or (alternatively) great relief and a new sense of freedom. People discover that they no longer want to “go” to church, rather they want to learn what it really means to “be” the church.

**Exploring New Testament gatherings.** Since our old paradigm of church life has often revolved around the Sunday morning gathering, we often find ourselves on a quest to discover what “New Testament” simple/house church gatherings might look like and feel like. In this stage, “the gathering” often remains the focus of our church-life as we seek to explore and experience small, Spirit-led, participatory, Christ-filled gatherings. Our freedom continues to grow and we become more and more enamored with the reality that we really are 24/7, kingdom-living, Spirit-directed believers. The dividing walls between secular and sacred continue to come down and we become excited about integrating our spiritual life with our “everyday” life.

**A new missional heart and longing.** It is inevitable that the process of re-booting to Jesus stirs in us a fresh desire to see his kingdom, his love, his power known and experienced by others. However, this stage is sometimes fraught with severe challenges because our background around “missional” has sometimes been so pre-packaged and programmed that we are challenged to grasp the unique and fresh ways that Jesus wants to make himself known through us. This is especially true for those whose spiritual gifts do not seem to fit into the “missional” spectrum. However, for those who are more apostolic and evangelistic in gifting, this stage often leads to an entirely new excitement and fervor for taking the “real Jesus” into the streets, neighborhoods, and unreached segments of the world. For those who have NOT seen themselves as “missional,” (in our previous church experiences) this stage can lead to some exciting discoveries of how God wants to embody himself uniquely through each of us.

“Does the Gospel I preach and teach have a natural tendency to cause people who hear it to become full-time students of Jesus? Would those who believe it become his apprentices as a natural 'next step'? What can we reasonably expect would result from people actually believing the substance of my message?” -Dallas Willard



## EXPLORATION

### THE FOURTH PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS GOSPEL MISSION (Seeking)

1. Read Luke 10:2-7. What did Jesus specifically instruct His disciples to do in Luke 10:5-7? Why do you think He instructed His disciples to do that? Is this new to you? Have you heard this before?

2. Read Mark 4:1-20: List the different kinds of soil mentioned in Mark 4:1-20. What kind of soil produces the most Kingdom fruit? What does this say about the kind of people we should look for as we follow Jesus on gospel mission? Where do you think we should look for good soil/receptive people?

3. "Receptive Person": "A person prepared by God to receive the Gospel before you arrive." (Dr. Tom Wolf) This person is also commonly referred to as the "person of peace". Where did Jesus go looking for receptive people/good soil?

Tax collectors were considered "outcasts" in Jesus' day and yet Jesus was intentional about sowing gospel seeds among tax collector and sinners (read Mark 2:15-17). Bartimaeus was an "outcast" (see Mark 10: 46-52)...he was a blind beggar...and yet Jesus stopped to extend the gospel to him.

4. In both the case of the woman at the well (John 4) and the demon-possessed man (See Mark 5)...they were considered "outcasts"...Jesus was intentional about sowing gospel seeds among the outcasts of his day. Did both these individuals bear kingdom fruit? In other words, did Jesus find "good soil"? Read John 4:39-41 and Mark 5:18-20. Can you think of any other examples? How about the sick and diseased? Others?

According to Dr. Wolf a "Receptive Person" will usually have three traits:

- Open/receptive/responsive to the message of Jesus Christ.
- He/she has many relational connections.
- He/she has a reputation, good or bad.

The Samaritan woman had a bad reputation (John 4) and Cornelius had a good reputation (Acts 11), yet God used both to bring many more to Jesus. No wonder Jesus kept telling new believers, "Go home to your people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you!" (Mark 5:19-20)



5. According to Luke 10 and the example of Jesus, what should we do with people who are disinterested and unresponsive to the gospel message (story of God)?

6. Where do you think is the best place to look for receptive people/good soil? Who are the "outcasts" in our society? Who are the outcasts in your city/neighborhood? As you engage pockets of people, who is open/responsive to your story as a follower of Jesus?

## CHALLENGE

**Missional Assignment:** Your assignment this week is to simply bless three different people. It could be a classmate, a neighbor, or a complete stranger. Offer to pray for them, help meet a need, do something special for them, etc. and as you intentionally bless others...perhaps creating opportunities to share your story, be looking for receptive/responsive people (good soil)! Ask the Holy Spirit DAILY to lead you to receptive people...continually ask Him to lead you to people with good soil and who will in turn (just like the woman at the well), make much of Jesus in their particular network, neighborhood, or community.

## FACEBOOK TIME

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**See Additional Reading in the Appendix.**

# Communitas Part 5: Gospel Mission (Storying)

## INTRODUCTION

We have been sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself. Gospel mission/movement requires the ability to effectively convey and communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that connects with people. We must also become effective at conveying the gospel in a way that is transferable and reproducible.

You won't get good at storying in a day or a week. This unit is really a launching pad for you to see the importance of being able to share the gospel in ways that make sense to people you know. The link in the Challenge section will give you some great free materials to begin incorporating into your personal time with God for the coming months. Our prayer is that you'll discover or rediscover the beauty of God's Story and be able to share it with others.

Watch this brief story of a youth worker who's discovered the power of storying the Bible.

<http://bit.ly/hf6HtL>



## INSIGHT

“While facts are viewed from the lens of a microscope, stories are viewed from the lens of the soul. Stories address us on every level. They speak to the mind, the body, the emotions, the spirit, and the will. In a story a person can identify with situations he or she has never been in. The individual’s imagination is unlocked to dream what was previously unimaginable.” - Mark Miller

We have been sent into the world by God (John 20:21) to join Jesus on an incredible mission as He reconciles all things back to Himself (gospel). Gospel mission/movement requires the ability to effectively convey and communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that connects with people. We must also become effective at conveying the gospel in a way that is transferable/reproducible.

**Think about this:** We live in stories. Stories are the language of our world. Think about your favorite movies - they draw you in...you begin to feel what the characters feel... their pain becomes your pain... their victory becomes your victory. We enter stories and make them part of our own experience. Stories are the most powerful

form of communication we have. Stories speak to the mind, the body, and the emotions—our spirits. In a story, we can identify with situations we have never been in.

### **What's your favorite movie/novel/story? Why?**

Stories have the power to...

- Attract our attention, draw us in and carry us along. Stories move and shape us, causing us to consider new possibilities—a new future. Spark our imagination. The people in stories come to life in our imaginations.
- Stories touch our minds and emotions and invite us into the narrative, often evoking a personal response. (curiosity, fear, agreement)
- Build true community. Story promotes community (a story is a shared experience) and community promotes storytelling. (a good experience and story begs retelling)

### **Can you think of any examples from your own life?**

People in our culture are dying for a purpose. They are desperately looking for a story to find themselves in. We need to help others to find themselves in the greatest story there is—the Story of God, and how he has pursued and redeemed humanity (including you and me) through the work of his son Jesus.

**Think about this:** “Our lives must find their place in some greater story or they will find their place in some lesser story.” -H. Stephen Shoemaker

## **EXPLORATION**

### **THE FOURTH PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY IS GOSPEL MISSION (Storying)**

#### **What is ‘Narrative and Dialogical Teaching’ or Storying?**

We use an approach to teaching biblical narratives and discussing them called Chronological Bible Storying (CBS). It is often just called “Storying”. This is a method that was created by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptists. We have adapted and developed our stories and the corresponding dialogue to be effective in a current, and often “Western”, context. Storying includes a time of dialogue and discovery after telling each story. In the dialogue, the storyteller uses questions to guide listeners to discover the meaning and significance of the biblical story, and to lead participants to connect their own stories to the larger narrative. ***(We have included some thoughts on the biblical basis for storying in the Appendix.)***

## A Typical Story Session

**Open relationally.** don't plan to get together with a group of strangers and jump straight into the Story. Take your time and build relationships as you get to know each other. Create an environment where you and your friends are comfortable and interested in going deeper into the things of God. Introduce the idea of going through The Story together in a natural way. Don't pull a relational 'bait and switch'!

**Review previous narrative.** Unless it's your first session, work together as a group to retell the last story you discussed together. Try not to move ahead until everyone is up to speed. This will help clear up any misconceptions or forgotten parts.

**Retell the new narrative.** Retell the story as a group, asking everyone to participate in the retelling. Say, "Let's see if we can retell the events of this story in the order they happened?" You'll need to help out a little (or a lot) at first, but over time your friends will get better at this part. Then, see if one person can retell the entire story. Again, everyone can (gently) remind them if they miss something. This retelling builds clarity and helps with retention. Note: When using the Story-formed Way, there is often not enough time to do the full retelling of the previous stories. See The Story-formed Way Leaders Guide for more information on how to manage this.

**Dialogue about the narrative(s).** This is where everything really starts to open up and become alive in your community. This part is critical in drawing out key ideas and truths from the Story. Use questions to keep discussion going, always directing your friends back to the narrative for answers and insights. This is not the time for you to preach! You are here to guide listeners to discover truth and insight from the Story NOT from YOU! There are several suggested questions provided as a starting point for you to use with each narrative. Do not turn this into a Q & A session! Remember, you want to facilitate genuine dialogue around the Story.

**Intersect with The Story.** Spend a little time with a few life-application questions, helping people connect their lives to the Story. This will naturally flow out of each dialogue time with just a little prompting. This is also a great time to have a couple people share their personal story. You'll be amazed at how everyone will naturally connect that person's story to parts of the Story told and discussed that session.

## Ways The Story Can Be Used

- Chronological telling of the full "Story of God" with a smaller group of leaders or young disciples
- The Story-formed Way 10 Week Discipleship set of narratives and dialogues
- The Story of God for Kids to be used at home or in a Sunday School type of setting
- Some modification of any of the above with teenagers

- Church planting set or track of narratives with dialogue for teaching and forming church planters
- Theological set or track of narratives with dialogue
- End Times set or track of narratives with dialogue
- Specific counseling sets of narratives arranged topically
- Individual stories from scripture told along with dialogue to focus on a specific teaching or truth
- In a public setting (café, park, yard, pub etc.)
- As a teaching/equipping tool (grouping several narratives together)
- Preaching/teaching in large gatherings

Tell one story at each meeting... Tell a cluster of stories at each meeting... Tell all the stories in one meeting... Tell the story that best fits the situation. There is really no subject or area of discipleship and leadership that cannot be addressed.

### Leading a dialogue requires us to...

- **Let go...** of the role of expert teacher and embrace the role of co-learner, encourager and guide.
- **Listen...** in expectation that God is revealing himself to and through each person present. Pay close attention to your participants answers and the patterns that emerge in how they respond to the Story. This will reveal a lot about where their heart is.
- **Trust...** that God will work through the process, valuing the experience as much as the knowledge and content.
- **Have faith...** that God will speak and help bring to light the truth and implications he wants to reveal.
- **Be patient...** allowing time to process, leaving room for different opinions, tension, questions, and wondering.

This is a process that involves a lot of shepherding, encouragement and practice. After a few stories participants will get into the rhythm of this process and they will begin to really listen and think deeply about the Story and how their own story intersects and mirrors what they are experiencing.

## CHALLENGE

**Missional Assignment:** Visit <http://www.gcmcollective.com/article/story-of-god/> and download and review the story of God material. Listen/review the 12 audio files summarizing each part of the story of God. Practice conveying the story of God with your friends, small group, or Life Transformation Group...make it fun and interactive! This is going to be our next series as a church. Each of you will have the opportunity to lead us in a discussion through the 12 major narratives...so take some time to practice and review!!!

\*This training material is from Soma Communities, <http://www.somacommunities.org/>.

## FACEBOOK TIME

After you've taken some time to go through the material above, please go to your community/team Facebook page and write a brief summary/reaction to what you've learned. Look at the comments of others and interact. Remember this is a journey done best in community.

# Communitas Part 6: Organic Systems

## INTRODUCTION

God's Kingdom spreads through churches; communities of Christ-followers tangibly living out the Gospel across every segment of life. Our vision is seeing God expanding his Kingdom through all the peoples of Europe. As a communitas, GEM's mission is discipling all peoples of Europe through rapidly reproducing churches.

Gospel movements require organic systems...expressions of church that are simple, accessible and reproducible with the power and function of the movement being distributed outwards (decentralized) to "ordinary" people.

Watch this short video by Alan Hirsch from the Verge 2010 Conference.

<http://bit.ly/gmMLaG>



## INSIGHT

Structures are needed, but they must be simple, reproducible and internal rather than external." -Neil Cole

"Since our old paradigm of church life has often revolved around the Sunday morning gathering, we often find ourselves on a quest to discover what "New Testament" simple/house church gatherings might look like and feel like. In this stage, "the gathering" often remains the focus of our church-life as we seek to explore and experience small, Spirit-led, participatory, Christ-filled gatherings. Our freedom continues to grow and we become more and more enamored with the reality

that we really are 24/7, kingdom-living, Spirit-directed believers. The dividing walls between secular and sacred continue to come down and we become excited about integrating our spiritual life with our “everyday” life.” -Roger Thoman

“There are essential differences between an institution and a movement: The one is conservative, the other progressive; the one is more or less passive yielding to influences from the outside, the other is active in influencing rather than being influenced; the one looks to the past, the other to the future. In addition the one is anxious, the other is prepared to take risks; the one guards boundaries, the other crosses them.” -H.R. Niebuhr

From institution to movement: in Christendom churches operated mainly in institutional mode, but in post-Christendom we must become again a Christian movement.

David Garrison does an outstanding job of describing church planting movements in his excellent book by the same name: "Church Planting Movements" (CPM). He defines CPM as a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment. According to Garrison, there are ten essential ingredients in a church planting movement.

- **Extraordinary prayer:** Wherever the church spawns a movement, prayer is at the center and is pervasive and continuous. There was prayer ongoing in Herrnhut during the Moravian movement twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for more than a hundred years.
- **Abundant evangelism:** "The Bible says, if you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. If you sow abundantly, you will reap abundantly."
- **Intentional planting of reproducing churches:** Wherever CPMs are found, the people are intentionally setting out to start churches among people, and do so without even needing to be persuaded to.
- **The authority of God's Word:** In Acts, the language Luke consistently uses for movement is "The Word Spread."
- **Local leadership:** To have churches starting other churches, the leadership must emerge, grow, and be deployed indigenously, and not be dependent on influence from outside.
- **Lay leadership:** When a movement is spreading, there is neither time nor resources to educate, train, and ordain professional leaders. The truth is, whenever a movement starts to require educated leadership, it comes to a grinding halt.
- **House churches:** It is universally true that wherever CPMs occur the church is found in homes rather than expensive buildings; the church is found where people live.
- **Churches planting churches:** The natural manner of reproducing is after one's own kind. Churches are meant to plant churches that plant churches. We are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. A mission agency or



denominational board are not the means to start churches and were never meant to be.

- **Rapid reproduction:** Wherever there is a CPM, the reproduction rate is shortened so that the multiplication rate accelerates.
- **Healthy churches:** As with any living thing, healthy ones reproduce naturally and sickness can cause infertility.

## EXPLORATION

### THE FIFTH PRACTICE OF A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY: ORGANIC SYSTEMS/REPRODUCTION

1. Thinking through Garrison's description, what are you/we missing? Where do we need improvement? Which one is the most significant to you? Why? What questions/comments do you have? Do these line up with what we read in the book of Acts? What examples?

2. The early church (an extension of what we read in the book of Acts) grew from as few as 25,000 adherents in AD 100 to up to 20 million in AD 310. What do think they did to produce this kind of movement and exponential growth/expansion?

3. Howard Snyder lists several characteristics of movements from his book "Signs of the Spirit." Read through these characteristics and then discuss.

- **A thirst for renewal:** A holy discontent with what exists precipitates a recovery of the vitality and patterns of the early church.
- **A new stress on the work of the Spirit:** The work of the Spirit is seen not only as important in the past but also as an experience in the present.
- **A concern for being a countercultural community:** Movements call the church to a more radical commitment and a more active tension with the world.
- **Non-traditional or non-ordained leadership:** Renewal movements are often led by people with no recognized formal leadership status in the church. Spiritual authority is the key.
- **Ministry to the poor:** Movements almost always involve people as the grassroots level. They actively involve the masses and often start as mission on the edges and among the poor.
- **An institutional-charismatic tension:** In almost every case of renewal, tensions within existing structures will arise.
- **Energy and dynamism:** New movements have the ability to excite and enlist others as leaders and participants.



## CHALLENGE

**Missional Assignment:** Take some time to read the following descriptions and characteristics of a missional community (by Michael Frost). What do you like? What excites you? What questions or comments do you have? How could you begin implementing these habits in your life and in the life of your community?

- Bless. We will bless at least one other member of our community every day.
- Eat. We will eat with other members of our community at least three times a week.
- Listen. We will commit ourselves weekly to listening to the promptings of God in our lives.
- Learn. We will read from the Gospels each week and remain diligent in learning more about Jesus.
- Sent. We will see our daily life as an expression of our sent-ness by God into this world.

## FACEBOOK TIME

After you've taken some time to go through the material above, please go to your community/team Facebook page and write a brief summary/reaction to what you've learned. Look at the comments of others and interact. Remember this is a journey done best in community.

# Appendix (Additional Reading)

## Part 4 Apostolic Mission

(More from Felicity Dale on finding receptive people.)

"The concept of the "person of peace" comes from Luke 10, a prominent passage in organic/simple church planting circles. It's the story of how Jesus sent out the 72 disciples. In the first few verses of the chapter Jesus reveals his strategy for that area. He sends the disciples out in pairs to all the towns and places he plans to visit, telling them to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he will send out laborers into the harvest.

"This is the first key to finding a person of peace. Prayer. When we pray the Luke 10:2 prayer, we are not primarily praying for more Christians to go out and evangelize; we are praying for not-yet-believers who will become the laborers in the harvest. They will most likely be the new leaders, and the church that emerges will probably be

formed from their friends and family and meet in their home. The resources for the harvest are in the harvest (Luke 10:3, 4)

"In Luke 10:5 and 6 Jesus tells us how to recognize these people when we meet them. They are open to being blessed by us, and they offer us hospitality. A person of peace is usually someone with reputation and influence. They open up their circle of influence to us and to our message.

"You start a new job, and the person who is the life and soul of the office suggests you join him and his friends for a drink after work on Friday. He/she may well be your person of peace.

"The key thing that the disciples did was to listen to Jesus and do what he told them. It's the same for us. Jesus will lead us to people of peace as we are responsive to his every prompting. (This makes knowing how to listen to Jesus and how to recognize his voice a vital skill.) He can say to us, "Go and sit in that seat on the bus," or "Walk around this apartment complex," and he will reveal the one we are to speak to.

"But Jesus did give us some clues as to where we are more likely to find these people. He said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners. (Mark 2:17, NLT) In Luke 4, Jesus describes his ministry as, "bringing Good News to the poor, proclaiming that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.

"People of peace often know they have a need. We are more likely to find a person of peace in the low-income housing projects than in a nice, middle-class neighborhood. We will find them in AA groups and on the streets. Those who are lonely or depressed are captives whom Jesus is longing to set free. Spiritual seekers like those involved in New Age practices are good candidates too. Many times, young people are open to discuss spiritual things. If our spiritual eyes are open, people of peace are everywhere. The waitress in your favorite restaurant may be the one you are looking for. The person in the dorm room next to you.

"If the Lord reveals to you that you are to work within a particular people grouping, ask him to lead you to a person of peace for that group. They are far more likely to have an impact within their circle of influence than you are. For example, a skateboarder is the most likely person to be able to reach other skateboarders effectively. And you are most likely to find him/her by hanging out at a skateboard park and brushing up on your skateboarding skills!

"When you think you may have found a person of peace, create a friendship with them by sharing food together (Luke 10:7, 8). Look for an opportunity to bring them face to face with a supernatural God. Then tell them about the Kingdom (verse 9)"

## Part 5 Gospel Mission (Storying)

### A Biblical Foundation:

The Bible was originally an oral document and still is a story. The contents of the Bible was originally retold and passed along from person to person, generation to generation. After thousands of years and many generations, God-in his sovereignty-chose to write his story down in narrative, poetic and apocalyptic forms, using different men guided by his Spirit.

2/3 is narrative + Wisdom books = 3/4 Bible is Story (25% Epistles)

The Biblical texts were recorded with the intent that they would be read aloud and relearned in community. In Jewish schools at the time of Jesus, the scriptures were not aloud to be read unless it was in the context of a group. Early Christians learned the stories by hearing them and retelling them together. Stories were the key for learning and experiencing God for early believers.

Bibles were not printed or available to common man in the west until the 1500's and much later in most of the world and still not available to approximately 9000 people/tribes around the world. They have no written Word!

### Jesus was a GREAT storyteller!

The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?" Jesus replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understanding flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight." Matthew 13:10-13 (The Message)

The bible tells us that "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable." Matthew 13:34 (NIV)

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself... They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:27,32 (NIV)

Do you think that Jesus was pulling a cart of scrolls down the Emmaus road with him?! Of course not. Jesus never owned a copy if the Old Testament, their were very few copies and they were kept exclusively in the synagogues. He told them the Story starting in the beginning...

## **Other Famous Storytellers in the Bible**

- Moses (Genesis, Exodus)
- David (Psalms 78, 105-106)
- Luke (Gospel of Matthew & Acts)
- Stephen (Acts 7)
- Paul (Galatians 3,4; Romans 9)
- and many more.

## **Literacy Facts: Did you know that in the USA...**

- Over 50% of people over age 16 are functionally illiterate.
- % of the U.S. adult population never reads another book after high school.
- 42% of college graduates never read another book.
- 80% of U.S. families did not buy or read a book last year.
- Each day, people in the US spend four hours watching TV, three hours listening to the radio and 14 minutes reading magazines.
- It's estimated that we spend as much as 80% of our non-working, non-sleeping time in front of a screen – TV or PC.
- Researchers believe that 70% or more of the people in North America prefer non-literate means of communication. (Preferred oral learners)