



Learning Community Three

Creating a Church of Missionaries

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Read John 4 together and then discuss the sharing questions below. After the discussion and sharing, spend some time in pairs praying for one another.

Sharing Questions:

1. What stands out to you in this passage?
2. In what ways is Jesus acting like a missionary in the story?
3. What are some “missionary methods” or “principles” that we still apply to today?
4. What are you personally challenged by in this passage? In what way can we pray for you regarding this challenge?



30-45
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

Homework Assignment:

1. Since cultivating vision is a dynamic process, carve out a half-day retreat in the next month to refine the vision you have for your church. Use *Visioneering*, the vision module, and this question to guide what you write:

If God could have his way with our church in the next 3-5 years, what do I believe He would like to do in us and through us? What will be different?

2. Read *Breaking the Missional Code* by Ed Stetzer and David Putman and come prepared to discuss the Book Review Questions (see next page).



5. Which of the values named in Chapter 6 are most challenging to you and your church and why?

6. Based on the definition of indigenous on pages 91-92m what does it mean for you to be an indigenous church?

7. What specific people living in your community may best be reached by the starting of a new congregation?

8. What kinds of things do you think an honest, first-time guest might say about your church?

9. What are three of the most important insights from the book that you would like to implement and why?



45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**
- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**
- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**
- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**
- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**
- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**
- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**
- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



20
minutes

Learning Activity: Become a Missionary in Your Community

Facilitator Instructions: Point everyone to the article entitled “Become a Missionary in Your Community.” Ask everyone to read the article slowly and to highlight ideas that seem important to them. After everyone has read, break them into groups of two’s and three’s to discuss the questions at the end of the article. If you have time bring the whole group together at the end to discuss a few of the questions.

Become a Missionary in Your Community

Cultures shift. Sometimes the change is almost imperceptible because it is so slow. At other times, the movements in culture are dramatic and hard to miss. One morning, I had a very enlightening conversation at my neighborhood coffee shop about tattoos, of all things. The young lady behind the counter had a school assignment that required her to research an “alien environment,” one that was unique and different for her personally, and she chose to research a tattoo parlor. A mandatory portion of the project involved an on-site visit. So, I asked her what she had learned about tattoos, why people get them, how much they cost, and her personal impressions of the whole experience. It was a very interesting conversation. But through it all I was reminded of the fact that I am living in an “alien environment.”

I recently previewed my son’s “Family Life Education” material that his school was going to take 400 seventh graders through. Forty percent of the material covered sexually transmitted diseases that 1 out of 4 women are infected with today. My rather naïve young lad was going to hear about terms like abstinence, anal sex, condoms, and masturbation, and I had to act quickly because as his father I wanted him to hear it from me first. In addition, my middle daughter was invited to attend a full-day workshop at our local high school where they covered “important” topics like: “Learning to say no,” “Anger management,” and “How to not have boys take advantage of you.” I was stunned when we received the invitation in the mail from the guidance counselor office. How times have changed when a school has to step into this kind of void because families are no longer providing moral guidance for their kids. And it is not just the schools. It’s everywhere. The winds of change are all around us, kicking up a whirlwind of moral debris.



This all begs the question, what are the implications for the church today? How should we live in the whirlwind of cultural change? One of the answers is, churches need to become modern-day missionaries. Because let's face it, we live in a foreign land that truly has become an "alien environment." The very communities that we reside in have dramatically changed in seen and unseen ways. To ignore this reality is both foolish and selfish. The churches that commit to missionary behaviors are going to be the ones that successfully bridge the ever-expanding cultural divide.

In Acts 17:16-23ff., Paul provides us with some clues on the kind of missionary thinking and strategy necessary when engaging an alien culture. Let's take a look at the passage first:

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" ... Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you."

Missionary Hearts

As Paul walked the streets of Athens we are told that his heart was greatly distressed. The phrase "greatly distressed" is a bit tame. The Greek actually indicates that Paul had a great pain in his chest while he meandered the streets of this great pagan city. Paul's heart was broken when he saw the city full of idols because he knew the hopelessness of idol worship. Paul knew that the spiritual roads that the Athenians had committed to were ultimately dead ends. What he took in with his eyes moved Paul emotionally.

Engaging our communities must first start with our hearts. If our hearts are not broken then we must ask God to break them. Ask Him to show you the things in your community that He weeps for. Ask Him for the missionary eyes of the Apostle Paul, for eyes that see behind the "idols" which lead to dead ends. We must be careful not to rush ahead to missionary methods before we have asked the fundamental question about our own hearts. Living like a missionary is too hard if it is not rooted in a heart of compassion. So, as you walk the streets of your "Athens" ask God to do a new and deep work in your own heart.



Missionary Eyes

From Acts 17, we get the impression that Paul was a learner and that he was wonderfully inquisitive. He discovered unique characteristics of the city by walking the pavement. He read the inscriptions underneath the various idols he encountered throughout urban neighborhoods. He watched carefully as commerce was conducted in the marketplace, and he engaged the “spiritually curious” in open discussion in the synagogues. Paul realized that being a student of a community would ultimately provide the keys he needed for reaching some with the Gospel. We can picture Paul, walking, talking, and investigating the values and convictions of the people of Athens so that he could build a communication bridge for the Gospel. Ultimately, the Lord opened up a door for Paul among the men of the Areopagus. He had done his homework though! He had studied the culture and he had found a creative way to express the life-transforming message of Christianity.

How well does your church understand the community that surrounds it? Do you know what’s going on in the schools? Would you be surprised by the trends and patterns that police officers see happening around you? Where are the unmet needs? What are the voids in people’s lives? Who is the “UNKNOWN GOD” in your town? The answers to these questions are critical because your church must understand the pulse and vital signs of your community.

Having your “finger on the pulse” will require an on-going effort to stay engaged and to stay curious. Paul found the keys to the culture by being in the culture and by being out with the people of the city. Rather than bemoaning the shifts in our culture we should be working actively to understand how and why the shifts are taking place. From this vantage point we will be able to build communication bridges for the Gospel. We must understand what the felt needs are so that we can win a right to be heard much like Paul won in Athens.

Missionary Methods

Ed Stetzer, in his book *Breaking the Missional Code*, outlines a number of creative ways for understanding our “Athens.” Perhaps a small group or task force would be willing to study the community for four to eight weeks as a project. God will meet you in remarkable ways as you go out to spy on the land. A strategy or project could include:

Natural conversations

Look for opportunities like I had that morning in the coffee shop. I wasn’t planning on talking about tattoos but the topic came up quite naturally



and I simply followed the thread of the conversation. Being curious will open up rich opportunities.

Mapping

Place major landmarks, roads, barriers, and churches on a good map of the area. Analyze how the locations of these arteries and barriers could impact where your church is ministering. What trends and patterns are emerging that you need to pay attention to?

Demographic study

Population shifts can be tricky to spot. In the next five years what will the makeup of your community look like? What age, ethnic, family, and socioeconomic changes are happening around you? Take advantage of any number of demographic surveying instruments that will provide a vast array of fresh insights about your area.

Community leaders

One of the richest deposits of community insights can be gained from those who are serving the public. A thirty-minute interview with a leader in your community will be eye-opening. Consider making a visit to:

- Local government officials
- Planning and zoning office
- School board, teachers, and principals
- Community service agency (such as Child Protective Services)
- Police and fire stations
- Health care professionals

Study the history

How did your city, town, or community come into existence? What caused people to move here? What have been the leading industries? How have the needs in the community changed in the last 5, 10 and 25 years?

Other churches and religious organizations

What's going on spiritually in your community? How many cults and sects are present? Which churches are growing and why? What are these churches doing to connect with the community?

Identify sub-groups

As Stetzer says, "The more you discover and learn about the people groups and community, the more effective you will become in relating to and communicating with all the people in your area. It is also likely that you will have many opportunities to minister to all kinds of people in your area" (*Breaking the Missional Code* 223).



It will take time and effort to understand your community. It will take getting out into the marketplace to listen, to interact, and to let your heart be moved. Go about it prayerfully and ask God to surprise you along the way. And may He grant you opportunities to bridge the Gospel into your “Athens.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Which ideas from “Become a Missionary in Your Community” stood out to you and why?
2. What principles from the article are you most challenged by and why?
3. What would stand in the way of you putting into practice some of the ideas that were shared?

**20
minutes**

Learning Activity: Community Profile Worksheet

Facilitator Instructions: Give everyone 10 minutes to work through the Community Profile worksheet as a way to reinforce the article. After the allotted time, break the group up into threes and fours to share their profile responses.



Community Profile

Category	Pattern or Trend	Implications for my church
Children		
Families		
Crime		
Poverty		
Schools		
Teenagers		
Elderly		
Housing		
Ethnic		



5
minutes

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

1. Form a Community Survey Task force that will work closely with you to put feet to the ideas from the book and from this module. Come prepared next time to hand out your initial draft reflections on your community.
2. Plan in detail about who will take responsibility to investigate the key pieces of the survey. Set SMART goals (see below for more details).
3. Review the entire *Motivation for Mission* manual and CD resource. In the next few weeks, recruit one or two key people who will help spearhead the launch. Come to the next Learning Community with your calendar so you can begin mapping out a timetable for launching the series.

Reminder for next time:

1. Bring your calendar
2. Bring your *Motivation for Mission* manual

Well Written Goals Are SMART

a) **S**pecific

Choose a specific starting time for the group if it's new

b) **M**easurable

Set a goal to reach a measurable number of people should be set.

c) **A**chievable

The goal should stretch our faith. At the same time, it's got to be realistic.

d) **R**esult Oriented

Determine the desired result or fruit.

e) **T**ime Bounded

Set a specific target date for when the tasks will actually be completed.



LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?