



Missional

A YOUTH BIBLE STUDY SERIES

★ The Episcopal Diocese of Texas



THE MEANING OF *Missional*

“Missional communities exist when we participate in God’s mission of reconciliation beyond the walls of the church through relationships and worship.”

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we believe that God is actively engaged in the world. Wherever you are, whomever you are, God is near. Jesus once said that whenever two or more of us are gathered together, He is there with us. This means that whether we are at school, at home, or hanging out with our friends, we can find peace in the fact that Jesus is with us. This Bible study is a tool to help build this awareness and invite others to engage your friends with the good news that God is at work reconciling the world.

Chances are there are a lot of people you know that are not involved in a Christian community. They may have a lot of assumptions about what happens at churches. Not all of that may be positive. This Bible study is intended to provide you some resources for starting a community on or off campus for your friends that are not sure about going to church yet. We call this kind of gathering a missional community. They are communities designed for those that cannot, or will not, participate in a traditional church environment.

MISSIONAL PROCESS

Missional communities have three traits:

Spiritual: They have a regular practice that is distinctly Christian, such as prayer or Bible study.

Relational: They are small groups so that each participant can know the others and build solid relationships.

Missional: They aren't closed groups; they are always thinking about how they might reach out others whether that be through service, friendship, or advocacy.

STRUCTURE

The Bible study is only 4 weeks long, which is just long enough for you to get started and find your own routine with those that participate. It's flexible so that you can use it at school, in someone's home or wherever!

NOTES

If you have decided that you want to start a missional community, then here are a few next steps:

- ★ Talk to the head of your congregation. Let them know what you are doing, and ask them to pray with you and for you as you begin. Check in with them before you start, during the first four weeks, and certainly after.
- ★ Find a mentor to review this content with you. Pray with them and for those you hope will participate. This may be a youth leader or an adult volunteer at your church.
- ★ Gather a group of friends, and ask them to commit to this process. You may want to start during Advent or Lent, and use this study as your practice during that season.
- ★ Agree on a time and place to meet with this group.
- ★ Feel free to reach out to your diocesan office for support. Contact information is found at the end of this study.

Going

WEEK 1

OPENING PRAYER

(Have each member of the group read a line of the prayer)

Everliving God, whose will it is
that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ:
Inspire our witness to him,
that all may know the power of his forgiveness
and the hope of his resurrection;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever, *Amen*.

(For the Mission of the Church; *Book of Common Prayer*, p 816)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- ★ Wonder together about change. What's scary about change? When is change and newness good and exciting? When is change and newness difficult?
- ★ Wonder together about new friendships and new relationships. What's good about creating new relationships? What's scary about creating new friendships?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scripture passage **three times** (or choose a passage from the list in the appendix). As you read, notice the significance of movement.

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?" (*Luke 8:22-25*)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Pose these questions to the group using a method called "mutual invitation": the leader gives their answer, then asks someone else in the group to respond. That person may answer the question, pass, or pass for now and return to the question at the end. Then the second person asks a third, until all people in the group have had a chance to respond.

- ★ After the first reading, what word or phrase stands out to you *personally*?
- ★ After the second reading, what word or phrase stand out to *your group together*?
- ★ After the third reading, how should your group *apply what you are discerning together*? What should be your *next steps on campus*?

PRAYER IN ACTION

Over the next week (or until you meet next time), commit to the practice of prayer walking through your school. The core of prayer walking is talking to God: ask God to show you what God sees and to know God's heart for your school. This can be done silently while going through your normal path on campus. Pray for God's blessings upon those you see in the hallways and spaces of your campus. If you aren't sure where to start, the words of the Lord's Prayer can be helpful: praying "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done..." for the individuals that you see and want to pray for. Take notice of anything that God shares with you during your prayer walks, and share those thoughts and prayers at your next meeting with your group. (Adapted from Thy Kingdom Come, <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/21>)

CLOSING PRAYER

Share any thanksgivings, blessings, and prayer requests that your group has with each other. Then close with the following prayer, having each group member read a line of the prayer.

O Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges, and universities and especially our school,
that they may be lively centers
for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom;
and grant that those who teach and those who learn
may find you to be the source of all truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, p 824)

Relationship

WEEK 2

OPENING PRAYER

(Have each member of the group read a line of the prayer)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son:
Look with compassion on the whole human family;
take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts;
break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love;
and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth;
that, in your good time,
all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(For the Human Family; *Book of Common Prayer*, p 815)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- ★ Share your prayer walk experience with your group. What did you notice? Was anything unexpected? What concerns did God share with you?
- ★ Spend some time picking 3-4 words that represent your core values from the following word cloud.
- ★ Share with the group which ones you picked and why those are so meaningful to you. How do you show the importance of those values in your relationships?



SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scripture passage **three times** (or choose a passage from the list in the appendix). As you read, notice any hesitations or difficulty in creating the new relationship in the story.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” (*Luke 19:1-10*)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Pose these questions using mutual invitation, like you did in week 1.

- ★ After the first reading, what word or phrase stands out to you *personally*?
- ★ After the second reading, what word or phrase stand out to *your group together*?
- ★ After the third reading, how should your group *apply what you are discerning together*? What should be your *next steps on campus*?

PRAYER IN ACTION

Over the next week (or until you meet next time), commit to introducing yourself to someone you haven't met before; possibly someone that seems alone or left out by others. Don't worry about how they respond. Be reminded that just as God sees—and loves each of us, the individuals you greet are not invisible. Refer to them by name.

Spend a few minutes in contemplation inviting everyone to pray about opportunities for new relationship in their life. Be as specific as you are comfortable. Feel free to use names or locations for desired relationships. Begin the next session by sharing what that experience was like.

CLOSING PRAYER

Share any thanksgivings, blessings and prayer requests that your group has with each other. Then close with the following prayer, having each group member read a line of the prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross
that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace:
So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you;
for the honor of your Name. *Amen.* (*BCP*, p 101)

Relationship

WEEK 3

OPENING PRAYER

(Have each member of the group read a line of the prayer)

God our Father, you see us growing up in an unsteady and confusing world:
Show us that your ways give more life than the ways of the world,
and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals.
Help us to take failure, not as a measure of our worth, but as a chance for a new start.
Give us strength to hold our faith in you,
and to keep alive our joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Adapted from For Young Persons, *BCP*, p 815)

INTRODUCTORY READING

Take time to reflect on a relationship that took an unexpected form in your life. Share with the group how this relationship evolved into something other than what you expected.

- ★ Wonder together whether you would have been as open to it if you had known what was in store.
- ★ Wonder about connections that are meaningful in your life. Ponder what other possible connections you still long for. Brainstorm together what might be a first possible step in creating those desired connections.

SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

Read the following scripture passage **three times** (or choose a passage from the list in the appendix). As you read, notice any hesitations or difficulty in creating the new relationship in the story.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him. (*John 4:7-15, 27-30*)

QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE

Pose these questions using mutual invitation, like you did in week 1.

- ★ After the first reading, what word or phrase stands out to you *personally*?
- ★ After the second reading, what word or phrase stand out to *your group together*?
- ★ After the third reading, how should your group *apply what you are discerning together*? What should be your *next steps on campus*?

PRAYER IN ACTION

Commit to sharing lunch with someone you notice eating alone. If comfortable, ask her or him about their faith journey or share your own with them.

Spend a few minutes in contemplation inviting everyone to pray about opportunities for new relationship in their life. Be as specific as you are comfortable. Feel free to use names or locations for desired relationships. Begin the next session by sharing what that experience was like.

CLOSING PRAYER

Share any thanksgivings, blessings and prayer requests that your group has with each other. Then close with the following prayer, having each group member read a line of the prayer.

O God, you have made of one blood
all the peoples of the earth,
and sent your blessed Son to preach peace
to those who are far off and to those who are near:
Grant that people everywhere
may seek after you and find you;
bring the nations into your fold;
pour out your Spirit upon all flesh;
and hasten the coming of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, p 100)

Gathering

WEEK 4

OPENING PRAYER

(Have each member of the group read a line of the prayer)

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself:

We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent

in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations.

We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love

has been gathered together by their prayers and labors,

and that in every place your servants call upon your Name;

for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours for ever. *Amen*

(For the Mission of the Church, *BCP*, p 838)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Reflect on a time when you ended up participating in a gathering of which you did not expect to be a part. Share what that experience was like for you.

- ★ When have you judged others when learning about who they hang out with? When we're being honest, what is the consequence of the choices we make about with whom and where we gather?
- ★ Brainstorm together the possible positive and negative consequences of the simple action of gathering. Why might it be important? What might be possible problems?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read the following scripture passage **three times** (or choose a passage from the list in the appendix). As you read, notice the gathering in the story.

When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

(*Luke 14:7-14*)

QUESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE

Pose these questions using mutual invitation, like you did in week 1.

- ★ After the first reading, what word or phrase stands out to you *personally*?

- ★ After the second reading, what word or phrase stand out to *your group together*?
- ★ After the third reading, how should your group *apply what you are discerning together*? What should be your *next steps on campus*?

PRAYER ACTION

The Eucharistic liturgy in which Episcopalians participate every Sunday is shaped by four actions from the Lord's Supper: **take, bless, break, give**. The bread and wine are taken from the earth and placed on the altar as an offering. On behalf of the people, the presider blesses the bread and wine and gives thanks to God for these gifts. The bread is physically and symbolically broken to remind us of the sacrifice Jesus made. Finally, the bread and wine are given to the people.

Wonder together what one action from this four-fold shape might become the focus for your next steps on campus. Wonder about the following questions for each part of the Eucharist:

- ★ **Take:** How could you *take* the gifts of the people gathered to be an offering at your school? What other resources are available to help you in your next steps? Who could you take alongside you in the journey? How could you learn more together about being an offering to your campus?
- ★ **Bless:** How could you, in community, *bless* your school? How could you give thanks? How could you continue to pray for your campus and those in it?
- ★ **Break:** Where do you see *brokenness* at your school? How could you gather together to organize to fix this brokenness? How could you help work towards God's justice at your school?
- ★ **Give:** How could you *give* your gifts back to your campus in service? How could you be Christ's hands and feet at school?

CLOSING PRAYER

Share any thanksgivings, blessings and prayer requests that your group has with each other. Then close with the following prayer, having each group member read a line of the prayer.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor,
and further us with your continual help;
that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy Name,
and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*BCP*, p 832)

Next Steps & Reflection

WEEK 5 (AND BEYOND)

CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You've taken the brave steps to participate in God's mission out in the world! Take some time to reflect before you continue ahead with missional community on your campus.

MEET WITH YOUR MENTOR/PRAYER PARTNER

- ★ Spend time in prayer asking questions about your experience. Listen to the Holy Spirit. What was positive? What was negative? What did you learn? Where are you feeling called to go from here?
- ★ What are your next steps? Where do you go from here? What is God telling you to do as a community next?

OPTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

If your group has discerned together the next steps you will take, great! Continue on that path, checking in with your mentor as you go forward. If not, consider taking one of these options:

- ★ Go through this four-week study again, picking different scriptures to study from the Appendix. Maybe invite new friends to join you this time.
- ★ Continue to study scripture together, but in another format. Ask your mentor for recommendations for formats and passages to study.
- ★ Gather together for Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, or Evening Prayer found in the *Book of Common Prayer*.
- ★ Go out to do one of the four-fold actions: take, bless, break, or give.
- ★ Go serve together as a group where there is a need at your school.
- ★ Advocate for a justice issue together that you discern is present on your campus.

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

Ask your mentor ways you can share the good news of your missional community with your home parish. You are doing good work being an ambassador of Christ!

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ... So we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE OPTIONS

Feel free to use whatever Bible translation you like: *NRSV, NIV, the Message, NLT, etc.*

Week 1: Going:

Luke 9:1-6, The Mission of the Twelve

Luke 10:1-12, The Mission of the Seventy

John 6:16-21, Jesus Walks on Water

Luke 24:13-35, The Road to Emmaus

Luke 9:28-26, The Transfiguration

Luke 14:25-34, The Cost of Discipleship

John 13:31-35, The New Commandment

Weeks 2 & 3: Relationships

Luke 1:39-45, Mary & Elizabeth

Luke 10:21-23, Jesus Rejoices

Luke 10:38-42, Mary and Martha

Luke 15:11-32, Parable of the Prodigal Father

John 3:1-15, Jesus and Nicodemus

John 11:1-44, Lazarus

John 14:1-14, the Trinity

Luke 22:54-52, Peter denies Jesus

Luke 9:18-20, Peter's declaration about Jesus

Luke 10:25-37, Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 15:1-10, Parables of the Lost Sheep & Coin

Luke 16:19-31, Lazarus and the Rich Man

John 4:1-21, 27-30 Jesus & Samaritan Woman

John 12:1-8, Mary anoints Jesus

John 21:15-19, Jesus and Peter

Week 4: Gathering

Luke 8:1-3, Women traveling with Jesus

Luke 9:57-62, Would-be Followers of Jesus

Luke 17:20-37, The Coming of the Kingdom

Luke 13:22-30, The Narrow Door

Luke 8:4-8, 11-15, Parable of the Sower

Luke 13:18-19, Parable of the Mustard Seed

Luke 22: 14-23, Institution of the Lord's Supper

John 6:1-14, Jesus Feeds the 5,000+

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact, Jason Evans, Missioner for Missional Communities at 281.536.7435 or visit epicenter.org/missional or Stephanie Townes, Youth Event Coordinator at 979.236.5478 or visit epicenter.org/youth.