

How to Be Mission-Minded...Right Here, Right Now

When we lived in San Diego, we had some friends who were, um, well off.

They would often invite us to dinner at “The Club”—a private golf club that they had joined and belonged for some time. Membership cost a few dollars(!) each year in the form of membership fees and dues, and since they were, um, well off, they could afford such a membership.

So when we were invited to dinner at “The Restaurant” at “The Club,” we could order anything off of the menu, and since our friends were members, they would get a pretty nice discount.

Kinda nice to have friends like that; I could have gotten used to that kind of living!

Churches are not “Clubs.” No one pays membership fees. No one pays dues. And most churches don’t have restaurants as do clubs.

What’s more, churches have a mission that’s unlike any other mission of any other group on earth.

That mission: to go and make disciples of Jesus of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Or as we like to say it at The Lakes, To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known.

It’s our mission as a church; therefore, it’s our mission as small groups. And it’s our mission individual followers of Jesus Christ. It’s my mission; it’s your mission; it’s the mission of the people in your small group.

How can you as a small group leader help your group to bring this mission into clearer focus in their lives? Here are two major steps to take to help in this process:

1. Find the People

That may seem to be obvious, but the longer a disciple of Jesus is connected into the life of the church, the fewer contacts that believer will have with people who are not believers.

I began to discover this reality as I pastored. My work usually involved believers. Those who worked with me were believers. The majority of my time

was spent with...believers. If I was going to meet new people who did not know Jesus, I was going to have to become more intentional.

Lance Ford and Brad Brisco wrote a wonderful book titled, “The Missional Quest: Becoming a Church of the Long Run.” Through the book, Ford and Brisco helped me to discover how to become more intentional in meeting new people who may not know Jesus.

Ford and Brisco identify three areas, three “places,” where we encounter new people:

- A. Around our home**—Not just family members. Not just those living under our roof. Our neighbors: our next door neighbors; our neighbors across the street/hallway; our neighbors two houses/doors down. There are people to meet, and they might be just right next door!
- B. At work or at school**—We see them all the time: at a cubicle; at a desk; in the lunch room; in the classroom; in passing. But how much do we know about them?
- C. At our “third place”**—We all have “third places.” It might be the gym; it might be the recreation area where we play. It might be a store where we shop; or a restaurant or coffee shop we frequent. But unless you live in a bunker, you are likely encountering people in these “third places.”

So, how many people?

One? Three? Five? It depends on your own context. For me, I looked for five people. Not because there was anything divinely sanctioned about the number five, but because, well, it fit my next step...

2. Take Five Actions

Building and developing relationships with other people is an essential ingredient in fulfilling the mission of making disciples. It’s something that doesn’t happen instantly; it’s a process. It takes time.

Here are five steps that help to build to an opportunity to make Christ known with those people:

- A. Learn their names**—Sounds simple enough; but one thing we discover about people in our world is the fact that so many are *lonely*. In spite of the fact that they live in perhaps the most inter-connected world in history—we can speak with virtually anyone, anytime, anywhere in the world—more and more people struggle with feelings of loneliness.

Simply learning a person's name goes such a long way in the process of building a relationship!

- B. Learn their stories**—With few exceptions, the favorite topic of discussion of virtually every person is...themselves. To have someone ask them about themselves—where they grew up, where they went to school, what kinds of activities they enjoy doing—and actually be interested in their stories, can often open people up to you and build a friendship.
- C. Pray for them**—Based upon what you continue to learn about your friend, their prayer needs will become more evident. Ask them if you can pray for them. Follow up with them on how things are going with those needs about which you pray.
- D. Serve them**—It can be something as simple as bringing over a plate of cookies, to bringing over dinner for their family, to helping with a chore or a project...opportunities to serve your new friends will present themselves. Look to serve. Not only that, don't be afraid to ask them to help you with a project that you are working on yourself; sometimes providing a chance to serve is in itself a service!
- E. Share Jesus with them**—Tell them about how you came to Christ. Explain to them what John 3:16 means to you. Invite them to church with you; take them out to lunch afterward, and ask them what they thought about it all. If you're still unsure about how to do it, keep your eyes open for the next time Pastor Mark offers his class on sharing Christ.

What if...?

What would it look like if five people in your group were to actively be on mission to know Jesus and make Jesus known, using these steps? What would it look like in our church if just five groups had five people actively on this mission?

It starts with me. It starts with you. It starts with *us*.