



THE AUSTIN STONE
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Vision Series Small Groups

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

**WE ARE THE CHURCH,
*TOGETHER***

MY SMALL GROUP'S CONTACT INFO

NAME	HOME PHONE	EMAIL
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Vision Series: We Are The Church, *Together*

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sept. 23 1 Vision Series INTRO	24	25	26	27	28	29
Sept. 30 2 WORSHIP CHRIST	Oct. 1	2	3 <i>1st Wed. Prayer: 7pm</i>	4	5	6
Oct. 7 3 LIVE IN COMMUNITY	8	9	10	11	12	13
Oct. 14 4 GET TRAINED ***** <i>Small Group Host/Leader Lunch 12:30pm - Cafeteria</i>	15	16	17	18	19	20 <i>Family Reunion: @ The Quarries</i>
Oct. 21 5 MAKE DISCIPLES	22	23	24	25	26	27
Oct. 28 6 CELEBRATION	29	30	31	Nov. 1	2	3 <i>Connection Event</i>

Foreword

Our God is a missionary God. Think about it – we are the church because of the mission of the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. There is church (us) because our God is on mission, not vice versa. We join with Him, for His purposes and glory, in our city and around the world. **So get excited** – the purpose of this Vision Series curriculum is to help create and nurture a hunger and passion to be on mission with God. **Be encouraged** – we have support – there are dozens and dozens of small groups (*missional communities*) throughout the city of Austin, all who desire to seek out God and be used as He grows His kingdom. **Get ready** – the following three objectives provide the foundation for developing Christ-centered small group communities:

1. ***Dig deep into the Word of God***

Tremendous spiritual power is experienced when a group wrestles with not only the meaning of a passage of Scripture, but also its purpose for their lives. This curriculum is organized into six lessons, each of which revolve around Biblical passages. This interactive study encourages group discussion and practical applications of Scripture.

2. ***Build community***

No person is intended to live in isolation. The Bible speaks nothing of *Lone Ranger* faith; and more than 50 times in the New Testament, God speaks of a "one another" type faith. One great benefit of group life is that it provides us with a practical laboratory in which to experience New Testament community – the type of community to which God calls us.

3. ***Live like a New Testament Church... a church on mission***

We will worship Christ, live in community, get trained for ministry, and make disciples...together. We will be filled with awe at the many things God will do with and through our small group. We will join together, united in Christ Jesus. We will share with each other and give to the needy. We will share meals in our homes and meet together with sincerity of hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. We will rejoice, knowing the Lord will add to those being saved.

This curriculum incorporates several aspects of Christian life to which we are called, including Worshipping Christ, Living in Community, Getting Trained, and Making Disciples. Also included is an opportunity for us to celebrate what God will do throughout this Vision Series.

Prepare: To help create and nurture a hunger and passion to be on mission with God, we need to seek Him out. Believe that God has called us to join this group. He has put our group together – every member in our group is here as a result of His call on them. He desires to use every person in our group for His glory – we believe that every person in our group can be used to bless His kingdom, all for His glory.

This curriculum can be used to help understand, communicate, and help us to fully realize how God plans to use us as He grows His kingdom. Here are a few ways we can put ourselves before the Lord, to prepare our hearts and minds for the work He will do with and through our missional, small group communities:

- Seek Him out in passionate prayer
- Humble ourselves before Him. See us as nothing, and know He is everything.
- Seek total reliance upon Him, believing that we can do nothing without Him.
- Recognize that He does not need to use us to grow *His* church, but He desires our being on mission with and for Him.

Disclaimer: Use this guide as the Holy Spirit of God allows. When He moves the group toward something slightly different or deeper, follow His lead. Example – if someone in our group does not know Jesus, and it's clear the Spirit is drawing that person to Himself, we will put on hold the discussion and pray over that person, if the Spirit leads in that way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

My Small Group's Contact Info	iii
Calendar	iv
Forward.....	v
Introduction to the Vision Series	2

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

Session 1: Vision Series Intro & Overview.....	4
Session 2: Worship Christ	8
Session 3: Live in Community.....	14
Session 4: Get Trained	18
Session 5: Make Disciples.....	22
Session 6: Celebration!	28

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Group Agreement.....	30
Small Group Calendar	31
Missional Health Assessment	32
Missional Health Plan.....	33
Small Group Prayer and Praise Report	34
Sharing My Story.....	35
My Spheres of Relationships.....	37
Partnership	38
Memory Verses.....	39

INTRO TO THE VISION SERIES

God is about to change our lives. Studying His Word and being on mission with Him will impact us in ways we can't imagine.

We're going to use that phrase a lot in this group experience: "on mission". When we use the word "missional," that is what it means – to be "on mission" with God. To be missional starts with knowing God's mission from the very beginning. The words *missions* and *missional* share a common ancestor: *mission*, which means "to send off." When Jesus gave us the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), he sent his followers off on a specific mission.

In John 20:19–23, Jesus welded the heart of missions with the heart of God when he said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Christ the Lord is telling his followers—you and me included—that he is sending us to others for exactly the same reason and purpose as he was sent.

Focusing on God's mission produces believers who are being sent *wherever they are* and *wherever they go*. This is missional at its core: God has a mission; God sent Jesus to fulfill that mission, and the Holy Spirit to empower that mission. Christ has placed that mantle of mission on every believer who follows him. Every believer individually and the church collectively embody the presence of Jesus in this world—we are his hands and feet.¹

We'll use this study guide as a reference to help us seek out God's will for us to be *on mission, together*, with Him. The format of each session follows:

LIVE IN COMMUNITY – The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate community with God and His family. The questions in this section are designed to help us learn about each other and grow together.

GET TRAINED for ministry – Deep understanding of the Bible and living out Scripture will impact greatly our lives. This section includes passages of Scripture that we can wrestle through, talk about, and apply to our lives. It will help renew the mind and stir the heart so we can serve the Body. In fact, we provide the opportunity to grow deeper in our walks with God by developing memorization of Scripture. Specific memory verses are provided in this section.

Training exists so that we can serve. Nothing is more fulfilling than using our God-given gifts to serve and help meet the needs of others in God's family. This section will help make that desire a reality. We will be encouraged to discover our unique shapes and will be challenged to take steps to serve those inside and outside our group.

MAKE DISCIPLES – The thought of sharing our faith can be scary. However, God desires to use us to reach out to others for Christ. The Make Disciples section is designed to give us practical, manageable steps for sharing Christ daily.

WORSHIP CHRIST – We were created to glorify God. In each small group session, we will have the opportunity to pray, surrender our hearts to God, and express our worship to Him. Pray that God would give us a passion for Christ during this time.

Preparation for Next Week. This section is provided to elicit thought, prayer, and study throughout the week. He is calling us out, and we will seek to make much of Him throughout the week.

¹ Adapted from "All Places Are Mission Fields" - a Bible Study for CTI by Rich Tatum

WEEK 1 – Vision Series Intro & Overview

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 20 Minutes

At our group’s first gathering, let us go around the circle and introduce ourselves.

Here are some guiding questions for our initial discussion:

1. What is your Austin Stone experience? How did you find the church? For how long have you attended? In what way(s) are you currently connected at The Austin Stone?
2. What led you to become a part of a Vision Series Small Group?
3. What would you like to see God do in and through your life during the next six weeks in this small group?

GET TRAINED 45 Minutes

Memory Verse:

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (NASB).

Read:

Realize the Potential Impact:

We’ve estimated that there are approximately 600,000 people in Austin who do not attend church and possibly countless numbers who don’t love and follow Jesus. It will take approximately 60-80,000 small groups to reach the lost in our city! Accordingly, many of our future small group leaders are not yet believers, not to mention all the people in those groups. That means that we must focus on prayer, evangelism, and simple training to find the majority of our future group leaders and members (Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:2).

Seek out the NEW TESTAMENT (NT) MODEL

The Book of Acts details the unlimited, spontaneous expansion of the church. It grows like the mustard seed, starting small before exploding into a giant tree. In fact, in the Book of Acts, God used small groups of people on mission together to reach the different cities – New Testament believers met together, “house to house.”

Read together through Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:4, Acts 5:14, Acts 5:42, Acts 6:7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

[Q] How do you feel about knowing the great need for God in our city?

[Q] Understanding this need, in what ways do you feel that the Holy Spirit of God could use you to help this group be on mission with God in Austin and beyond?

[Q] There were barriers to being on mission with God together, even in the New Testament Church (Acts 20:28-31, Acts 21:27). What do you think are some barriers in our culture and society to living on mission with God together?

[Q] What do you feel are some personal barriers for you to being on mission with God and a small community of people?

[Q] How could those barriers affect us as a group being on mission with God together? What is it about me, my schedule, my season in life, my job, my insecurities, my personality, and so forth that might keep me from truly investing in God's mission through this group?

MAKE DISCIPLES..... 15 Minutes

Read together through the following verses:

Acts 1:8 – but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Acts 2:46-47 – Everyday, they continued to meet together in the Temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and they ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

[Q] If we want to look, be, act, and pray like the church in Acts 2:42-47, what must occur in our small group?

[Q] How might it look like to reach out into our circle of friends, families, co-workers, and others within our circles of influence to show them God's love?

[Q] Think about just one amazing thing God has done in our lives. How might we show His glory by sharing that simple example with someone who does not know Jesus?

WORSHIP CHRIST..... 15 Minutes

Prayer is a key foundation for the New Testament Church (Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Acts 4:24, Acts 6:2-3, Acts 12:12, Acts 20:36). In the large group, or breaking into small groups of three or four, seek out the Father and pray. Praise Him and give Him thanks. Pray also that the Holy Spirit of God will use these small groups throughout Austin as they meet throughout this week. The following verses in the Book of Acts offer examples of the Holy Spirit working in the New Testament church. Read and pray over some or all of these verses, and together ask God to use your group to be on mission for His purposes.

Using Acts 1:8 as a guide, pray that God would ignite this small group with a passion to be witnesses for His name.

GET TRAINED *for ministry* 15 Minutes

Training can take many shapes and forms. Encouragement and friendly accountability can help us to get trained and remain faithful throughout the week. Take some time to find a reading partner – men with men and women with women. Check in with your accountability partner throughout the week to encourage each other’s reading and to share what God is teaching you.

BEFORE WE LEAVE

1. Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. Fill out the *Small Group Calendar* on page **31** together, noting where you will meet each week, who will facilitate, and who will provide a meal or snack. Note special events, activities, or days off as well. The Group Host/Leader will be very appreciative and everyone will have a lot more fun together. This would be a great role for someone to coordinate for the group.
2. Ensure that every person is on the Group Contact Info Sheet, or refer to the Group Toolbox online.
3. Read through and sign the Small Group Agreement on page 29.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT TIME

1. During the Vision Series, you might begin sensing a calling and desire to partner with The Austin Stone. To find out more about partnership, see the Partnership blurb on page **38**.
2. Accountability partners and reading of and praying over Scripture – encourage each other to pursue His truth.
3. Study this week's memory verse and be prepared to share it with someone at the next meeting. All of our memory verses are from the *NASB*. A simple way to do this is to hand-write the verse 5-8 times on a piece of paper. This simple practice will help grow our heart-level knowledge in God’s Word.

Memory Verse:

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (NASB).

4. Read and pray over the Scripture references in this document.
5. Most people want to live a healthy, balanced life. A regular medical check-up is a good way to measure health and spot potential problems. In the same way, a spiritual check-up is vital to your spiritual well-being. The *Missional Health Assessment* on page **32** was designed to give you a quick snapshot or pulse of your spiritual health. Take 3-4 minutes alone to complete the *Missional Health Assessment*. After answering each question, tally your results. Next week, you’ll pair up with your accountability partner, and briefly share one element that is going well and one that needs a little work.

WEEK 2 – Worship Christ, together

Memory Verse

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Mark 12:30 (NASB)

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 10 Minutes

Pair up with your accountability partner, and briefly review your results from the *Missional Health Assessment*. Share what was most enlightening about going through the *Assessment*. Also share one element that is going well and one that needs a little work.

GET TRAINED 30 Minutes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If your group has eight or more people you may want to break into circles of 3-4 people for greater participation and deeper discussion.

[Q] Take a few minutes to talk about the sermon from Sunday. Was there anything that was said that God used to grow, stretch or challenge you?

[Q] When you hear the word "worship," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Have someone read aloud Romans 12:1. How does this verse define worship?

Read together the following:

Realize the Potential Impact of His Mightiness

Revelation 4:8-11

8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

FOR MEDITATION

Spend some time thinking about the God who created the universe, the God who formed us out of nothing and into His likeness, in light of these verses. Read again through these verses and ponder the greatness of God.

Read through the following together:

Understand what we’re facing. Focus on the self is one potential barrier to joining together to pursue God’s will for growing His church. We are on mission, together, with God, in a very me-centric society. Changing our focus from ourselves and putting our focus on Christ will help us to seek Him out more fully. “It is the soul that finds God to be everything that is so filled with His presence there is no place for self. So alone can the promised be fulfilled: ‘The pride of men brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted that day (Isaiah 2:11)’ (Murray, p.69).”

[Q] Talk briefly about how pride and how the focus on the self can deter us from being used for God’s mission.

[Q] Specifically, what about you will you need to give up to live for and look more like Christ?

WORSHIP CHRIST 10 Minutes

Get back together as a large group. *(In this next exercise, your group will need their REAP Journals. If they do not have a REAP Journal, have them use a blank sheet of paper and follow along.)*

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26

“What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching... Let all things be done for edification.”

“When” we come together, not “if” we come together, we should have something to share with others. We cannot share what we do not have. So it is important to come to group having spent time with Jesus through His Word. In fact, this is one way to worship Christ - through reading, examining and applying the word of God. One way to do this is through the REAP method. Let’s review the REAP method now:

Step 1

Find the Scriptures for today in the Bible Reading Plan (at the front of the REAP Journal)

Step 2

Read the passages. Read with an open heart and Jesus will give you words of encouragement, direction and correction. (2 Tim 3:16)

Step 3

When Jesus gives you a life lesson, turn to a fresh page in your “Daily Pages” to record what He has just shown you.

- Read today’s Scriptures. **(Read)**
- Write today’s date.
- Give your lesson a title.
- Write down the main Scripture.
- Write down what you see in the Scriptures. **(Examine)**
- Write how you will be different today because of what you have just read. **(Application)**
- Write out your prayer. **(Prayer)**

Step 4

Turn to the Table of Contents. Write your entry by date, Scripture, topic, title, and page.

Step 5

Conclude your daily devotional time by turning to the Prayer List and then pray for what you have written.

Remember

The **REAP Journal** is designed to serve you in growth with Christ. You can be flexible in how you use it, but be sure to develop a healthy habit of spending time daily with the Lord.

Some have asked, “When is the best time for my devotions? In the mornings or evening?”

My answer to that is, “The best time is when you’re at your best!” If you’re a morning person, do your devotions in the morning. If you’re an evening person, do your devotions at night. The bottom line is: **“Jesus deserves your best, so give Him the best part of your day!”**

REAP Example

Read: 1 Kings 8-9; Acts 26

Key Texts: 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 26:18

(OT) “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

(NT) “to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Examine:

(OT) Solomon builds the temple and brings the ark of the covenant into the holy of holies, but realizes that God cannot be contained by a house made with human hands.

(NT) Paul defends himself and gives his testimony to Agrippa. Jesus has chosen him to open the eyes of the Jews and Gentiles.

Application:

(OT) I will not treat God as if He’s only present in a church building on Sundays but acknowledge Him to be everywhere.

(NT) Give my testimony to someone this week and share Christ.

Prayer:

God, help me to know you’re everywhere, and help me to share Jesus with someone this week. Amen.

GET TRAINED 30 Minutes

Spend some time in groups of 3 or 4 going through the REAP method together using Acts ch. 2 as the text. Share your insights from your time doing REAP.

WORSHIP CHRIST 15 Minutes

(If you have time remaining in your group, do this exercise. If not, go through this on your own.)

This week we have looked at worshipping Christ through the Word. Let's also look at worshipping Christ through prayer. In preparation for the prayer time this week, discuss the following questions:

1. Romans 12:2 says we should not conform to the values of the world in which we live. What are some of the subtle ways in which you are vulnerable to accepting the values of the world's culture?
2. What barriers keep you from dedicating your whole life to God?
3. As you begin your time of prayer, follow the ensuing ACTS prayer guide:
 - A = Adoration: spend time adoring God for who He is
 - C = Confession: spend time confessing sin
 - T = Thanksgiving: spend time thanking God for what He has done
 - S = Supplication: spend time petitioning God for others and for His glory to be made known in this city and around the world.
 - Express, in short one-sentence prayers, your thankfulness for who He is. Ask God to show you areas you need to surrender to Him. Pray for everyone in the group to live a life totally devoted to God and His mission. Be sure to write the requests on the prayer and praise sheets on page 34.

BEFORE WE LEAVE

1. Plan a time in the next 3-4 weeks for your group to share a meal together. Get out your calendars and pick the date.
2. As a group, take a few minutes to discuss an in-reach ministry you could serve in together to meet a need in the church (Setup, Tear-down, Welcome Team, Parking, KidStuff volunteers, childcare for other Small Groups, etc.). Choose an activity from the list provided. Appoint a leader to organize this activity for the group.
3. Remember, this week is 1st Wednesday Prayer. The location is TBD. It is at 7pm. Check the website for more details: www.austinstone.org It would be a great opportunity to Worship Christ together as a small group.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT TIME

1. Accountability partners and reading of and praying over Scripture – encourage each other to pursue His truth.
2. Review this week's memory verse:

Memory Verse

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Mark 12:30 (NASB)

3. Read and pray over the Scriptures in this document.
4. Pray for the group member needs you wrote down on the prayer and praise list.

References:

Murray, Andrew (2001). *Humility, the Journey Toward Holiness*. Bethany House Publishers. Bloomington, Minnesota.

New American Standard Bible.

WEEK 3 – Live in Community, together

Memory Verse:

Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (NASB).

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 45 Minutes

From the past week, discuss with each other what God has done or revealed:

1. Take a few minutes to talk about the sermon from Sunday. Was there anything that was said that God used to grow, stretch or challenge you?
2. Talk about your time this past week in the Word. What did that look like? What did you experience as a result of reading and praying over Scripture? Would you describe your reading and prayer over Scripture an act of your worship to our Lord? Why/why not?
3. Describe your accountability experience this week. How did you encourage your accountability partner(s) to read and pray over Scripture? How were you encouraged by your partner(s)? What might you do this week to improve on your encouragement of your partner(s)? How did you praise and thank God (worship) as a result of the encouragement you experienced during your accountability?

Read together through the following verses:

- Acts 2:42 – ...And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
 - Acts 2:46 – ... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,
 - Acts 20:7 – On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.
 - Acts 20:11 – Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate.
 - Acts 27:35 – After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.
1. In reading these truths, talk with each other about the importance of eating together. How might that encourage unity?
 2. How might eating together be a demonstration of unity and community?

“Rejoice with those who rejoice” Exercise:

Read the following verses together:

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **Rejoice with those who rejoice**, and weep

with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”
Romans 12:9-16 (NASB)

Break into groups of 3 or 4 and have each person share a highlight from the last week or month. What is something that God did that made you happy or joyous over the last week to month? Share that with the group of 3 to 4 people. After each person is done sharing, the group should encourage that person with something like, “Way to go!” “That’s great!” or “I’m so excited for you!” Be enthusiastic about rejoicing with the person who is rejoicing!

GET TRAINED 20 Minutes

The Christian life involves more than believing; it also involves belonging. God wants you to be a part of a community to build relationships that strengthen the mission that God has for your group.

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:14,15. In the Bible, the church is described as a household or family. What characteristics of healthy families would be true of healthy churches or groups?
2. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:10, *“If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone, when they fall are in real trouble.”* Can you share a time in your life when other believers came to your assistance, brought you comfort, or met a need?
3. Read through the following “One Another” verses:
 - (John 13:34-35 NASB) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - (Rom. 15:7 NASB) Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
 - (Eph 4:32 NASB) Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
 - (Col 3:13 NASB) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
 - (Col 3:16 NASB) Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
 - (1 Th 5:11 NASB) Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.
 - (1 Th 5:15 NASB) See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.
 - (Heb 3:13 NASB) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - (Heb 10:24-25 NASB) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
 - (James 5:16 NASB) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
 - (1 Peter 3:8 NASB) To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;
 - (1 Peter 4:9 NASB) Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

What the church looks like when it practices the One Anothers:

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling all their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising GOD and having favor with all the people And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47 NASB)

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] Which ones stand out to you and why? Which ones are your strengths/weaknesses?
- [Q] How could our group live out these “One Another” verses?

BEFORE WE LEAVE

1. As a way to affirm and encourage, take a few minutes to do the "hot seat" exercise. Select an individual in your group and write his or her name at the top of a piece of paper. Then pass it around the room and have each group member write, "This is what I've learned to appreciate about you," or, "This is what I've learned to value in you," followed by something specifically appreciated or valued. Only a phrase or one sentence is needed. When the sheet has been passed all the way around, have one group member read it aloud to the individual.
2. Review your In-reach project: Consider a need your group can meet together within the church, and plan your small group's involvement.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT TIME

1. Read, reflect, and meditate on Romans 8:28-38 this week.
2. Read John 15:1-8. What lessons can we learn about our spiritual growth from this passage? When have you felt most connected to the vine?
3. Review the memory verse for this week:

Memory Verse:

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NASB).

WEEK 4 – GET TRAINED for ministry

Memory Verse

*“As each one has received a special gift,
employ it in serving one another as good stewards
of the manifold grace of God.”*

1 Peter 4:10 (NASB)

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 10 Minutes

Break into small groups or pair up with your partner and take time to check-in on how you are doing with this group experience. Look again at the *Missional Health Assessment* on page 32.

[Q] How would you assess yourself in light of what you have been learning and experiencing?

[Q] Take a few minutes to talk about the sermon from Sunday. Was there anything that was said that God used to grow, stretch or challenge you?

GET TRAINED 30 Minutes

Read Ephesians 4:11-16 as a group.

We become salt and light to others as God grows us.

[Q] According to these verses, what is the goal of equipping? How do we grow?

Read Mark 12:30 as a group.

The goal of getting trained is to stir the heart, soul and mind to love God and people.

[Q] What does it look like to love God with all your heart? What role do your emotions play in pursuing Christ?

Read Romans 12:1-2 as a group.

[Q] What does it look like to love God with your entire mind? How can you form a proper understanding of who God is? How can you pursue this as a small group?

Read John 13:14 as a group

[Q] What does it look like to love God with all your strength? How can you be equipped to serve like Christ?

Read Ephesians 4:11-16 as a group

[Q] What is the result of equipping the saints?

Read Philippians 2:12, 13 together:

"... work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you to will and to work for his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12,13 (NASB)

From Philippians 1:12,13, you discover that it is your responsibility to develop the salvation you have in Christ. With this in mind, we will consider more closely.

[Q] Some people have thought that Paul's reference to working out our salvation means that we have to earn our salvation. What does Ephesians 2:8-9 have to say about this?

[Q] "Working out" your salvation can be compared to a physical workout. Your workout is to develop what you already possess. In what ways is discipleship like a physical workout?

[Q] Read Romans 8:28 and James 1:2-4. How has God used circumstances and trials in your life to train you in Christ-likeness?

GET TRAINED *for ministry* 10 Minutes

One very important tool God uses to train us is our circumstances. You cannot choose what is going to happen to you, but your response can display a trust Christ.

1. How can your problems and circumstances be opportunities for you to serve God and others? What circumstance have you experienced that God could use as an opportunity for you to serve others?
2. Pair up and turn to the *Missional Health Assessment* on page **32**. Select one element in which you need to grow and write down ONE action step that you could take this week to grow in that element.

Read out loud:

Getting Trained at our church prepares you to Make Disciples. By renewing your mind, stirring your heart, and serving the body of Christ, you become the kind of person that naturally loves and affects other people. To bless our city and our world with the gospel, we are all needed for what we have to give.

Practically, Getting Trained with The Austin Stone happens as you take classes individually or together as a small group, serve on ministry teams – like the Welcome (or Setup) Team individually or as a small group, and train others to train others with simple tools like REAP and ACTS. Most importantly God uses these and other events in your life to develop your character and hone your talents and abilities.

WORSHIP CHRIST 15 Minutes

1. This would be a great time to break into smaller prayer circles. Begin by thanking God for not passing you by in your time of need, and confess any selfishness that has kept you from seeing and meeting needs.
2. Take a few minutes to ask God to help you slow down and see the needs of those around you, and to give you a heart like His, willing to reach out to those in need.
3. Ask God to reveal a need you could meet anonymously this week.

BEFORE WE LEAVE

Saturday, October 20th, we will have our annual **Family Reunion and Baptism at The Quarries**. Please block off this date on your calendar as it's an event you won't want to miss. You can sit together with your small group to hangout and see what God is doing in the body of Christ. Check the website for more details and times. See you there!

PREPARATION FOR NEXT TIME

1. Train others to train others: Ask God to show you someone who needs to learn the REAP method of Bible study, or ACTS method of prayer. Take a few minutes this week and show that person how to do the REAP and/or ACTS method.
2. Read Luke 15 to discover God's heart for those outside His family. Think about a list of people you know who don't know Jesus and pray for them. Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. What principles for sharing your faith can you learn from Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Why is the word picture of an ambassador (v. 20) such an appropriate image for our mission in the world?
4. Go through the "Sharing My Story" exercise on page 35. This will prepare you for the exercises next week.

WEEK 5 – Make Disciples, *together*

Memory Verse

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you...”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 15 Minutes

Our prayer for you as you complete this series is that you have discovered the value of a small group, a missional community, and we hope you will continue on together.

Pair up with a person sitting beside you and share a *two-minute* version of your story. Share briefly your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, and the difference He has made in your life.

Discussion starters:

Come back together as a large group and discuss.

- [Q] There is an oft-quoted statistic that four years after their conversion, 90 percent of Christians don't know any unbelievers. In your experience, have you found this to be true? Why or why not?
- [Q] When was the last time you shared your faith? What happened?

GET TRAINED 45 Minutes

Read out loud:

“At the beginning of the Gospels, our Lord comes alongside us in the flesh—the incarnation. Jesus’ last word to his disciples in the Gospels is “Go” (Matthew 28:19). Through these ‘model’ and ‘command’ bookends, it’s clear that Christ’s expectation is for us to move out and into others people’s worlds. It’s curious, then, how much of Christian outreach is church-building centered. We expect that our neighbors will come to hear a Christian comedian or musician, but many times it becomes a night of Christian entertainment with few, if any, unbelievers in attendance. Why is that? Maybe Jesus was right that the simple acts of going and neighboring (*being a good neighbor*) are the most authentic and life-altering. “

Think personal: Reach out to your sphere of influence.

Read John 4:1–42.

[Q] Have you ever had to cross social, economic, or racial lines to be a “neighbor” to another? If so, what difficulties did that entail?

[Q] What do you know about the way Jews viewed Samaritans? Women?

- What does Jesus’ intentional route through the heart of Samaria tell you?
- What does Jesus’ interaction with a “loose” pagan woman tell you about him?

[Q] Jesus initiated the conversation with a request for what he needed: “Will you give me a drink? (v. 7).” Imagining all the other possible remarks that he could have made, how does this disarm and give dignity to the woman?

Note: *Evangelism can be a power play. Christians can approach others with an “Us vs. Them” or “You’re wrong about everything & I’m right about everything” attitude. Thus, we may be tempted to act “perfect,” launch into proofs for the gospel, or be condemning. Initiating a relationship of mutual respect and openness goes a long way.*

[Q] How did Jesus pique the Samaritan woman’s interest, or make her thirsty, for what he had to offer (vv. 10–26)?

- Does your life make people thirsty for Jesus? What things make people thirsty for Him?

[Q] How well do you really know the people in your sphere of relationships? How well do they know you? How can you get to know them?

Note: *The Jews considered Samaritans as “half-breeds” and pagans. They were lumped in with sinners and tax collectors and were viewed as unredeemable; thus Jews were forbidden to interact with them. Samaritans were so despised that Jews who traveled from Judea to Galilee would actually travel around Samaria. And in their morning prayers, Jewish men would thank God that they were not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman!*

Think local: Reach out to the poor, oppressed, and needy.

Read the following out loud together:

When someone asks how we are doing spiritually, we are likely to respond by focusing on the frequency of our prayer and Bible study, the ways our lives are being transformed, or how close we feel to God. Few of us would respond by evaluating our sacrificial efforts to serve the poor, oppressed and needy. We may believe that serving the poor and oppressed is good, but it doesn't take a prominent place in our conception of being a Christian. However, this is one of the ways in which God judges his people's faithfulness and worship.

Read Isaiah 58:1–10.

[Q] Some have said that they come to The Austin Stone because they like the “worship”. According to Isaiah, what does fasting and worship really look like? (v. 6-7)

[Q] What will happen when this kind of worship and fasting takes place? (v. 8-10)

Then read the following out loud together:

The Bible references the poor more than 170 times. These passages refer primarily to those who are physically poor. Despite all our studying of the Bible, we often fail to comprehend God's heart for the needy. There are many aspects to the Christian life, and caring for the needy is an essential one that often gets relegated to the back burner. Spiritual disciplines, study, and worship will not please God if we are hardhearted toward those in need.

Serving the poor and oppressed will increase and strengthen our faith in ways we might not expect. If you've ever been on a short-term mission trip or participated in a service project, it probably changed you more than you changed the people you were serving. Service has a way of giving us a different perspective and showing us what is important to God. As we respond to God's call to serve the poor and the oppressed, it will bring us closer to him.²

[Q] What keeps you from being more aware of the poor, oppressed and needy?

Read the following out loud together:

Bryant Myers once noted that "the world tends to view the poor as a group that is helpless; thus we give ourselves permission to play god in the lives of the poor. The poor become nameless, and this invites us to treat them as objects of our compassion, as a 'thing' to which we can do what we believe is best."³ When the poor are at arms length, it is easy for them to become a project or 'thing', instead of human beings made in the image of God.

[Q] Are “the poor and oppressed” nameless to you or do you personally know someone who is physically poor or oppressed? Why or why not?

[Q] What are some steps you can take to personally know and be involved in the life of someone who is poor and oppressed?

² Adapted from “Reach Your Community” - a Bible Study for CTI by Mark Buchanan

³ Bryant Myers: *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, p. 57

Think global: Reach out to the nations.

In groups of 3 or 4, read Revelation 7:9.

In groups of 3 or 4, assess what you already know about the status of God's global mission. Read the statements below and mark T if the statement is true, F if false and U if you are unsure.

1. ___ 1/3 of the world's people are followers of Jesus.
2. ___ Most followers of Jesus live in the western world (North America and Europe).
3. ___ Churches are growing 17-20,000 believers a day in Brazil.
4. ___ 3 billion people live on less than \$2/day and 1/3 of the world lives in slums.
5. ___ The professional missionary force is decreasing.
6. ___ A people group has a distinct language and culture.
7. ___ Half of the unreached people groups are unengaged people groups (peoples with no churches).
8. ___ 11 million children die every year from preventable diseases.
9. ___ 27,000 children die per day from unclean water, malaria and AIDS.
10. ___ Over a billion people are still illiterate.

Continuing in groups of 3 or 4, read out loud the following information. When you have finished, review your answers above and make any necessary corrections.

The Good News:

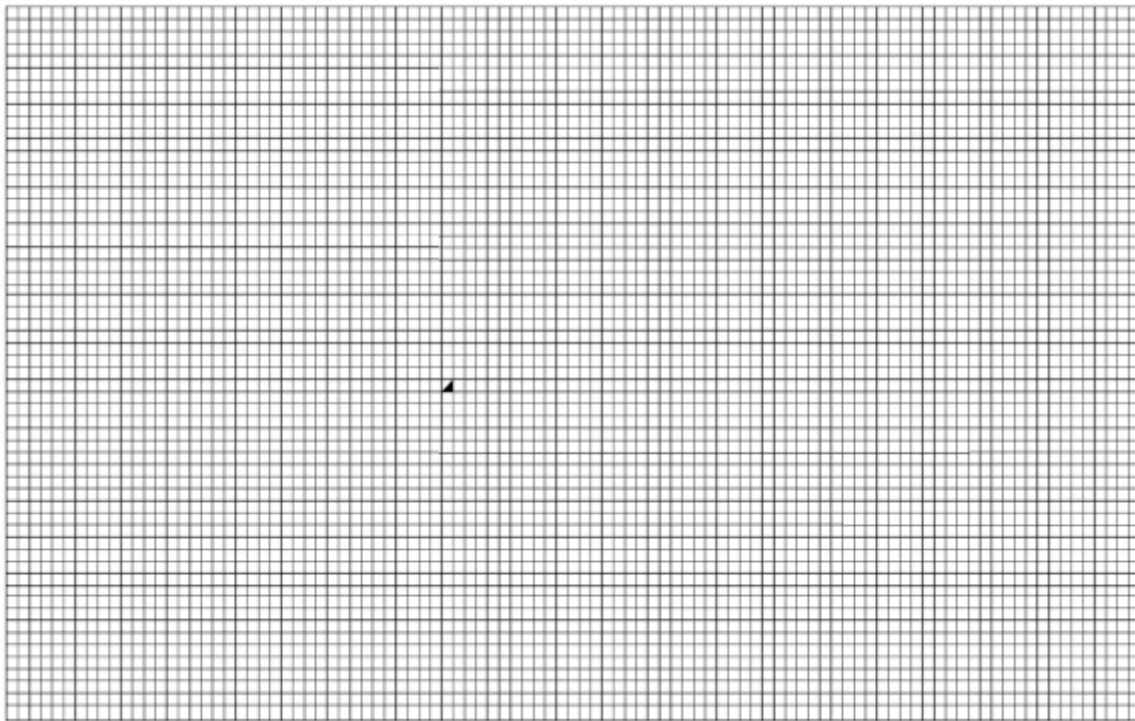
- Out of 6.5 billion people in the world, there are 2.2 billion who claim to be followers of Jesus.
- Most of the church growth is outside the western world.
 - In 1900 – 81% of the followers of Jesus were in the western world.
 - In 1981 – 51% of the followers of Jesus were in the western world.
 - In 2000 – 40% of the followers of Jesus are in the western world.
- Examples from the year 2000:
 - Brazil - the church is growing 17-20,000 new believers a week!
 - China – the church is growing 20-30,000 new believers a day!
- Technology has helped get the Bible translated into many other languages.
 - 1800 – 67 languages
 - 1900 – 537 languages
 - 2000 – 2800 languages
- Churches are cooperating in world mission partnerships more than ever before.
- There are now about 450,000 full-time missionaries around the world.

The Bad News:

- With 6 billion people in the world, over 4 billion people are lost without Christ!

Look at the graph below:

- Full-Time Missionaries Worldwide: 1 square = 1,000,000 people
- Shaded area = total full-time missionaries world-wide



- There are approximately 12,000 people groups worldwide.
 - "People groups" are defined as the same ethnic or language groups. Within one country (like China), there may be up to 400 people groups - all speaking different languages.
- There are still over 6,000 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in the world.
 - Among these people groups, 1.7 billion people have no known visible witness for Christ!
- Of the 6,000 Unreached People Groups, 3,000 people groups are "unengaged."
 - Unengaged People Groups (UEGs)- There is no known church or mission agency working among these people to start churches.
- Poverty is on the increase globally.
 - 3 billion people live on less than \$2/day and 1/3 of the world lives in slums.
- Pandemic disease is on the rise.
 - 11 million children die every year from diseases that are preventable, and 27,000 children die per day from unclean water, malaria and AIDS.
- Rampant illiteracy keeps people in darkness.
 - Over 1 billion people are still illiterate worldwide.

[Q] What struck you most about these previous statements? Why?

[Q] Go, pray, send, welcome, mobilize – those are the 5 habits of a global Christian. Which ones would you consider your strengths? Which habits need improvement for the sake of reaching the nations?

MAKE DISCIPLES..... 5 Minutes

Come back together as a large group. Read out loud:

“The same mission Christ had on earth He has now given to us. Our mission is simply to pass on to others, through words **and** deeds, the same Good News about God's redeeming love that someone shared with us.

Jesus commanded His followers to “go and make disciples among all nations” (Matt 28:19). And He said that His followers were to be His witnesses to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). When you committed to follow Jesus, you signed up to carry out God's plan for the world. God has promised to guide you, supply for your needs, and protect you in this mission.

Many have gone ahead of you. Much has been accomplished, and God is doing significant things in the world today. But there is still much to be done. Now, as you prepare to go, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.” (Psalms 37:5 NASB)

BEFORE WE LEAVE

As a group, take a few minutes to discuss an outreach ministry you could serve in together to meet a need in locally and/or globally. Choose an activity from the list provided. Appoint a leader to organize this activity for the group.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT TIME

1. **Action Point:** Get to know someone better this week. Think about those people you see fairly often, but whom you don't know beyond “Hi, how are ya?” such as: the check out lady at the store—ask if there's anything you can pray for her about; that guy at the coffee shop who is always there by himself—invite him to sit with you, or ask if you can sit with him; your “Hi/Bye” neighbors—ask them over for coffee and dessert on your porch. Nothing big or too risky. Just choose to wade out into deeper waters this week. See what God does.
2. How can you get to know the poor and oppressed and their needs? Maybe your small group or family could prayer-walk through an at-risk, impoverished neighborhood like St. Johns. Maybe your small group could host a monthly soup night in your home for the homeless. Invite them over. Families can take turns providing the soups. No frills. No agenda. Any show of hospitality—not to be confused with entertaining—in our culture will be a powerful expression of the gospel. Maybe your small group could spend a couple of hours just riding the bus together, putting yourselves in the shoes of those who may not have transportation.
3. Break routine this week to connect with those around you. Go out after work with your colleagues. Or instead of the weekly lunch with church friends on Sunday, invite a neighbor over for a cookout. Instead of hanging out with believers all week, go for a walk around your neighborhood and stop to talk to those on your block.⁴

⁴ Adapted from “Get To Know Unbelievers” - a Bible Study for CTI by Kyle White

WEEK 6 – Celebration, *together*

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 45 Minutes

Throw a party! Share a meal together. Have a BBQ! Celebrate what God has done over the last 6 weeks.

WORSHIP CHRIST 30 Minutes

1. Take a few minutes to celebrate what God has done in your group these six weeks. Share what you enjoyed or gained from the last six weeks.
2. Be sure to take a few extra minutes to both affirm and thank God for your group Hosts/Leaders.
3. Close your time together praying these prayers for the non-believers you named in the MAKE DISCIPLES section.
 - Ask God to soften your heart and give you a real love for the unbelievers with whom you come in contact.
 - Ask God to soften your heart and give you a real love for the poor and oppressed in Austin and the world.
 - Ask God to give you and your small group opportunities to invite others to your activities and the courage to tell them about Christ.
 - Ask God to soften their hearts. God often does this through problems and pain, so look around and ask, "*Who's hurting?*" The person who comes to mind is probably the one you should try to reach first.

COMMUNION FOR SMALL GROUPS

If you so choose, as a small group you can celebrate by taking communion together.

What is Communion?

It is a SIMPLE act, not an elaborate ceremony. It's a REMINDER of what Jesus did and is a unifying part of Christian fellowship. You'll need to have some simple grape juice and enough bread or crackers available to serve as the communion elements.

Suggested Format

1. Read the following words of Jesus:

The Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed took bread 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." In the same way, after supper, He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:23-25

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26

2. Distribute the elements and give people a moment of quiet personal prayer, then after a minute or so, receive the elements together.

3. End in a closing prayer of thanks to God for what He has done for everyone in the group.

LIVE IN COMMUNITY 15 Minutes

What happens at the end of this six weeks together?

This is the completion of the six-week Vision Series and missional group experience together. Congratulations! Our prayer is that our church is now connected like never before and that God has deepened and transformed each of our lives as we have been on mission together. You have committed only for 6 weeks, but as you reach the end of this time, our hope is that your group will want to stay together as a group. You may or may not choose to continue. If you decide not to, we ask that you help identify a leader among the people who want to stay. Training and support will be provided for these new leaders. Regarding the small groups (missional communities), some will continue meeting. Others will return to prior small groups; still others may choose to try another group with different people. We will help you with that process. Whichever option you choose, we pray you will continue to pursue being on mission with God with a small community of believers.

Take some time and discuss your options:

- We will stay together as a group and continue on mission together
- We will not stay together as a group, but we will help identify a host/leader from among the people who want to stay
 - Host/Leader for those staying together: _____
 - Contact your Coach and let him/her know
- I am going to return to my previous small group
- I am going to try another group
 - Go to www.groups.austinstone.org to search for other groups
- I would like to start a new group
 - Contact your Coach and let him/her know

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

GROUP AGREEMENT

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such an agreement will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. Discuss your agreement during session 1 in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

If the idea of a written agreement is unfamiliar to your group, we encourage you to give it a try.

We agree to the following VALUES:

Clear Goal	To grow missional lives by building a missional small group community
Group Attendance	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
Safe Environment	To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
Be Confidential	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
Missional Health	To give group members permission to support, encourage and help me live a life that is on mission with God
Welcome Newcomers	To invite our friends who might benefit from this series and warmly welcome newcomers
Building Relationships	To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly

Signature _____

Date _____

SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

Missional small groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures no one person has responsibility for the group. Use the calendar to keep track of dinners, hangouts, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE/Time	LESSON	LOCATION	FACILITATOR	SNACK/MEAL
	Session 1: Vision Series Intro			
	Session 2: Worship Christ			
<i>Oct. 3 7pm</i>	1st Wed. Prayer	<i>TBD</i>		
	Session 3: Live in Community			
	Session 4: Get Trained			
<i>Oct. 20</i>	Family Reunion & Baptism	<i>The Quarries</i>		
	Session 5: Make Disciples			
	Session 6: Celebration!			
<i>Nov. 3</i>	Partner Connection Class	<i>TBD</i>		

MISSIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Worship Christ

	Just beginning			Well developed	
I am experiencing the presence and power of God through prayer in my everyday life.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am faithfully attending my small group and weekend services to worship God.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am feeding myself consistently from God's Word so that I can bless others	1	2	3	4	5
I am habitually spending time with God through the reading of scripture and prayer	1	2	3	4	5
I am following the example of Christ in my personal holiness	1	2	3	4	5
I am participating in communion.....	1	2	3	4	5

Worship Christ Total _____

Live in Community

I am actively pursuing biblical community.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am deepening my understanding of and friendship with God in community with others.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am growing in my ability both to share and to show my love to others	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing to share my real needs for prayer and support from others	1	2	3	4	5
I am resolving conflict constructively and am willing to forgive others	1	2	3	4	5
I see myself as someone who cares for others in my group.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am diligent to not gossip, but instead use my words to give grace to those who hear.....	1	2	3	4	5

Live in Community Total _____

Get Trained for Ministry

I am growing in my knowledge of the Word of God	1	2	3	4	5
I am learning more about the character of God.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am discovering and developing my Spiritual Gifts for ministry	1	2	3	4	5
I am regularly asking God to show me opportunities to serve others.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am involved in my small group by sharing some group role or responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
I am building discipleship relationships with other believers.....	1	2	3	4	5

Get Trained Total _____

Make Disciples

I am pursuing intentional, transparent relationships with non-Christians in my sphere of influence.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am asking God to give me opportunities to share the gospel.....	1	2	3	4	5
I am identifying the mission that God has called me to	1	2	3	4	5
I am investing my time in another person or group who needs to know Christ personally	1	2	3	4	5
I am involved sharing the gospel locally to the poor and oppressed	1	2	3	4	5
I am involved sharing the gospel to unreached people groups globally					

Make Disciples Total _____

JUST BEGINNING 0-5	FAIR 5-10	GETTING GOING 10-15	VERY GOOD 15-20	WELL DEVELOPED 20-25
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Optional Exercise: Have your friend, spouse, group leader, parent(s) and/or one additional Christian friend fill out a copy of this form before you complete the *Missional Health Plan*.

MISSIONAL HEALTH PLAN

Elements (Scriptural Mandates)	Possibilities	Plans (Strategic Steps)
<p>WORSHIP CHRIST How can I worship Christ in all that I think, say and do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • REAP – feeding from God’s Word regularly • Praise and thanks to Christ • 1st Wednesday Prayer • Sunday services 		
<p>LIVE IN COMMUNITY How can I deepen my relationships with others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/friends • Relational/emotional development • Small group (missional community) • Living out the “One Anothers” 		
<p>GET TRAINED for ministry How can I grow to be like Christ and serve others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Trained classes with my small group • Spiritual disciplines • Financial stewardship • Character development • Ministry to the Body • Leadership training • Continuing training 		
<p>MAKE DISCIPLES How can I share my faith regularly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends/family, work, neighborhood • Locally with the poor and oppressed • Globally in God’s Mission to the nations • Cross-cultural involvement 		

SHARING MY STORY

My Story

Today we're going to focus on learning how to comfortably and naturally talk to others about what God has done in your life. As you go through the exercises on the following pages consider who you could share your story with in the near future.

Step #1 Identify life and heart themes.

Step #2 What my life was like before I met Christ.

Step #3 How I realized I needed Christ.

Step #4 How I committed my life to Christ.

Step #5 The difference it has made in my life.

Step #1: Life and Heart Themes

Looking at the list of life and heart themes, check the boxes that were present in your life before your relationship with God became meaningful. This list is provided to get you think about your life before God.

Step #2 What my life was like before I met Christ.

- What common circumstances in your life would an unbeliever identify with?
- What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with?
- What was most important to you?
- What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life? (sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)

Life and Heart Themes

- Worries/Anxiety Inner Peace
- Guilt/Shame. Forgiveness
- Anger/Temper. Patience and love
- Emptiness/Lack of Purpose Purpose in life
- Grief Comfort and joy
- Stress/Burnout Power for living
- Low Self-Esteem Significance to God
- Poor Health Strength to go on
- Disappointment Trust in His good plans
- Insecurity Confidence and security
- Regrets. A second chance at life
- Discontent/Always Busy Contentment and peace
- Fears Faith to face my fears
- Loneliness. He's always with me
- Addictions/Habits Power to change
- Self-Centeredness Love for other people
- Despair/Depression Hope
- Cheap Thrills Real, lasting happiness
- Boredom with My Life Adventure with God
- Fear of Death Assurance of heaven
- "Something Was Missing" Sense of fulfillment
- Bitterness & Resentment Freedom from my past
- Pain of Rejection God's unconditional love
- Marriage Problems Changes in my marriage
- Financial Problems Changes in my finances
- Business Problems. Changes in my business

*If you've been a believer since early childhood, then reflect on this question: "What are some difficulties or challenges that God has helped you face that could serve as a connecting point, as a window of grace, with a nonbeliever?"

Step #3 How I realized I needed Christ.

- What significant steps led up to your conversion?
- What needs, hurts, or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God?
- How did God get your attention?
- What motivated you?

Step #4 How I responded to Christ.

- What specifically did you do as a response to the faith God placed in your heart?
- Where did it happen?
- What did you say in your prayer? Be specific.

*For the early childhood believer... How did you ask God to help you? How did you ask God to get involved?

Step #5 The difference it has made in my life.

- What benefits have you experienced or felt?
- What problems have been resolved?
- How has Jesus helped you change for the better?
- How has it helped your relationships? Give a current example.

Who Could You Share With?

Look over the “*Your Spheres of Relationships*” handout. Are there any people that you have identified who you know do not know Jesus? Write them down on the list.

YOUR SPHERES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Family
(immediate or extended)

Acquaintances
(Neighbors, kids' sports teams, school, etc.)

Friends

Fun
(Gym, hobbies, hangouts)

Work

PARTNERSHIP

During the Vision Series, you might begin sensing a calling and desire to partner with The Austin Stone. We say “partner” rather than “member” to emphasize the fact that we hope and expect they’ll be more than spectators. The role of partners is to be on mission with God and the vision and strategy of the church and use their unique gifts and talents to help fulfill our vision at The Austin Stone.

The requirements for partnership at The Austin Stone include attending a Connection Class to learn about the mission and strategy of the church as well as living out the elements together in groups which discuss the role of missional living. With the current Vision Series, we are covering mission and strategy through the messages on Sundays, and the small group curriculum and discussion. With this small group you also will have the opportunity to serve together and experience missional living together.

With this in mind, on November 3 the church is hosting a Connection Event for those who actively participated in Vision Series’ small groups to learn about partnership, get their questions answered and commit to becoming a partner with the Austin Stone Community Church.

Keep in mind - faithful attendance and participation in a Vision Series Small Group is a pre-requisite for this Connection event.

Sign-ups for the November 3rd Connection Event will be offered on-line at a later date. Until then, keep in mind that participation in your host group is required in order to attend the November 3 Connection Event.

So, in order to become a partner, here are the steps to take:

1. participate in a Vision Series small group
2. attend the **November 3 – Connection Event**

If you have questions, feel free to contact:

Michelle Ritchie, Minister of Partner Connection: michelle@austinstone.org

MEMORY VERSES

Memory Verse – One of the most effective ways to drive deeply into our lives the principles we are learning in this series is to memorize key scriptures. For many, memorization is a new concept or one that has been difficult in the past. Stretch yourself and try to memorize these six memory verses. If possible, memorize these as a group and make them part of your group time.

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" Psalm 119:11

<p>Week One</p> <p><i>"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."</i></p> <p>Acts 5:42 (NASB)</p>	<p>Week Two</p> <p><i>"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."</i></p> <p>Mark 12:30 (NASB)</p>
<p>Week Three</p> <p><i>"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."</i></p> <p>Acts 2:42 (NASB).</p>	<p>Week Four</p> <p><i>"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."</i></p> <p>1 Peter 4:10 (NASB)</p>
<p>Week Five</p> <p><i>"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you..."</i></p> <p>Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)</p>	<p>Week Six</p> <p><i>"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, make the most of the opportunity."</i></p> <p>Colossians 4:5 (NASB)</p>