



step **2.**

Showing Respect.

Developing
Relationship

Showing
Respect



BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 146

Isaiah 1:16-23

What does God's compassion for people look like?

What should our compassion for people look like and what is our only source of true compassion?

Philippians 2

How will having an attitude like that of Christ contrast with the selfish ambition Paul mentions in verse 3?

What will outsiders notice?

1 Thessalonians 1

What do work produced by faith, labour prompted by love, and endurance inspired by hope in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3) look like in practice?

How do the lives of Paul and the Thessalonians serve as models for others (vv. 6-7)?

1 Thessalonians 2

How does Paul demonstrate the gospel in practice in addition to proclaiming it?

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

How do we win the respect of outsiders?

When I was a student, I spent a summer in Pakistan developing a financial system for a charity based in Lahore. One of my jobs was to go and buy the food in the market each day. I was dressed in the same clothes as everyone else and bartered for the same products with the same money in the same language, but I still stood out very clearly from the crowd—in my case by being six feet six inches tall and blond!

Christians are people who stand out. 1 Peter 2 describes the church as a people belonging to God who have been completely transformed by his mercy. Peter describes that change in terms of being called out of the darkness of separation from God into the light of relationship with him. Our challenge is to recognize the stark contrast between light and dark and remember that we are strangers in a dark world. As people of light, the darkness surrounding us is now alien to our very nature (v. 11). But, in addition to a new reality, we also have a new responsibility to live a life of contrasting light. The ‘good deeds’ of a transformed life (v. 12) will point people to God and inspire them to glorify him. People who demonstrate unconditional love cause others to look for the source—the cross of Christ.

The danger, however, comes when the church of Christ stops being a contrasting light. Jesus knew we would be tempted to crank down our contrast levels and hide the light of our life with God under a bowl so no one could see it (Matt. 5:15). In the verses before this, Jesus warns that if we lose our distinctive salty taste we’re of no use to anyone. Scripture challenges us throughout to remain distinct so that people will see the difference it makes to live life in relationship with God. As a result, they won’t praise us but our Father in heaven (v. 16).

As churches we’re called to say ‘bless you’ to our communities—with our actions as well as with words—and not just when someone sneezes!

Because.

God requires us to love mercy, act justly, and walk humbly.

When did you last feel that you were a victim of injustice? Were you treated unfairly by a colleague perhaps? Did you get a fine you didn't deserve? Why does injustice upset us so much? Why don't we just accept it as part of life? That's the question the book of Ecclesiastes poses—what would the world 'under the sun' without God be like? In chapter 3 the writer sees that the world works according to fixed laws—it's predictable, with a time for good and for bad. But there's one thing that bucks the trend and isn't as ordered and predictable as you'd imagine—injustice. Chapter 4 begins:

'Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter.

And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.'

The point he makes is that oppression isn't caused by some freak of nature but rather by a decay of human nature. The misuse of power by one person or group of people over another is what causes injustice. And here's the rub—while we might think that the oppression mentioned here is some extreme form of slavery brought by a totalitarian regime, we have to remember that Solomon, who was king of Israel, wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. The oppression he's talking about, therefore, is within a society that had law and order—a theocracy, no less, where the temple was the brand-new building in the centre of Jerusalem.

Injustice is an aberration in the world—but the chilling reality is that this aberration is allowed to continue and even thrive. To oppress and get away with injustice actually takes a lot of energy, because those who perpetrate injustices are constantly pushing the world out of the shape God intended and trying to push God out of the picture while they're at it. So the shameful truth is that the only way oppressors can get away with injustice that damages our world is if we don't bother to oppose the oppressors. They can only push society out of shape if society doesn't push back.

The root of injustice is envy—always wanting more and never being satisfied. Envy leads to a desperate urge to take as much as I can for myself and for my benefit without caring if others go without as a consequence. So the question is this: how do we turn from envy and individualism and seek justice? The answer is that we walk with the God of merciful justice each day, as the prophet Micah teaches us:

'He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8)

The key phrase is 'walk humbly with your God'—acting with justice comes from loving mercy, and that love of mercy only comes when we experience God's mercy for ourselves.

God is about justice

- He made the world with justice in its fabric and he hates injustice—it is an affront to him and a poison in the world.
- He acts to bring justice—we see this in his rescue of people through Jesus (Rom. 3:21–26).
- He has compassion on those facing injustice and calls us to exercise the same compassion (Isa. 1).
- He will bring justice one day when he judges the earth.

Loving justice and mercy out of a love for God shapes a church's attitude to its context. Bruce Waltke defines justice as 'The righteous (*saddiq*) are willing to disadvantage themselves to advantage the community; the wicked are willing to disadvantage the community to advantage themselves'.¹ Justice is a restorative mindset at the heart of a church because it's a sharing in the heart of God. As Tim Keller puts it, biblical mercy 'implies compassion for the undeserving' while biblical justice 'implies giving people their due'.² Justice is a response to the gospel and is rooted in an understanding of abundant grace. As a driving ambition, justice becomes an everyday activity for churches—justice is no longer only about certain projects or 'those corrupt people over there' but is rather a practice in each and every activity. It's a desire for *shalom* in our situation that goes beyond keeping within the law (whether that law is secular or biblical). A justice mindset goes beyond what is required to bring delight—a delight in how we value people, how we serve with sacrificial love, how we share our resources with others in need, and how we see need in the first place. Jesus is the supreme model of a justice mindset, and the early church gives us a striking example of people who grasped that mindset and put it into practice.

Paul tells the Thessalonians to make it their ambition to live lives that 'may win the respect of outsiders'. Clearly, we're not to expect that others will regard Christians favourably. Christians need to win respect by living in a way that deliberately seeks to break down barriers of misconception:

- By being transparent about our failures and need for grace
- By speaking of our true hope with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15)
- By showing the reality of a gospel life lived in step with the Spirit
- By demonstrating genuine, long-term interest in the lives of others.

We need to take care to avoid the perception that the only reason we care for people is to get a contact name and address so we can invite them to an evangelistic activity. In that case, social concern isn't concern for the person as much as it is a means to a different end. Although that end is eternally vital, we can justifiably be accused of being underhanded. Tim Keller suggests a useful corrective:

'The proper model is not to see mercy as the means to evangelism, or to see mercy and evangelism as independent ends, but to see both word and deed, evangelism and mercy, as means to the single end of the spread of the kingdom of God... Mercy and evangelism are like smoke and fire—where one is, the other must be near.'³

Therefore.

Expand and decentralize your gateways.

It's easy to create a church-building-centric model—particularly when those who work in or have responsibility for the church building formulate the strategy. Neil Hudson suggests that when a church looks at vision, the question normally boils down to 'What are you going to do about ABC?' (attendance, buildings, and cash). Those questions shape vision around life as a gathered church. But Hudson says the ABC of vision should also include the D of disciples. He says: **'Our vision is that we live our whole lives for the glory of God and we will equip one another to do that faithfully and well.'**⁴

A key question to ask when looking at our strategy is: 'How building-centric are we?' Since most church members spend the vast majority of their time in very non-church buildings, the question worth coming back to on a regular basis is: 'Are we valuing and facilitating ministry by members in these many different locations where they spend their time?'

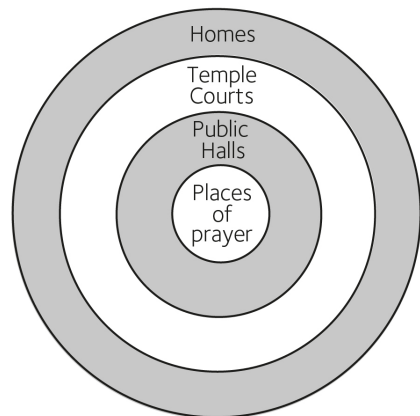
In fact, even when we're looking at the activities of a gathered church, it's instructive to note that the early church met in a variety of locations and evangelism was a lifestyle that infused all of these gatherings:

- **Homes**

The early Christians gathered regularly to share meals in each other's homes. They invited others to join them, and evangelism happened around the tables as people discussed the gospel in a relaxed and secure setting.

- **Temple courts**

The early Christians met daily in the temple courts—the place where many different people met to socialize after work. In other words, they didn't squirrel themselves away in a 'holy huddle' but met in the public square where they could get together with both their Christian and sceptic friends. The public square was also where the apostles delivered some of their big speeches.



- **Public halls**

Consistent evangelism requires a venue where people know that they can gather for debate. Paul took advantage of these kinds of venues. He gained an invitation in Athens to speak at the Areopagus and in Ephesus he rented the Hall of Tyrannus.

- **Synagogues**

Often Paul would begin his evangelism in a new city at the synagogue, as it was usually there that he found people who were willing to listen and who were interested in discussing his message.

- **Places of prayer**

In cities without synagogues, such as Philippi, Paul often went to the places where worshippers gathered. There he'd meet with receptive people such as Lydia and begin to build churches from their homes.

- **Congregations**

It's clear that later on, when there was a move from synagogues to church gatherings (which probably met in large private houses), outsiders were also often present. Paul therefore urged Christians to speak intelligibly so unbelievers could encounter God (1 Cor. 14:22-25).

When evangelism happens in different locations, it underlines the principle that mission is not just an activity that happens in the church building. Instead, there is a mission movement outward from the church gathering—as people live and work in places of daily worship.

Missional churches operate in three locations:

- 1. Marketplace:** Christians proclaim Christ in the public square at work and home as they speak and act in response to the gospel, as they socialize with friends.

- 2. Third Spaces:** Christians engage with people in what can be called 'third spaces'. Third spaces are more neutral, non-church venues in the local area where debates and other evangelistic talks can take place and where people with receptive attitudes will be relaxed enough to open up and ask questions to find out more.

- 3. Places of Prayer:** Christians gather as church in homes and church buildings for prayer, praise, teaching and fellowship.

'[People ask] "aren't new expressions of church, for example, just an updated version of house churches, now known in Britain as 'New Churches'?" ... The big difference, at least to emerging church in its mission mode, is that many New Churches continued to operate on a "you come to us" model. Members liked their new way of being church and used evangelism to encourage non-churchgoers to join them ... Emerging church is not quite the same as church planting either, although planting is at the heart of it ... Sometimes plants merely cloned existing church. A group of Christians might move onto a housing estate or into a school, start perhaps a more relaxed version of mainstream church and then issue the invitation, "Come and join us" ... Emerging church with a mission heart is different. It does not start with a predetermined mould and expect non-churchgoers to compress in. It begins with the people church is seeking to reach, and asks "What might be an appropriate expression of church for them?"'⁵

One way to build the value of everyday mission by everyday Christians is to shift the traditional focus on the church as the centre of mission. Instead, church gatherings are about sending out in mission. Evangelism strategy can therefore make use of different locations for evangelism and link them together so there is a flow from unbelief to belief, and from being a stranger to belonging. Missional flow allows people to think, reflect, and gain interest as they share daily life and talk over meals, then to start to explore further by going to a ‘third-space event’, and eventually to welcome the Lord’s message, join a worshipping community, and develop faith. When people are able to go at their own pace and explore on home ground instead of ‘playing away’, location isn’t a barrier to exploration.

The following contrasting models of missional flow are shaped by contrasting missional DNA:

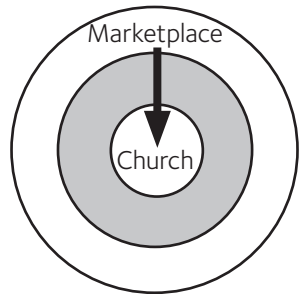
1. Attractional strategy *The ‘front door pathway’ or ‘outreach and in-drag’.*⁶

Attractional churches have a centripetal dynamic that emphasizes bringing people to the worship service or course. Church members can be called ‘bringers’, and evangelism training is focused on praying for friends and inviting friends to events.

Ed Stetzer says that the primary mode of the church growth movement is the Constantinian approach he calls the evangelistic/attractional model:

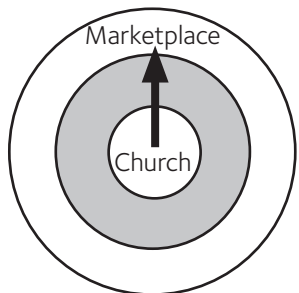
*‘The Evangelistic/Attractional church is “extractional” by nature, meaning converts are brought out of their cultures and assimilated into a new culture (Christian/church) ... Success in the E/A church is measured in numbers of church members, baptisms, program attendance, etc.’*⁷

The attractional strategy often focuses on specific subcultures at first, but as it grows it becomes more diverse as people from different subcultures start to come along. That is the point at which attracting people from a culture can end up extracting people from their culture.



‘2. Incarnational strategy *The ‘side door pathway’.*⁸

Centrifugal churches invest in community activities and personal evangelism amongst a network of contacts. They then include people in the life of the church, as belonging leads to doctrinal belief, which in turn transforms behaviour.



There is church because there is mission, not vice versa.’⁹

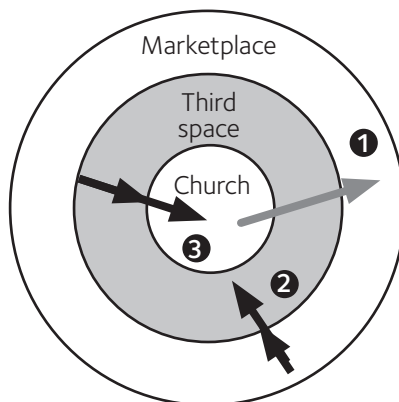
3. Emerging strategy *The new door pathway*

A church established in the geographic and cultural context of a particular people group emerges within that context as it demonstrates a profoundly attractive Christlikeness and servant attitude. A church emerges as people become Christians, and the church is based in the geographic and cultural context of those people. This strategy has the advantage of being contextually adapted, but the challenge is sustainability if the geographic location is not large enough or appropriate for regular church gatherings—or if people with other cultural preferences start to join.

4. Gathered missional strategy *The multi-point pathway*

This model is less either/or. It takes the different locations of evangelism into account while also recognizing that the ultimate objective is to make disciples who gather with others in a mixed community of believers within a local area. Workers, supported with ongoing biblical training, encouragement, and excellent evangelistic events, go out into the harvest field. As churches engage culture with a gathered missional strategy, more and more unbelievers, interested sceptics, new believers, and mature believers come together, do life together, and discover more about the Lord Jesus together.

- 1 Individuals are equipped and sent out to the daily mission field.
- 2 The church serves the community and organizes outreach events in 'third spaces'. These events act as gateways to gospel conversations. Church members bring friends.
- 3 Once people get to know 'people of peace' at third-space events, they're invited to activities organized at the church where they can explore faith, become Christians, and join the body of Christ.



ACTION SUMMARY

Analyse your current mission flow (pp. 48–49)

- Do church members have a come-to-me or a go-to-them view of mission?
- Is your mission flow currently attractational, incarnational, or gathered missional?

List activities you carry out by location (marketplace, homes, third spaces, church)

- How balanced is your spread of locations for mission activities?
- How does each activity link into an overall gathered missional flow?
- How much of a joined-up flow is there from marketplace to church gathering?
- How could you develop a mission flow which is outward and inward?

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asks how people will know about Christ unless they hear and how they will hear unless someone speaks to them. In other words, the onus is on Christians to go and speak to people. Churches aren't just to put signs on their doors saying 'enquire within'. Rather, they're to send each member into their particular mission location as an everyday missionary. A movement of mission occurs when evangelism happens across a network of mission fields. Missional churches have multiple gateways that give space to investigate faith in a wide range of locations. There are several gateways:

1. Family life gateways

Family life ministries are a way of building a whole network of relationships amongst people in the community. Regular events such as toddler groups, therefore, when they're led with the vision of a compassion ministry, can be gateways into genuine community rather than just surface-level social clubs. When the leaders and helpers are meeting to pray for the people attending and for opportunities to demonstrate sacrificial love to the participants, these activities become a key part of an overall evangelism process. These are ministries that give people a first taste of what Christ's love and community look like in practice.

2. Third-space-based gateways

One way to avoid the church building being seen as the only place evangelism occurs is to move evangelistic activities into neutral community venues. It helps break down barriers when community members see the church located in ordinary places they normally visit. Making use of these spaces also stops Christians from thinking in terms of a sacred-secular divide as they see evangelism happening in places without churchy associations. For example, would hiring a community centre or cafe work as a third-space gateway for children and youth? Could a toddler group meet in a building near a popular local play area or park?

A. Short talks and classes gateways

Talks and classes are great ways of serving people in local communities and building trust, respect and relationship. Examples include:

- A series talks. Attending short talks after work is becoming an increasingly popular pastime and social event for people working in cities.
- Classes such as teaching english, parenting.

B. Sports ministry gateways

Sport is popular, social, and celebrates life. Some of the most famous sports clubs in the UK were started by churches. Churches are often in a good position to organize a team, and when there's a mix of Christians and non-Christians there are plenty of opportunities to chat informally to people, or a more specific talk or testimony can be given at the end of a training session or at a dinner celebration event.

3. Web-based gateways

The web provides a shop window where people can start to explore church and faith in the comfort, safety, and anonymity of their home—or, with web-enabled mobile devices, anywhere and anytime. The church's web content could include:

- A simple gospel explanation in a clearly linked area of the website
- Video recordings of evangelistic talks at church events
- Specially made evangelistic videos.

It's important to be clear about the aim of your web content. Three potential aims could be to:

- Introduce Christianity to people visiting your church website
- Create a profile and interest in events at church
- Provide a resource for Christians to send to friends as a discussion starter.

The web is distinct from other gateways in that it's open and available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. The key is asking what exploring this web-based material will lead to. There needs to be progress from virtual learning to joining a group of people where they can explore faith in community with others.

Some points to note on web-based evangelism include:

- The attention span on the web is much shorter than at a live event
- The production values for a short film need to be a lot higher than for a recording of a live talk
- Making a series of films that each make one point well is often better than attempting a one-stop gospel explanation
- Provide links to further resources and live events that enable further investigation.

ACTION SUMMARY

Discuss new gateways

- Which gateways (pp. 50–51) would open up new mission fields for you?
- How could you develop each of them most effectively in your context?

Based on the above analysis and discussion, decide:

1. What activities you will carry out in different locations
2. What gateways these activities will open up in each location
3. How each activity links into an overall mission flow which is outward and inward.

Therefore.

Show God's compassion to the world.

1. Develop your role as a community champion

The UK government has a policy of encouraging 'community champions' who will act as the social cohesion glue to bring communities together. Christians are often the 'social entrepreneurs' who are investing in, and actually living in, communities. Many of those employed in caring professions, such as doctors, teachers, and social workers, live elsewhere and travel to work in a community. It's the people from local churches who don't just do good in a community but live life in that community. They care for the community they're living in and are part of it 24/7, not just 9-5. Using the church's resources to meet needs in the community that other agencies aren't meeting establishes bridgeheads of communication with people who are beyond the reach of regular church activities.

The call to rout out injustice is a rallying call in many sectors of society and serves as a common denominator that enables churches to connect immediately and personally with people. Working for justice is also a way that churches can demonstrate a distinct, gospel-driven approach. The social security view says we can solve injustice by changing the structural causes of educational and social deprivation. The self-help view says we can solve injustice by teaching family values, applying discipline, and improving our characters. The scriptural view, by contrast, is that God's justice begins with the transformation of our hearts. When churches teach justice regularly and Christians understand justice as a response to God's character, this teaching gets to the heart of a congregation and seeking the *shalom* of the community becomes an instinctive practice. One excellent way of investing in the social capital of a community is through ministries with a justice priority.

Examples of ministries that invest in the community include:

A. Social concern

- Serving local residents (decorating, home improvements, and furnishings; food banks; food hampers or presents for families at Christmas time)
- Community work parties (picking up litter, planting gardens, painting, etc.)

Note: It's important to talk to and cooperate with local residents' associations

- Disability support
- Bereavement counselling
- Financial advice, debt counselling, and credit unions
- Support groups (e.g., recovery from addictions; healing and support after divorce)
- Visiting in prisons
- Projects for the homeless.

B. Family life

One of the barriers to community cohesion is the distance between family members, who often live apart from each other. When the people of God entered Canaan, each family belonged to a tribe that was allocated a piece of land that was passed down the generations and released from debt at jubilee. In contemporary society, the family unit can be as strong as ever up to the point when children leave home, but from that point on the caring responsibility can rapidly diminish. As one government minister put it: **'Nobody ever questions that we look after our children, that's obvious. Nobody ever says it is a caring responsibility, it's just what you do. Some of that logic ... will have to impinge on the way we start thinking about looking after our parents.'**¹³

Churches have caring responsibility in their DNA.

Examples of clubs and other family life activities include: toddler groups; after-school clubs; youth clubs; adoption support; dad's clubs to see children; crisis pregnancy support; holiday clubs for kids, etc.

Activities for senior citizens could include: a regular group for elderly members to come and enjoy fellowship and perhaps a meal; a special week of events for the elderly, perhaps run during school holiday time so there are more volunteers available—in effect, a holiday club for the elderly linked to a special service at the end of the week.

C. Volunteering opportunities

Ministries of justice and social concern provide great opportunities for churches to connect with people:

- Local residents or workers may be cautious about coming to an event that they perceive is 'targeted at them', but people are generally much more willing to volunteer to help with a homeless shelter, food bank, or crisis appeal.
- Firms understand that employees want to make a difference and give back to society. Companies often give their employees time off for volunteering and have links with local schools or charities where volunteers can read with children, give advice on debt and legal issues, visit the housebound, and be involved with many other activities that don't take huge amounts of time but generate large amounts of goodwill within the firm and community.

Churches can interact with this volunteering spirit—either by sending volunteers to work in these schools or charities or by creating activities that people who are not yet members of the church or committed Christians can do. In both cases, people in the church can work alongside people in the community for a common cause.

D. Awards ceremonies

An annual dinner that celebrates and awards prizes to local people who have made particular contributions to the community raises awareness of the church and its activities and networks with other service providers and also demonstrates Christlike gratitude and love to community members.¹⁴

2. Increase your accessibility

What does making Christ visible to the world look like in practice? One way is living in distinct community. Statistics show that more people are living alone, in part because fewer people remain committed to marriage or even bother with marriage in the first place. In addition, people have less time for social and leisure activities as work takes a greater share of the hours in their day. An increasing number of workers, in the words of one psychotherapist, are: 'type-A dynamite kegs' prone to heart attacks, high blood pressure, and migraines who find that 'their work schedules are getting in the way of their enjoyment of life'.¹⁵ Another cause of societal fragmentation is that people move house more frequently. A global economy and concentration of employment in increasingly multinational companies mean that people are constantly moving locations with their jobs. All of these factors hamper the formation of consistent long-term relationships.

Jesus prays that his church will be such a distinctive and loving community that others will come to know him (John 17). For example, when the epidemics hit the urban centres of the Roman Empire, Christians showed their faith and compassion in practice by being willing to risk their own lives and stay in the cities to care for people. **'There was nothing new in the idea that the supernatural makes behavioural demands on humans—the gods have always wanted sacrifices and worship ... What was new was the notion that more than self-interested exchange relations were possible between humans and the supernatural. The Christian teaching that God loves those who love him was alien to pagan beliefs ... Equally alien to paganism was the notion that because God loves humanity, Christians cannot please God unless they love each other. Indeed, as God demonstrates his love through sacrifice, Christians must demonstrate their love through sacrifice on behalf of one another. Moreover, such responsibilities were extended beyond the bonds of family and tribe.'**¹⁶

Jesus gives his people the staggering privilege of advertising his light to the world. God could have used many methods of advertising that we might think would have been more reliable, but he chose to attract attention to his light through his chosen people—you and me. Jesus describes his people as a city of light (Matt. 5:14–16). Individuals shine the light of good deeds in daily life, and a gathered local church in a community acts as a 'stadium of God's light'. When people see 'your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. 1:3), their attention will be drawn to the ultimate source and they will praise our Father in heaven. Now that's praise worth generating! But note that work, labour, and endurance only point to Christ when they're produced, prompted, and inspired by Christ. It's dangerous when our works become detached from the Word and are not explained in words that point to Christ.

'Development requires justification. Justification is too often excluded from the ongoing ministry of development. This is not to say that mission teams do not intend to share the gospel, that they are not concerned with seeing people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. However the gospel is often forgotten in the mix of doing community work. It may even be excluded when opportunities present themselves. We have lost sight of our original goals and understanding of the holistic gospel.'¹⁷

Ideas to increase accessibility include:

A. Office base

Instead of church staff working from home, there are advantages to them working in a church office so the church building can be kept open and there is someone available through the week should someone pop in for a chat.

B. Drop-in café

If the church is in a location where locals pass by frequently, opening a café may create opportunities to meet and serve them. This can be done as a once-a-week volunteer-run event, for example on a Saturday morning, rather than as a full-scale café—which has much bigger financial and staffing implications.

For churches with a more remote location, operating a shop or café in the local shopping area may be an attractive proposition. A café is a lot of work but can provide opportunities to listen to those in need and to chat with those who are lonely. Cafés can thus be seen as a compassion ministry rather than as a money-making enterprise.

C. Use of building

Church buildings are often used for many different events, including:

- Rentals for parties, fitness classes, ballet, etc.
- Hosting meetings of community groups, AA, etc.
- Meetings of uniformed groups, etc.
- Rentals for local businesses
- Shared workspace.

People who come to these events will gain familiarity with the building and will see the church as playing a valuable role in local community life.

While using your facilities they'll gather impressions:

- The quality of the facilities removes the preconception that churches are tatty, old-fashioned, and neglected.
- A warm welcome from church staff, volunteers, and other groups they meet in the building dispels the notion that Christians are unfriendly or sanctimonious.
- Attractive publicity for church events breaks down misconceptions by offering a picture of a lively community.

Of course, the caveat to the above is that tatty facilities or unhelpful church staff or members or out-of-date signs, such as Christmas posters still up in January, give a very different impression. Another issue can be that significant church resources end up going toward upkeep, repair, etc., and letting others use your facilities can bring about the opposite of relationship building when someone from the church has to chase down the group that destroyed the pool table in the youth room, broke furniture, or marked up the walls in the bathrooms.

'We need to engage with our culture from a position of strength, not desperation. If we are desperate to please, we appease.'¹⁸

One solution is to let groups that have at least one church member involved use your facilities. That enables a more intentional and effective witness with, and investment in, these groups, and it also encourages church members to be more involved in community groups.

N. Freebies

Giving free gifts demonstrates grace and breaks down the preconception that churches are after people's money. Examples include giving coffee and snacks to commuters, car washing by the youth club, roasted chestnuts at a Christmas fair, a gift wrapping service at local shops. You could also provide 'goodie bags' that church members can give as a welcome to people moving into their neighbourhoods. These could contain local maps and other information, details about the church, an invitation to a meal, a CD or DVD of music and talks, and so on. Church members could present new neighbours with the goodie bag along with a meal or offer of help with unpacking, etc.

O. Offer a spiritual health check

To take an idea from a gym, develop a spiritual health diagnostic tool that people could use with friends or that could be on offer for a limited period at the church or a community centre or gym.¹⁹

P. Specific prayer

Meet regularly as a church to pray for the communities you are aiming to reach. Feed the prayer times with information so people can pray specifically for the context—for the issues and people known, for openings to meet people, for wisdom in being thoroughly contextual as well as distinctly Christian.

Q. Respond effectively to enquiries about weddings, funerals, and new babies

Regardless of your denominational policy, people from outside your congregation will come to the church with requests regarding weddings, funerals, and thanksgiving for new babies. It's important to know what your policies are and how to explain them in a clear and caring way so that through that contact you're drawing people closer to knowledge of God during these important times in their lives. Questions to ask include:

- How can the church build ongoing relationships with those who are bereaved locally?
- What sort of preparation courses and support can you offer to engaged and newly married couples to give insight into the gospel and the distinctives of Christian marriage?
- How can the church celebrate with, and serve, those with new babies? How can this be done within your context so that people outside the covenant community can also come and have a form of thanksgiving ceremony without feeling like unwelcome outsiders?
- Is it feasible to send cards on anniversaries and birthdays or significant birthdays?

R. Sport

- Put on a football or other sports tournament

It's often more strategic to join secular teams or form a church team in which at least half the team are not church members.

- Screen big matches

Case study: One of the first activities we did to show hospitality to our community was to screen the World Cup in 1998. We simply put a sign outside, and we had hundreds of people come into our building, giving us the opportunity to chat with them. Before the match, I simply said this was a way that we as a church could host our community—and if anyone ever wanted a vicar or a chat, 'I'm your man!' That got applause and built a positive impression towards the church.

S. Social events open to all

Instead of planning every outreach event specifically to explain the gospel to unbelievers, a great starting point is simply to invite unbelievers to events where they can experience the distinctive reality of the gospel lived out in a church family. Invite church members to come and enjoy all the fun of the church family event—and encourage them to bring friends and neighbours so they can see that Christians are more fun, more loving, and less weird than they might have imagined. Ideas for these events include:

- Church days out to the seaside or a theme park
- Festivals in local parks or other open community spaces with a barbecue, family games, bouncy castle, and so on
- A meal, quiz night, barn dance, etc.
- A film night, comedy or talent show, concert, etc.

T. Special social events

Special events for people with a particular interest or occupation, or for those who have come from another country to work or study, can be effective because people with a common interest are more likely to socialize and it's easier to establish a theme for the evening. For example:

- A talk based on a specific common interest or occupation
- An event with food, music, and other people from their home country.

Publicizing events geared at certain people is generally easier when there are specific publications they read or places they visit where they'll be likely to see an ad placed by the church.

U. Midweek

Transform church meetings into church family gatherings where people enjoy sharing their lives over food—in the early church, devotion to the fellowship included eating together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:42,46).

V. Sundays

Make services and other times that church people meet ‘events’ so that people aren’t just coming to ‘a service’ and then dashing off:

– Refreshments before church

Some new people arrive early for church, and if they go straight in they may well be greeted by an empty room, because the regulars come later, or by a noisy room, because people are rushing around testing mikes and practising songs. Refreshments served before the service by a friendly church member or two in another area of the building may create a more welcoming first impression.

– Refreshments after church

Many new people will leave right after the service if you expect them to go in search of coffee and then hold it in a large hall full of people they don’t know—heading straight for the exit is a much easier option. One idea is to serve coffee as the service is ending—at an easily accessible serving point or even offering it to people in their seats. That encourages people to linger. The aim is to encourage people to stay long enough for a member of the church in a nearby seat to have introduced themselves.

– Sunday lunch, supper, etc. on a regular basis

Encourage the whole church to make these red-letter days.

– Special talks on a current issue or a social event after the service

Events perhaps with food at which people can meet others and discuss issues.

As any successful company will tell you, meetings that begin with people eating together are far more relational than meetings that simply move through the business so people can leave.

Case study

One of the first things I did when I began at Saint James was to remove a painted sign on the church steps that read ‘Do not sit or eat here by order of the churchwardens’. Then we cordoned off an area of the steps with potted plants and invited people to sit there. At lunchtime and in the evenings, people from the church would sit with people and get to know them—the designer of this book cover was one of the people I met who has since become a dear friend.

But our policy was not universally accepted. One local couple told me it was ‘disgusting ... you came from the city and are just interested in turning the church into a money making business’. Over time, that couple have also become friends—they still don’t agree about our use of the steps, but they do respect what we’re about because they’ve seen, amongst other things, the love and care our youth team has poured into their son and other local kids. Over the years we have shared our lives and have wept together at funerals, celebrated together at their marriage renewal service, and laughed together at community events.

3. Develop local community mission

A. Missionary small groups

Community-based small groups can become strategic catalysts of mission when each small group adopts an area or people network. The small group learns about the issues specific to the mission field, prays together for the people within the mission field, and gets to know the contacts each member of the group makes. But the small group also shares life within the mission field—maybe by meeting in the area if it's a geographic mission field such as a housing estate, or by putting on joint events if it's a network mission field such as artists or business professionals, or by volunteering with a project working with that people group if it's a local need-based mission field such as youth or the homeless. Because it focuses on a mission field, the missionary small group has a uniting purpose and can be intentional about shaping their investment of time and resources in a particular direction.

B. Missional communities

'[Gospel communities] have a common identity with a commitment to pastoring one another with the gospel and working together to witness to Christ in their context. ... They cannot reach everyone or contextualize to everyone, so they focus on reaching specific groups or communities. This helps the members to work together so that mission is a shared venture.'¹⁰

Missional communities are very different from home groups, even though a cursory glance might suggest that they're similar. Both are about people committing to meeting together in a home or third-space venue on a regular basis. Both may involve Bible study, prayer, and fellowship over food. But the orientation of a missional community, as the name implies, is mission in community. Missional communities see mission as a shared activity and a daily life activity. This perspective moves the focus of mission from a church-organized event to which you take friends to inviting friends into your missional community where they see the gospel intentionally lived out and discussed. A missional community tends to involve up to twenty Christians who commit to sharing life together and often have a missional focus on a specific people group or area of a city. They commit to meeting in each other's homes, to bringing friends to join in with activities on a regular basis, to serving in practical ways within the area or people group of focus, and to praying consistently for each other's friends.

One of the great advantages of missional communities is that, rather than asking for prayer in a home group for people no one else in the group has ever met, you're praying for each other's friends—people with whom you've eaten and people you've had a chance to get to know personally. Missional communities emphasize 'disciples making disciples' through 'gospeling' each other in the context of community. It is a great encouragement to see people chatting about how the gospel relates to their daily lives over a meal with Christians and those who are not yet Christians. This kind of community models gospeling, helps our unbelieving friends gain exposure to a wider range of Christians and evangelistic styles, and puts the practice of inviting unbelieving and believing friends around together on our daily radar.

Mission happens as missional communities expose unbelievers to community life where the gospel is openly discussed, applied, and lived out every day. This kind of mission is therefore highly contextual and diverse, in addition to being anchored in ordinary life. Missional community evangelism is a great complement to big-event evangelism, as the structured talks and testimonies heard at events can be grounded in observing Christians practicing those principles day by day.

One of the great advantages of missional community as an evangelistic strategy is that it is highly reproducible and creates a lay ministry dynamic.¹¹ One of the dangers of church-based evangelism is that it causes a disconnect between Sundays and Mondays. Missional communities drive Christians to be counter-cultural and to practice a missional lifestyle in everyday life.

Three consequences of missional communities

i. Moving across the doorstep

Missional communities encourage intentional compassion. By focusing on our local neighbourhood and praying for the streets where we live and gather as a missional community, we grow in compassion for the area and gain a greater understanding of who our neighbours are and what needs they have. That compassion and insight, along with a focus on prayer as a group, compel us to walk across the street and reach out a hand of friendship to our neighbours.

ii. Meeting over meals

The meal is one of God's great community-building gifts to us. Throughout the Bible, breaking bread with others brings people together and breaks down barriers. The highlight of the day was coming together again after being dispersed at work. Jesus did a lot of his evangelism and discipleship over meals—and he was criticized for it when he didn't eat with PLUs (people like us)! One of the big issues in our culture is that our personal devices have replaced the dining table. Family members are more likely to be texting than building relationships with those in the same room. The missional community practice of eating together is therefore counter-cultural and reasserts the priority of relationships and the value of friendships.

iii. Mixing up

When we meet people at church for a couple of hours a week it's easy to wear a mask and to say what's expected rather than be honest with people—what Oliver James calls chameleoning.¹² Community, however, is founded on relational integrity and emotional honesty—and therefore the reality of very different people sharing life together is the distinctive witness of missional community. What happens at church is mostly invisible to most people, but what happens in your home—and in particular when you have visitors for meals or receive meals when you're in need—is highly visible to your neighbours. People who might be wary of going to a church event may well be amenable to an invitation to a missional community event.

ACTION SUMMARY

Analysis

1. Interview people in the local community:

- What is their impression of how the church is involved in the community?
- What do they think the church's role should be in the community?

2. Review what proportion of your financial resources, buildings, staff time, and volunteer time is invested in people not yet in contact with Christ.

- What does that say about your priorities? What kinds of changes might you need to make to ensure that your investment priority is seeking to save lost people?

Discuss the ways listed above (see pp. 54–55) to invest in the social capital of the local community.

- Which of these ideas will be most helpful in your context and why?

Discuss the ways listed above (see pp. 56–57) to make the church more accessible.

- Which of these ideas will be most helpful in your context and why?

Discuss the ways listed above (see pp. 61–62) to increase missional community.

- Which of these ideas can you adopt in your context and how?

Take all the ideas you've generated about social capital and visibility and decide:

- Of the potential strategies, which will you focus on developing in the next year and in the next three years?

- How will new ministries impact existing ministries?

- How can existing ministries be adjusted to accommodate new ministries?

In the film *Sister Act*,²⁰ Whoopi Goldberg witnesses a murder and is put into police protection with a new identity as a nun. The convent she hides in is linked to a local church where the priest admits, 'We're a small congregation this morning. Too many mornings. Something has gone terribly wrong. Where is faith? Where is celebration? Where is everyone?'

But things change when Goldberg starts to lead the choir. And the Mother Superior, played by Maggie Smith, makes her feelings known about the change of style. The Mother Superior attempts to stop things, but the priest intervenes by congratulating Goldberg and admitting he hasn't enjoyed mass that much in years. The changes attracted others off the street as well. As the priest says, 'That music, that heavenly music, Reverend Mother, it called to them.'

Therefore.

Innovate marketplace ministries.

The workplace is where many people spend a considerable amount of time, and it's often where the best evangelistic opportunities are. Opportunities to give a reason for our love, joy, peace and hope we have as Christians arise naturally as people see our attitudes to work. That's what Paul encourages the Thessalonians with in his early letter to them. He says their work is produced by faith, prompted by love and inspired by hope (1 Thess. 1:3). The producer, prompter and inspirer all make a considerable difference to a Christian's attitudes and actions in the workplace but those observing the Christian only witness the results, not the reason. In the same way as a movie producer's work is inherent in the final film watched by audiences, our workplace ministry starts with a preparedness to explain the reason and inspiration behind the story of our daily lives.

There are a number of ways churches can equip everyone to be a minister at work.

A. Teach a theology of work

The Bible begins by saying that when the heavens and earth were created *ex nihilo*, matter was formless, empty and dark (Genesis 1:2). God's work from then on is to form what is formless, fill what is empty and light what is dark. When God makes people in his own image he blesses them and tells the, to continue his work of forming, filling, subduing and ruling (Genesis 1:28). Work is therefore a necessary part of how God made the earth even before sin and curse entered the world. Christians will work with a love inspired by hope when they see how work is a gift from God and contribution to his purposes of blessing.

On a TV show I saw recently the main character says to a priest, "even though I don't believe and I know that scientifically nothing I do makes any difference in the end anyway, I'm still scared! Why am I still scared?!" That's what people feel a lot of the time even if they don't say it quite so clearly or out loud. All Christians have a priestly role as ministers of reconciliation to present to others a very different worldview – a view of life, themselves and others where there is a purposeful God who has plans to bless. The more clear Christians are in God's purposes for work, the more confident they will be in explaining that to their co-workers.

B. Apply the Bible to work

Every Sunday is an opportunity to apply the Bible to people's work lives and equip them to work inspired by hope and prompted by love. The more the preacher is talking to workers in preparation, the more applied to daily lives the final sermon will be.

Testimony is a powerful way to connect the principles outlined by the 'professional

preacher' with the issues faced by the 'ordinary pew filler'. 'This Time Tomorrow' interviews connect Sundays to the whole of life by asking congregation members:²¹

1. What will you be doing this time tomorrow?
2. What opportunities or challenges will you face?
3. How can we pray for you?

C. Resource evangelistic opportunities accessible to people in the workplace

Many churches are able to resource evangelistic courses and Christian groups in the workplace. Churches can also work together and put on evangelistic events or courses in the workplace that then link people to a local church in their area where they can explore further. This is particularly necessary when the workplace for church members is a distance from your church and therefore it would be less easy for Christians to bring colleagues who don't live in the same locality to events at your church. One option is to run a School of Faith essentials event²² where the gospel is presented in a series of four clear, concise and compelling talks over a single evening (see p. 107).

D. Train in everyday evangelism at work

Churches can encourage people to be everyday missionaries though training people to see their workplace mission field and share their faith naturally and confidently day by day (See pages 90-95).

E. Shared workspace gateway

The past few decades have seen significant shifts in workstyles and the workplaces needed to support them. For example:

- Fewer static jobs fixed to a workstation and greater movement from job to job rather than doing a job for life
- More collaboration between different disciplines, with new firms combining design, finance, and technology in co-located teams
- Workers expect high levels of service and see workplaces more as hotels where they are guests
- Work increasingly spills over into the public realm, and coffee shops have become meeting rooms and workspaces.

One factor driving the new workstyles is the move from people working for a large corporation to wanting to start their own business and work for themselves. This shift has increased the demand for flexible co-working spaces where entrepreneurs can work alongside others, but it has also led to large corporations making their workstyles more flexible to attract talent. What is the Christian response to this? The Bible states that we were made to cooperate rather than work alone. God made us to depend on others, to be in relationship, and to complement each other with our gifts and particular skills.

Churches can support co-working by opening up spaces for people to work. What most creatives need is a table, a charging point, wifi, and coffee. In addition to these things, churches can offer a venue that's inspiring in its beauty and a model that demonstrates generosity and encourages people to help each other. Such a workspace is therefore a gateway into exploring faith.

This becomes a ministry rather than just venue hire when church members and staff team co-work with others. As conversations are had and ideas exchanged, the Christian worldview and values for work are expressed and modelled to others.

Some practical suggestions include:

- Have a social area where conversations can happen and make it separate from the work areas where people need to concentrate
- Have larger tables to encourage cooperation or seating areas where groups can chat
- Show generosity in how you charge to use the space and in providing coffee to the quality expected.

The facilitator of the co-working space:

- Helps people make connections with others who can help them
- Ensures that people feel welcomed and are introduced to others
- Represents the church and turns the space into a place
- Is available to talk about Christ, to listen to people as God's Spirit opens up opportunities, and to invite them to explore faith further.

F. Develop a marketplace ministry as a church

Churches can encourage people to be everyday missionaries though training people to see their workplace mission field and share their faith naturally and confidently day by day (See pages 90–95).

Each local church is also based in a marketplace and should think through:

- What particular mission fields are there in terms of businesses, workers, and commercial relationships?
- What events could the church run, such as lunchtime talks, an evangelistic course, or carol services?
- Are there social projects the church is, or could be, involved in, such as work with the homeless, that local workers and firms would be willing to support? Through working together, these workers could get to know and trust church members.
- Could the church contribute to the business community by arranging a business breakfast or other networking event?

One way to catalyse marketplace ministry is to develop a centre for faith and work which focuses on engaging with the marketplace in the church's local context. This can also involve an intern programme that provides training and mentoring for Christians on being gospel workers and culture transformers in their daily work.

For example, the Redeemer Center for Faith and Work has four programmes that help people in the workplace integrate their faith:

Gotham Fellowship. Equips young adults for gospel leadership in the world through an intensive, top-tier training programme. It provides the theological, spiritual, and relational foundations required for meaningful and sustainable integration of faith and work. The Fellowship integrates three primary elements to further the social, cultural, and spiritual renewal of New York City:

Training courses. Participants learn in a cross-vocational community how to apply theological content and biblical truths to everyday work life, thus creating a more meaningful and sustainable integration of faith and work. Courses help participants to consider how the gospel challenges common industry idols, to explore what Scripture has to say about the tensions inherent in their work, and to imagine innovative ways to address areas of brokenness in their fields.

Entrepreneurship and innovation. Encourages and supports entrepreneurs within the congregation who have a bold vision for new ventures that promote gospel-centred renewal in cities.

Workshops. Subjects include productivity, healthy artists, entrepreneurship, raising startup capital.²³

ACTION SUMMARY

How are you equipping people on Sundays for the daily workplace mission field?
– is your preaching applying to people's work lives?

How are you resourcing people for the daily workplace mission field?
– what activities could you run in the marketplace that enable members of your church to invite colleagues who don't live near your church to hear the gospel?

Which ideas mentioned about developing market place ministry (pp. 64-67) could you adopt in your setting?

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