

# communities on mission starter

For Everyday Leaders

Saturate cultivates and curates resources from across the Church for equipping everyday people, leaders, and pastors to be disciples who make disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

We've condensed the essential concepts and first steps toward becoming an effective missional community leader into this short booklet for people who are leading small groups, communities, or missional communities. This “starter” is intended to help you take practical steps toward more-effective leadership and toward increased community life on mission. This will help you get started.

You will start with the most important and foundational things: the gospel, our identity, who we are, and how we live. Along the way, we'll point to other resources that will allow you to go deeper on each topic and ways to equip your community in the things you're learning.

Lastly, we'll share some key resources for helping you step into leading or rebooting your community to be centered on the gospel and on mission.

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We call our small groups “missional communities,” but you may know them as “gospel communities,” “community groups,” etc. For clarity's sake, what distinguishes a community on mission from a small group are these three crucial elements: a group of people who have committed to live like family, serve one another and their community like Jesus, and are on mission together in the everyday stuff of life.



**EVERY CHURCH. EVERY PERSON. EVERY PLACE**

## **This starter is for those who find themselves leading communities of all shapes and sizes.**

As a leader, you've answered the call to take initiative for the benefit of others. Namely, you're dedicating your life not only to following Jesus, but to cultivating a community that calls others to learn to follow Jesus, too.

This starter was written to help you lead people, into all Jesus has called us to be. We pray you will find encouragement, clarification, and tools you can immediately implement in your community. Our prayer is that, as you read it, you will consistently put it down and pray; pray for yourself, pray for your community, and listen to God for direction, peace, and clarity.

# The Gospel

The gospel is the good news about Jesus saving and restoring all things. The gospel is the fuel for all mission. The gospel is the glue for all community. The gospel is not something we graduate from—it's the foundational truth for all life.

There are two big aspects of the gospel that inform and empower our life of disciple-making.

## **1. The Power of the Gospel: The Gospel is the Power of God to Save**

In this case, the Good News is that God, in and through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit, accepts us, empowers us, and is changing us.

We have been saved from the penalty of sin, are being saved from the power of sin, and will be saved from the presence of sin because of God's power and work, not our own (Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 1:27-29; 2:6-7; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

## **2. The Purpose of the Gospel: The Gospel is the Means of Restoring All Things**

In this case, the Good News is that God sent His Son to redeem the world and create a new humanity. Eventually the whole world will be renewed. Death, decay, injustice, and suffering will all be removed. God is saving a people and sending them out for His Mission so that Christ will be glorified in all things.

You have been saved by God's work for God's work (Ephesians 1, 2:10, 14-22; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Revelation 21).

In other words, there is a massive movement going on. God is doing something remarkable, and we have been called to it! We—the people of God—are participating within God’s redemptive plan by being a people who display a foretaste of what the future will be like under God’s rule (Jeremiah 29; Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:20-36; 1 Peter 2:9-12).

All this means your community is not just a time slot. Your role in leading is not to walk through curriculum. You are proclaiming the gospel that has the power to save! You are cultivating a community that demonstrates the restoration of God. As a leader, you speak the gospel in casual conversations and meaningful moments.

### **Go Deeper: Gospel Fluency**

We call the skill of speaking the truths about Jesus gospel fluency.  
Learn more about gospel fluency and find resources to equip  
your community at [gospelfluency.com](http://gospelfluency.com)

# What is a Disciple?

If we want to lead and make disciples, we have to understand what a disciple is.

Discipleship is not a program of the church but the mission of the church. Discipleship is learning to follow Jesus in your real life—not just in a Bible study, at a church building, or within spiritual disciplines.

Making disciples is leading people to submit all of life increasingly to the lordship and empowering presence of Jesus Christ. As a leader, your role is to cultivate an environment where discipleship happens.

**Life on Life:** Making disciples means we share life with people so we know their stories, know their struggles, and can see each other walk in faith and obedience. They also get to know us! To be a disciple means we will share our lives with others.

**Life in Community:** Making disciples requires the input, encouragement, gifting, and example of a whole group of people. It can't just be one-on-one. We need the body. We need community to know how to follow Jesus.

**Life on Mission:** Making disciples draws us into the mission of sharing the gospel with friends, neighbors, and families. Our communities live outwardly, seeking to make the gospel clear through our words and actions to others.

### **Go Deeper: Everyday Disciple**

Watch Jeff Vanderstelt articulate this principle well in this short video:  
Everyday Disciple. [https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/  
church-is-more/everyday-discipleship/](https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/church-is-more/everyday-discipleship/)

### **Equip Your Community: How Did Jesus Make Disciples?**

Read through the Gospel of Luke chapter by chapter highlighting each activity, moment, or setting in which Jesus made disciples. Note the moments in which He and His disciples are sharing the normal, everyday stuff of life, such as walking, eating, sleeping, and working. Note also how they share community and burdens for one another and the challenges they are facing, such as sick parents, fear, storms, and other stresses. Lastly, note how this discipleship is happening purposefully and on mission. Try to make an exhaustive list of everything that Jesus did to make disciples.

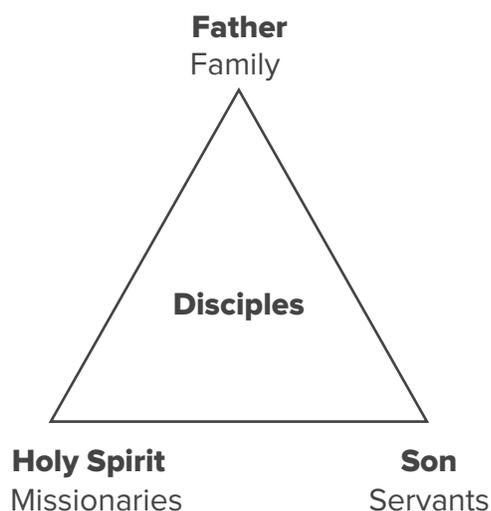
Then ask one another: What would it look like to be disciples of Jesus and make disciples like Jesus did?

# Gospel Identity

God commands us to make disciples and baptize them in the name the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—God’s way of establishing us in our new identity. God declares something to be so and it is. This is what goes on in baptism. What God does to us, He intends to do through us.

## *Matthew 28:17-20*

*Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*



**Family Identity:** We submit to God as our Father as adopted sons and daughters and love one another as brothers and sisters.

**Servant Identity:** We submit to Jesus as Lord and serve others as though we are serving Jesus.

**Missionary Identity:** We submit to the Spirit as our Sender and Leader and are empowered to show and share Jesus with others.

### **Go Deeper: Gospel Identity**

Jeff Vanderstelt unpacks this truth in a very helpful way in this animated video:  
<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/church-is-more/baptismal-identity/>.

#### **Practical Step: Practice Your Identity**

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one way you can step into your gospel identity throughout the next month as an individual and as a family.

**Family** — Spend time loving, caring for, or sharing life with a fellow disciple of Jesus this week.

**Servants** — Seek out one opportunity this week to bless or serve others in your neighborhood or at work.

**Missionaries** — Spend relational time with a friend, neighbor, or co-worker who doesn't know Jesus and get to know some of their story.

# Five Essentials of Being on Mission Together

We want to suggest five essentials we usually see lacking in churches in some form that need constant attention and strengthening.

**People** — Who are the specific non-Christian people (approximately eight to twelve) you believe God has called your group to pursue and give their best time, love, prayer, and tangible service to throughout the week?

Lead your group to discern together prayerfully who God is calling you to pursue together.

**Places** — Where are the specific places and relational contexts your group will commit to love and pursue these people regularly?

Lead your group to discern prayerfully the best times, places, and ways to spend time with people.

The key is to determine when and where you can spend time with them consistently and as a group—minimum two to three points of contact each month.

**Proclamation** — How will your group specifically proclaim the Gospel through word and deed on a regular basis to these people you're deepening friendship with? Your group needs to discern prayerfully how to demonstrate and talk about the love of Jesus practically, creatively, and genuinely on a regular basis.

**Plan** — What is the specific weekly and monthly plan your group has to live life together with the intentionality and focus identified above?

Your group needs to discern prayerfully how to organize your lives and create a plan to live together with this intentionality. Great intentions without a specific plan usually lead to a lack of fruitfulness.

Be specific. Be consistent. Be focused. Your group doesn't need to commit to ten things on a monthly basis. Do a few things regularly with the same people, and do them well. Remember, the goal is to go as deep as possible in relationship with the eight to twelve people God has called your group to love and serve.

**Prayer** — How will your group pray for these people, places, and details in a focused way?

Your group needs to discern prayerfully when, where, how, and for whom you will pray in a focused way. Prayer is the power that helps change hearts and minds leading to transformed lives. It's the fuel for mission.

### **Go Deeper: Community on Mission**

Jeff Vanderstelt explains the power and purpose of a missional community in this short animated video: <https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/church-is-more/mission-community/>

### **Equip Your Community: Move toward Mission Together**

Consider guiding your community through these essential questions and make a plan as a community. You can download this resource with ideas and a template for discussion:  
<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/five-essentials-for-effective-mission-template/>

# Preparing to Start or Restart a Missional Community

We've talked through many of the important issues related to a disciple-making life and community. But there might still be a lingering question: How do you start a missional community?

Every missional community has three essential ingredients: leaders, a clear mission, and a committed core. This is where you must begin as a leader. While everything might not be perfectly clear before you begin (it never is), you will want to have an initial plan of action.

Pray for the people God will bring into your community. Pray for people to come alongside you and help. Pray for God to bring names to mind. Think through the specific people in your life you want to join your new missional community. They'll need to live or work fairly close to you since it's hard to commute to community. You aren't looking for "all-stars" or elite Christians—they don't exist. Pray for people who will commit to the process of becoming a community. Pray for teachable, humble, and honest people. Pray for people who believe in Jesus!

Before you begin sending invitations and making phone calls, be able to put your hopes and prayers for this new community into words. You need to know why.

- What is a missional community? Why start one? Who are the people we will be on mission to?
- What do you hope this will look like in your city and town?

- What are you asking people to commit to? How will you live on mission together, and how will you figure it out together?

As you invite people, give them a picture of gospel-shaped community alive in God's mission. As you describe what you are prayerfully starting, avoid making your invitation tailor-made to each person, where you sacrifice your convictions. For example, you really want your friends who are struggling in marriage to join, so you tell them it will be a group that fixes marriages. Invite people into a community that isn't centered on their needs, hobbies, or passions but the gospel of Jesus and His mission.

### **Go Deeper: Starting a Missional Community Checklist**

We've synthesized all the theological, logistical, and practical issues that go into starting a missional community into a "Missional Community Checklist." This is a great resource to help you see how close or far you are from being able to start a community or reboot your existing community.

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/starting-mc-checklist/>

# What is a Leader?

We want to give the final pages of this “starter” to clarifying the role and process of leading a community. There are important questions: How do you lead? How do you share leadership? What are you responsible for? How do you plan as a leader? How can you be intentional with your community?

## **Leadership Modes** — How You Operate as a Leader

- **Gardener Not God**—You facilitate gospel growth by creating an environment where growth can happen, but you can’t make people believe and you can’t make people obey.
- **Catalyst Not CEO**—You speak up and call God’s people to the mission, to community, and, most important of all, to belief in the gospel. You do this by casting vision, preparing strategy, and asking questions.
- **Example Not Perfect**—You are a picture to the community of someone who is believing the gospel and walking in obedience. As a leader, you are inviting people to watch your life and follow you as you follow Jesus on mission.

## **Sharing Leadership Roles** — How You Lead with Others

- **Missional Leader**—They lead the community in its common mission. The missional leader is the champion for the mission by reminding the group about the it and why. These leaders tend to be the pioneering, justice-oriented, and evangelistic people.

- Shepherding Leader—They focus on the internal care of the community. They are thinking through the spiritual formation of the people in their community. These leaders tend to be the pastoral and teaching people.

# What Do Leaders Do?

## **Leadership Commitment — How You Practically Lead**

2 hours a week—in addition to your participation in the missional community.

- 1 hour praying and processing. As you will likely see a lot of time is spent thinking about and praying for the people in your community. You are also asked to think about the current state of your community and where God is leading you forward.
- 1 hour preparing or planning. This might mean preparing for discussions, planning meetings, planning missional engagement, etc. This will also likely look like time with coaches and leadership meetings.

## **Leadership Reflection — How You Depend on the Spirit**

Regularly ask these questions to the Spirit as you reflect on the life of your community.

- How is God's kindness leading us into repentance?
- What does obedience look like for us? What's the next step toward obedience?
- What is God calling us to? Who is God calling us to love—through word and deed?
- What scriptures do we need to be reading?
- What times of prayer do we need to have?
- What spiritual disciplines do we need to engage?

### **Going Deeper: Assessment and Personal Development Plan**

Leadership is obviously an important role in all of this. The hope is that you will not only be able to lead a community, but thrive! Consider doing a personal assessment and crafting a plan to grow intentionally within your leadership:  
<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/leadership-assessment-checklist-3/>

# Prayerfully Planning as a Leader

If some of your primary responsibilities for leading your community are prayer and planning, how you do that is crucial!

The best way to plan and lead your community is to think in months and then weeks. Planning week-to-week is too exhausting, especially for the busy leader. There is too much to think through, and everything comes quickly in the normal rhythm of life. When leaders plan week-to-week their intentionality becomes nearly non-existent, and their organization tends to fall apart. The weeks become disconnected. The movement of the community toward something stalls. It is better to do the bulk of the planning month-to-month. You can plan it all out with balance, then you can move forward preparing for each week. Planning monthly also gives the entire community a heads up, so they can plan their lives accordingly.

Here's a basic example to help you get going.

**Monthly Discipleship Prayer:** See our complete need for the gospel as we seek to help those overwhelmed by the needs of others and as we include friends into life of our community.

	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>
<b>Family</b>	Wednesday Meal where focus is confession and repentance (Jared leads).		Wednesday Meal where focus is on studying Scriptures (Jared leads).	

<b>Missionaries</b>	Game night (hosted by the Wilsons). Invite friends, coworkers, and neighbors.		Friday Night: Go to a happy hour in the neighborhood where you can invite friends and coworkers	
<b>Servants</b>		Wednesday: Do a babysitting night for foster families in your neighborhood (Stacey organizes)		Meet to put care packages together for case-workers and foster families and thank them for loving and caring for children (Caleb organizes)
<b>Learners</b>	Encourage everyone to take a day of rest as individuals and families throughout the weekend. (John will share some sabbath resources via e-mail.)	DNA groups meet	Personal reading and study from Scripture on Wednesday night.	DNA groups meet

### Go Deeper: Download Planning Templates

We have several planning tools for a variety of personalities and time-frames: annual, monthly, weekly. Find them at [www.saturatetheworld.com/planning](http://www.saturatetheworld.com/planning)

# Missional Community Leader Discipleship Questions

Most of discipleship happens in informal settings: conversations over meals, at the park, and in the regular flow of life. As a leader, how can you pursue others and have intentional conversations that produce fruit? Here is a list of go-to questions to ask in the formal and informal moments of missional community life.

What was good about your week? Why?  
How did it make you feel?

What was bad about your week? Why?  
How did it make you feel?

What things can we celebrate or give  
thanks for from this past week?

What was a significant struggle you had  
this week? How did you deal with it? Did  
you learn anything from it?

What has brought you the most joy this  
week? Why?

What has made you feel worried or frustrat-  
ed this week? Why? How did you deal with  
it?

Where did you see Jesus in your life this  
week? In someone else's life? Did you  
learn anything from that?

What has made you feel sad this week?  
Why? How did you deal with it?

Did your love and passion for Jesus grow  
this week? How?

What has made you feel angry this week?  
Why? How did you deal with it?

Did your compassion and grace toward  
others grow this week? How?

What has been on your mind the most this week? What's taking most of your mental/emotional energy? Why?

What are you desiring more than anything else?

What do you find yourself day-dreaming or fantasizing about?

What lies are you subtly believing that undermine the truth of the gospel?

How does the gospel surprise you?

Where have you made much of yourself and little of God?

Is technology stealing attention from your family?

Is work replacing your spouse's place in your heart?

Where do your thoughts drift to when you enter a social setting?

What fears are paralyzing your heart from enjoying God? What consumes your thoughts when you have alone time?

# Next Steps

Asking the questions and engaging the resources mentioned on every page is a great start! But we want to highlight two next steps that can keep you moving in the right direction in personal growth and leadership.

## 1. Start a Missional Community

Use what you've learned and experiment. Invite people to join you. Focus on the gospel. Establish a rhythm of mission together. Use the resources you've seen here or use the *Saturate Field Guide* to start well.

## 2. Read *Saturate* and *Gospel Fluency*.



# Continued Learning in Community

## **Consider Becoming a Member of Saturate**

Membership to Saturate's online community and resource site offers both individual and group access to the best available video, print, and digital resources designed to help you and your church implement a gospel-centered, disciple-making culture.

We, along with our partners, are committed to resourcing the Church with the best possible content and training and will be adding new resources on a weekly basis.

The Saturate Online Community connects leaders and disciples to experienced leaders from all over the world who are available to interact on a variety of topics, offer shared experience and mentoring, as well as provide support and encouragement.