

# Missional Community

LAUNCH CURRICULUM



This Book Belongs to:

Church Family,

The desire of The Austin Stone has always been to be a New Testament church existing for the supremacy of the name and purpose of Jesus Christ. This vision can only happen as we joyfully hear and obey God's Word, together in genuine, biblical community.

In this six-week curriculum, we're going to focus on how we pursue that kind of missional community. The six-week study that you are holding is rooted in the four core values of missional community life:

- × The Word
- × Prayer
- × Demonstrating the gospel
- × Declaring the gospel

We hope this study will clarify the purpose of missional communities: to exalt Jesus, to love one another, and to tell your neighbors and the world about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Additionally, we hope this tool helps our church family develop intentional, everyday-life rhythms.

May God's Holy Spirit help us to be white-hot in our affections for Jesus, and may our actions in everyday life demonstrate our passion for the Savior.

Grace and Peace,



Todd Engstrom  
Executive Pastor of Ministries

## How to use this curriculum:

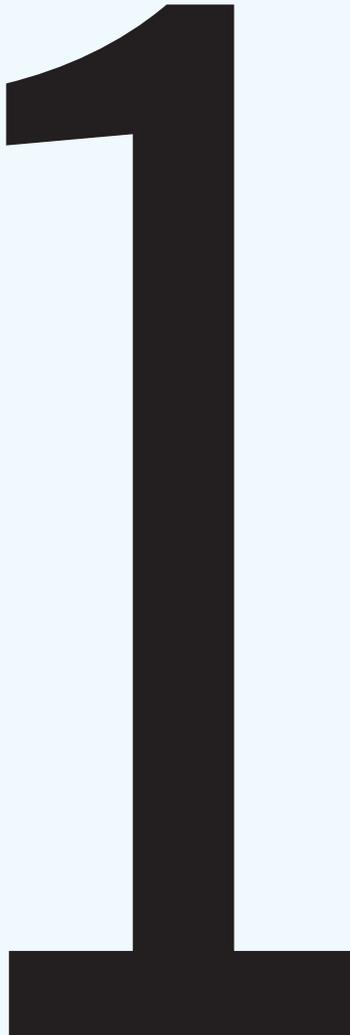
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- 1 This curriculum was written so that anyone can facilitate it with little or no preparation.
- 2 Start each study on time. Otherwise, you'll run out of time right when it's getting good.
- 3 Each study should last around 45 min. or less. Don't get bogged down. Provide opportunities for several people to give various answers before moving on.
- 4 Each paragraph should be read out loud to the whole group. If there is confusion, read the paragraph again and discuss it.
- 5 Each question should be asked out loud. Follow up questions should be discussed one at a time, so don't read all the questions aloud all at once.
- 6 If you're having trouble getting responses to questions, it can be helpful to break the group in half. Then discuss the questions and reconvene to report the answers.
- 7 It's okay if someone disagrees with something or someone, but disagree without being disagreeable. Keep in mind that this curriculum reflects the theology, vision, and mission of The Austin Stone.
- 8 There are many quotes from the book *Total Church* by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis. We've referenced this book often because we believe it is the best explanation for our vision of missional community. We recommend reading it and putting it into practice!
- 9 The last week will include a full meal (potluck-style) and a time of communion. You don't need to be a pastor or a priest to lead communion. If you feel uncertain on how to properly lead communion, just use the outline given in Week Six to help you facilitate this time with your people.

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# The Word

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## Introduction

The Bible is God's word and is foundational and formative for God's people. It is the first attribute of missional community. In tonight's study, we'll look at Psalm 1, a chapter that reveals the joy and benefit of personally committing to the word.

## Question

Name some celebrities (TV, movies, authors, etc.) who are recognized to be spiritually knowledgeable and connected. What kind of advice would you expect to receive from them about how to connect with God?

Let's look at what the Christian faith says about knowing God.

### Read the quote below:

*God reveals himself by his Spirit through his word. We do not meet God in the stillness: we meet him in his word. We are not nearer to God in a garden: we draw near to God through his word (Deut 30:14). It is Scripture breathed by the Spirit of God that is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." This is what makes us "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). And it is the word of God that brings hope and change to the human heart. It is the word of God that revives our souls.*

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* p.142

The Bible matters because it is the only place where we know for sure we are hearing from God.

# The Word

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## Read the Word

Read Psalm 1 out loud to the group.

### The Blessed

*<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

### The Wicked

*<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

### Final Verdict

*<sup>6</sup> for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

## Discuss the Text

1. How is the blessed (or happy) man described in vv. 1-3?
2. Verse 1 talks about three different things the blessed man avoids. What are they? How are they different? What are some specific examples of each?
3. Verse 2 is key in this psalm. What is the difference between delighting in God's word versus just reading God's word?
4. Describe the tree in v. 3. What do you love about big trees? What are

the benefits for a tree to be planted by streams of water? According to Psalm 1, how does a person become like this tree?

5. In vv. 4-5, how are the wicked described? What is chaff (rhymes with "staff"), and how does it characterize the life of a wicked person? How is it a contrast to the blessed man?
6. In v.6, what is God's final verdict for each group? In which group do you place yourself? Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21, and describe how one goes from being wicked to being righteous.
7. What other things in this passage stuck out to you?

## Apply the Truth

Someone read the following paragraphs out loud:

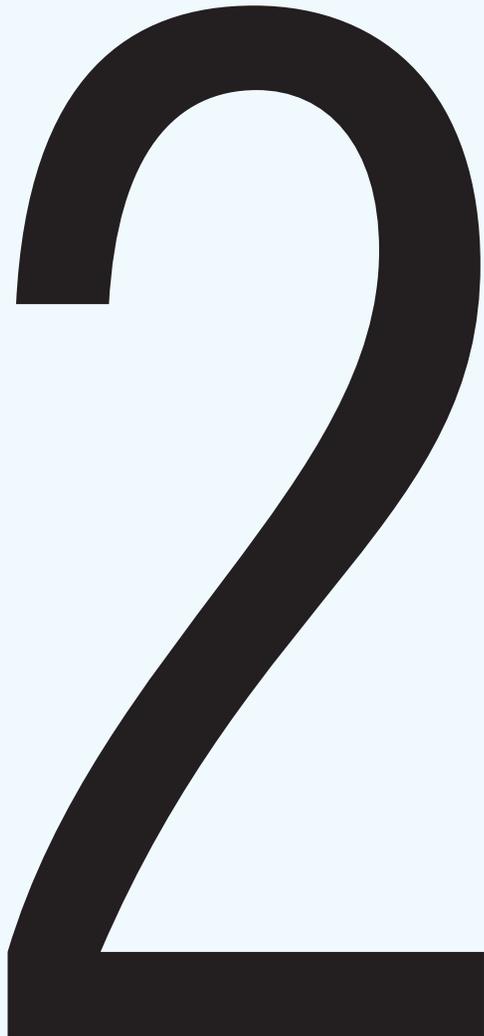
Psalm 1 is teaching us how a man or woman of God relates to God's word. Obeying Psalm 1 requires more than agreeing to attend a Bible study.

In Total Church, we read that "Meditation is not emptying your mind, but filling your mind with God's word." In missional communities, we want to seek God by meditating on the word of God. Primarily, we study it individually throughout the week, self-feeding using the REAP method (REAP resource available on The City). Then we meet together in Life Transformation Groups (LTGs) to hear what God is teaching and calling us to. LTGs are single-gender groups of two or three people that meet at times other than our missional community gatherings where we read the word, confess to one another, and pray together.

Without functioning LTGs, our group is not a missional community.

This means that large missional community meetings are not for





# Prayer

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## Introduction

Prayer is communication to God. God is a person, not an impersonal force. He wants us to relate to Him like a person. He speaks to us specifically through His word and we speak to Him when we pray, asking Him for all things. Because nothing that lasts can be done apart from Him, prayer is another attribute of missional community.

## Question

If you pray, what is the content of most of your prayers? What do you think would be the ingredients of a perfect prayer life?

Have someone read the quote below:

*Biblical spirituality is not a spirituality of silence; it is a spirituality of passionate petition. If we are engaged with the world around us, we will care about that world. We will be passionate about people's needs, our holiness, and God's glory. We will not be still in prayer.*

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* pp.147-48

## ACTS Prayer Exercise

See next page for chart.

## ACTS Prayer Exercise

As we see from the quote above, followers of Jesus speak to Him in many ways and at all times. Let's practice a very simple form of prayer together called the ACTS model. ACTS is an acronym that stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (meaning "to request").

Under each word is a list of Scripture passages and some empty space. Have different people look up the verses and read them aloud to the group. Then the group will discuss what each passage says about our prayers. Write these thoughts in the empty space. Make sure to discuss personal thoughts that you would include in the box. For example, what you personally adore God for, etc.

After each section, break into groups of 2-4 people, and let each person pray out loud (if they want) for a minute or two based on what was written (adoring, confessing, thanking, requesting). Then bring the group back together and repeat for each section.

### Adoration

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Psalm 90:2

Psalm 136:1

John 1:1,14

Romans 5:8

Romans 11:33

**Personal thoughts**

### Thanksgiving

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Psalm 147:8-9

John 6:44

Romans 8:28

2 Thessalonians 1:3

Hebrews 1:1-3

**Personal thoughts**

### Confession

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Psalm 51:5

Jeremiah 17:9

Romans 3:9-20

Romans 7:21-23-

**Personal thoughts**

### Supplication (making requests)

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Matthew 6:9-13

Romans 10:1

Ephesians 3:14-19

Philippians 2:12-13

**Personal thoughts**



# 3

## Demonstrating the Gospel

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### Introduction

This is the gospel: Jesus lived for us, died, and rose again. He did this to save His desperately needy people from their sins when they couldn't save themselves.

We demonstrate this gospel – this “good news” – when we know and meet needs. Yes, every person has needs, but we're especially talking about people who are living in some kind of poverty, experiencing serious lack, isolation, or powerlessness. Remember that poverty doesn't just mean financial poverty. You can have physical, emotional, social, and spiritual poverty. We care about meeting these needs because this brings attention to Jesus. Demonstrating the gospel is an attribute of missional community.

### Question

When have you received major help from somebody? What was that like? What makes it hard to receive help? What makes it hard to help others?

#### Read the quote below:

*Jesus' eating with sinners is a wonderful declaration of the riches of God's grace. But notice how this grace plays out in practice. It results in Jesus spending time with the despised and marginalized. It means Jesus has time for the needy. They are his priority. He does not focus on the professional classes, the lawyers, the doctors, the respectable middle classes. Such people are welcomed if they will associate with the ragtag group who make up the community of Jesus – after all, Luke himself is a doctor. But Jesus goes out of his way to welcome the poor, the marginalized, and the needy. And Jesus expects us to do the same.*

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, Total Church p.73

Let's see how Jesus explains this concept.

## Read the Word

Have someone read aloud this passage about giving mercy and help.

### Luke 10:25-37

<sup>25</sup> And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” <sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

## Discuss the Text

1. Somebody summarize this whole story without looking at it.
2. Now, fill in or clarify any details as a group.

3. According to this passage, what does God want from those who seek to please Him?
4. Break into two groups and each group make two lists: 1) List all the needs of the man who was beaten and robbed. 2) List everything it cost the Samaritan to meet the man’s needs.
5. After your smaller group discussion, reconvene to share your answers collectively.
6. How would you define a neighbor according to this story? How is this different from how we normally define a neighbor?
7. What might be some dangers of trying to help people without accurately knowing their needs? How do you accurately know someone’s needs?
8. What is Jesus requiring of those who follow Him?

## Apply the Truth

Someone read the following paragraphs out loud.

Jesus cares about meeting every need. In Luke 7, John the Baptist wasn’t quite sure what to make of Jesus, so he sent his disciples to ask Him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

Jesus answered, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” Jesus is basically saying, “Wherever the Messiah is reigning, you will see people being restored like this.” Even today, when we know and meet other peoples’ needs – their physical, social, material, and emotional needs – we are telling the world, “The King is reigning here among God’s people!”



# 4

## Declaring the Gospel

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### Introduction

The message about Jesus is the gospel, which means good news! Good news is fundamentally different from good advice. Good advice declares what you should do to help yourself. Good news declares what someone has done for you. Helpless sinners don't need good advice; they need good news. Because Christianity has the best news, declaring this news together is another attribute of missional community.

### Question

Besides Jesus, what topic(s) do you genuinely want people to care about and consider? Why? Does this topic come up much? How do you try to bring it up? Think of topics you normally get excited to talk about and give your opinion about.

### Read the quote below:

*Francis of Assisi is alleged to have said, "Preach the gospel always; if necessary use words." That may be a great medieval sound bite, but it falls short of what the Bible teaches about evangelism...There is a tendency in some quarters today to promote a kind of evangelism without proclamation. Acts of service are done or people are invited to experience Christian worship. But without words of explanation these are like signposts pointing nowhere or, worse still, signposts pointing to our good works. The gospel is good news – a message to be proclaimed, a truth to be taught, a word to be spoken, and a story to be told.*

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* p. 54

Communicating the actual message of the gospel is crucial! Let's see how the Bible makes this clear.

## Read the Word & Discuss the Text

Read the passages out loud and discuss them, section by section.

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

1. Why do you think Paul would need to remind Christians of the details of the gospel?
2. List and try to explain each different element of the gospel that Paul mentions.
3. Why is this good news?

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### Romans 10:13-14

<sup>13</sup> "...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

1. What does it mean to "call on the name of the Lord?" What does this mean for those who don't call on His name?
2. What is Paul saying about the way the gospel must spread?
3. If this is true, how should this challenge the way you think about engaging friends who don't believe?

### Context for Acts 4:19-20

When Peter and John were dragged in front of the highest Jewish court, they were commanded "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

### Acts 4:19-20 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

1. What reasons, external and internal, might have intimidated the apostles into silence about Jesus?
2. What motives overcame these intimidations, causing them to speak?
3. Break into two groups to discuss what reasons, external and internal, intimidate you into silence about Jesus. What motives help you to overcome intimidation and speak?
4. Reconvene and share your answers as a whole group.

## Apply the Truth

Someone read the following paragraphs out loud.

Jesus began His ministry by calling His disciples with the words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus' final words as He left His disciples were, "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." Jesus cares about declaring the gospel!

This is why Charles Spurgeon said, "If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself. Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor." To love Jesus means that we think often about Him and talk about Him with people.



# 5

## Defining Missional Community

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### Introduction

The values of word, prayer, demonstrating, and declaring the gospel are lived out in missional community. Since we're aiming at obeying God, it helps to practice these things together often. But we haven't yet put the whole missional community picture together.

So, now it's time to answer the question, "What is a missional community?" Here is a simple definition:

1. A community of Christians,
2. on mission with God in obedience to the Holy Spirit,
3. who demonstrate tangibly and declare creatively the gospel of Jesus Christ
4. to a pocket of people.

### Question

What small community has had the greatest impact on your life, for good or for ill? What are some reasons that it was so powerful?

Read the quote below:

*Before they are preachers, leaders or church planters, the disciples are to be lovers! This is the test of whether or not they have known Jesus. This remains the case today: this cross-love is the primary, dynamic test of whether or not we have understood the gospel word and experienced its power...It is our cross-love for each other that proclaims the truth of the gospel to a watching and skeptical world. Our love for one another, to the extent that it imitates and conforms to the cross-love of Jesus for us, is evangelistic.*

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* pp. 56-7

Knowing, accepting, loving, and serving folks in our missional community plays a major role in our mission to demonstrate and declare the gospel. Let's see how this all works together.

## Read the Word and Discuss the Text

Read the passages out loud to the group and discuss them, section by section.

### Acts 2:41-47

*41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

1. What words would you use to describe this community's love and commitment to each other?
2. How does the community in this text specifically live out each aspect of missional community spelled out in the definition above?
3. Break into two groups and make two lists: 1) List the things you think you'd love about this kind of community. 2) List the things you think would be hard about having community like this. 3) Reconvene to share your answers collectively.
4. In v.47, what are the results of this community's life together? How is this different from most church small groups you've attended or heard about before?

### John 13:34-35

*"34 A new commandment I [Jesus] give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

1. According to this verse, what happens when Christians love each other? How do you think this works?

In Total Church, we read that, "Mission must involve not only contact between unbelievers and individual Christians, but between unbelievers and the Christian community. We want to build relationships with unbelievers. But we also need to introduce people to the network of relationships that make up that believing community so that they see Christian community in action."

### Ephesians 4:31-32

*31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

1. This short excerpt comes from a longer section of Ephesians 4 where Paul is teaching the Ephesian church how to live in community. How will obeying these verses benefit a community?
2. Why is it so important to think about how Jesus forgave us when we're trying to forgive and accept others in our community? Why would a whole community with this mindset be a powerful witness?

## Apply the Truth

Someone read the following paragraphs out loud.

A missional community is, first and foremost, a community of people. It's not a weekly event any more than your family is. You have family meetings, but your family is the people. Your missional community is your community of people, not your meetings. This community exists to love God and love people.



## NEXT WEEK **Week 6**

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We will be sharing a meal and taking communion together. Talk about and volunteer for meal logistics at this time. You will need to budget at least 2 hours for the meal and the whole study.



Main dish  
.....

Side  
.....

Side  
.....

Salad  
.....

Dessert  
.....

Drinks  
.....

Plain bread

for communion  
.....

Wine or juice

for communion, group decision  
.....

# 6

## Celebration, Communion, & Covenant

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### Introduction

This is the last week of the Vision Series Curriculum. We've met at least six times, so now let's celebrate what God's done in our time together. There's no better way to celebrate than with a meal. In the Bible, Jesus does great things when He shows up to meals, and we know that He is in fact here with us now through the Holy Spirit. So, let's eat and have a good time. Afterward, we'll take communion together and talk.

### Scripture Reading and Blessing

Psalm 104 is a celebration of God's goodness and power to sustain all creation and provide for every living thing.

Someone read these selected verses from Psalm 104 and then pray for our meal together.

*<sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

*O LORD my God, you are very great!  
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,  
<sup>2</sup> covering yourself with light as with a garment,  
stretching out the heavens like a tent.*

*<sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the livestock  
and plants for man to cultivate,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth  
<sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the heart of man,  
oil to make his face shine  
and bread to strengthen man's heart.*

<sup>21</sup> *The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.*  
<sup>22</sup> *When the sun rises, they steal away  
and lie down in their dens.*  
<sup>23</sup> *Man goes out to his work  
and to his labor until the evening.*

<sup>27</sup> *These all look to you,  
to give them their food in due season.*  
<sup>28</sup> *When you give it to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.*  
<sup>29</sup> *When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath, they die  
and return to their dust.*  
<sup>30</sup> *When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,  
and you renew the face of the ground.*

<sup>31</sup> *May the glory of the Lord endure forever;  
may the LORD rejoice in his works,*

## Discussion During the Meal

- What have you learned in the past 6 weeks about somebody else in the group?
- What is one fun memory you have from the last 6 weeks?
- Share something that you learned in the past 6 weeks from our times together. We've studied:
  - Word
  - Prayer
  - Demonstrating the gospel
  - Declaring the gospel
  - What is a Missional Community

## Communion

**Have the bread out and the wine or juice poured into one cup.**

The death and resurrection of Jesus for our salvation are at the very center of our faith. It's very great news! Paul says that "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Taking communion is for those who are "all in" for Jesus. So, we're going to take communion together and proclaim what He's done by dying and rising for us.

### Read 1 Corinthians 11

<sup>23</sup> "...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

1. Pass the bread around. Break a piece off and hold that piece.
2. Let's have a few people very briefly say one sin of theirs that they are amazed that Jesus paid the penalty for.

### Read 1 Corinthians 11

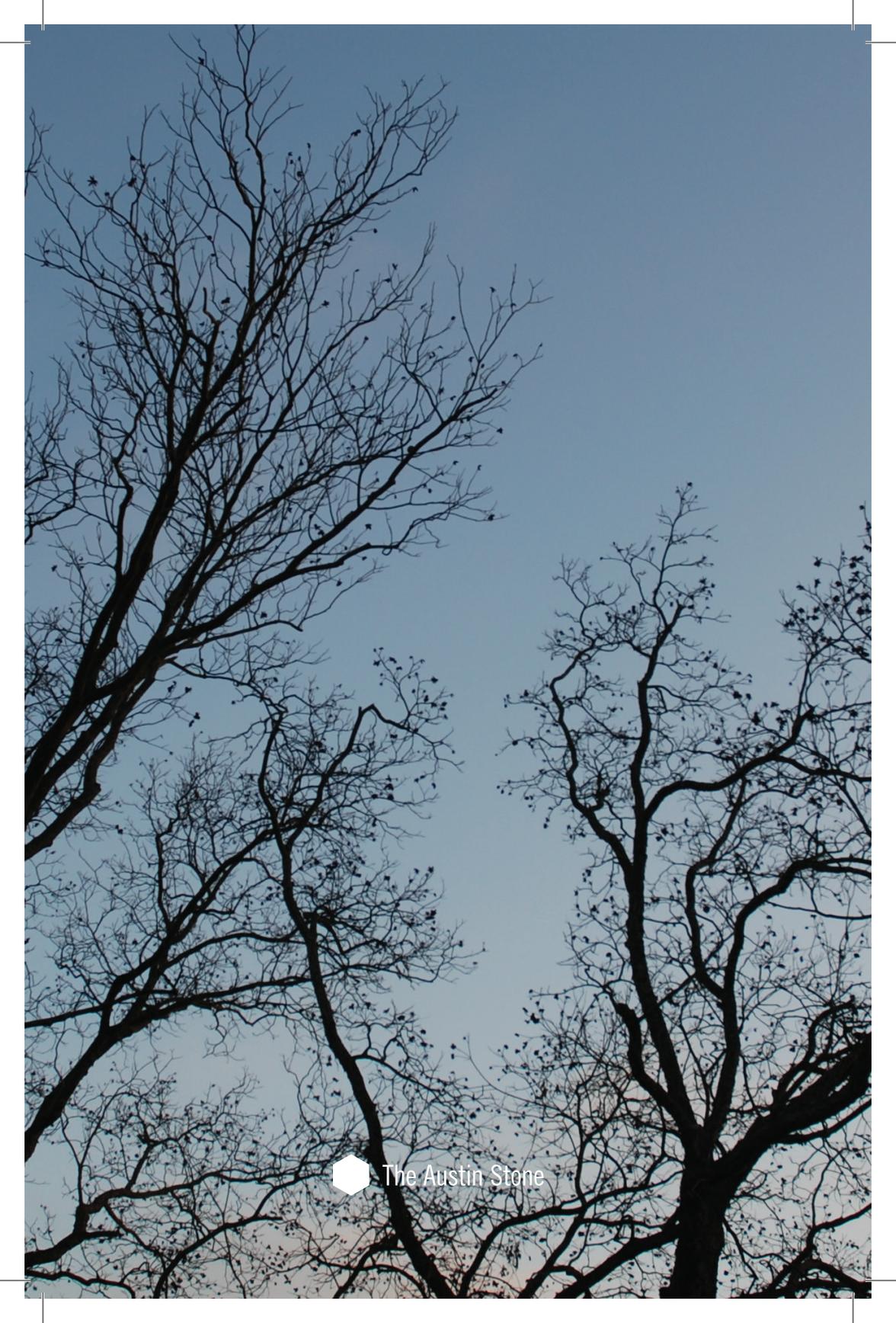
<sup>25</sup> "In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

1. Let's have a few people very briefly say one thing they love about being fully adopted into God's family because of Jesus.
2. Pass the cup around. Dip your piece of bread into it and eat.
3. Someone conclude with a prayer of thanks to God for Jesus.

## What's Next



 The Austin Stone



The Austin Stone