

## Other Missional Churches: Struggles, Successes, & Dangers

by: Hugh Halter

***What are some other churches that are living out missional communities? And what are some dangers, struggles, and successes you've seen?***

First, I think we have to fight as much as we can against what we would view as success because at the end of the day, to do this really is more about just being faithful because we know this is Bible. We know this is the way of Jesus.

There are a lot of times when people will live really faithfully, and they don't really see a whole lot of fruit. We have to recognize and tell people that we're not really after success; we're after being able to go to sleep at night and know we lived like Jesus in our neighborhoods.

You have to realize most of our stories from people that say, "Oh, Adullam is just going great" were two-year, three-year processes with people. Most of the time, it didn't *feel* like we were getting anywhere.

You have to decide, *That's the way I actually want to live, regardless of what type of fruit I see.* Obviously, we're seeing and hearing hundreds and hundreds of stories from mega churches that are taking their small groups and reconditioning them back to missional communities. I know you guys at Austin Stone have seen quite a bit of fruit in that. You guys have tons of communities, but you pushed them further.

You guys have shared stories with us about real-life change, real conversion stories. I know if you just looked at Austin New Church, what Brandon Hatmaker is doing there, has been a really cool story of focusing on the mission circle and just giving people mission to the poor.

We heard a story of a 60-year-old woman out of Sioux Center, Iowa, who got a hold of our TK Primers and grabbed a bunch of old folks out in the cornfields of Iowa. After about 500 people had come into these groups, they finally had to call their first pastor just to try to hold it together.

There are wild stories we're hearing of missions agencies and parachurch groups that are processing, "How do we do more than just outreach?" We're just hearing the same types of stories.

The biggest danger is that people would look to missional community as a way to keep their church growing. We've seen a lot of people say, "Okay, that seems like that's some good conversation. God is starting with the whole church, so I better get on board so I don't miss something." When you take that approach, you end up trying to program it as opposed to trying to create an actual systemic heart change in the lives of your people.

So we try to encourage people to realize Jesus told us to go make disciples. All a disciple is is somebody who is like Jesus. That is a hard, lifelong struggle, so you never really get to the end and say, "Oh! We have this cranking at our church!"

Our job as spiritual leaders is to help people to become more like Jesus. Sometimes that could be a 10-15 year process. Sometimes it's six months. You just can't program the way of Jesus. This is really a counter-cultural movement that happens in the hearts of your people. As their hearts are changed, they begin to behave differently.

Our encouragement is that you have to decide what you have to be faithful to. He is never going to hold us accountable to how much we grow our church, but He is going to hold us accountable to doing all you could to "create people like My Son who gave His life away for people." That will radically shift what is our metric for success.