

What do Missional Communities do?

by: Hugh Halter

That's a really good question. Sometimes, people are trying to make it look more intense than it is. All it really means is that you have some friends that you live fairly close to, sharing spontaneous life together. In our environment, we try to coach three aspects of kingdom life.

One is just *communion* - the ability to connect with God together. For most Christians, that's time in Scripture together, praying together, eating together, etc. The second thing we try to have people integrate is what we call *mission* or *blessing*, which is just helping people with no strings attached. Every time you're together just say, "Do any of our friends have any needs?" If somebody says, "Yeah," then you actually go, and you spontaneously meet the needs.

The third phase is what we call *inclusive community* where you're creating a place of belonging for people. The simplest way we coach this is to make sure you throw a party! For those who are just getting started with us, we'll give them a very basic grid that, within a month with those same people, we want you to start throwing a party once a month. We want you to go help some people once a month together. We want you to spend some time together in Scripture a couple of times a month.

So it's really not rocket science, but we find that if you don't coach it in those different circles, people just end up going, "Yeah, it's been another six months, and all we've done is Bible study."

Here's what we do know: even though we like the concept, everything in the kingdom or everything of the Spirit actually goes against everything of our flesh. This is why pastors go, "I just can't get people to really do this." This isn't an issue of training; it's an issue of prayer.

We're letting our people know that the way of Jesus really is that different because it costs us our time, oftentimes our money, and our ability to control our own relationships; God is going to bring situations and people in our lives that make us feel uncomfortable.

Galatians even says that the things of the Spirit are always fighting against the things of the flesh. We Americans have a lot of fleshly things, like individualism, consumerism, materialism...you name it. So to really do missional-incarnational community, somebody actually has to be changed at the heart level.

That's why we *make and go do*. We find that when we push people out, sometimes they're even angry. They don't want to do it, but when we actually force them to go out, be with people, those people out there actually captivate their hearts. Then a spiritual formation process begins and they find that they've never been so full spiritually.

So it's not easy - I think it's brutal in a lot of ways - but when you've been there, you never want to go back.