

Youth Resource

by Greg Groves
Greenville IL FMC

together everywhere

Together with all those
everywhere who call
on the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ
1 Corinthians 1:2

Missional Youth Ministry

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:2

Theme: Together | Everywhere

Key Truth: God has a mission and a church to accomplish it.

Brief Outline:

- 1 – Introduce and define the idea of being a “missional” church/youth group
- 2 – Study together what the Scripture says about the purpose of the church
- 3 – Examine what we are already doing
- 4 – Brainstorm new ideas of how to be missional
- 5 – Pray for the Lord’s help
- 6 – Choose one (or more) action steps



Introduce & Define

The purpose of this first section is to introduce the idea of “missional living” and define what we mean by a missional church or a missional youth ministry. If you are unfamiliar with the term or would like a refresher, “What Makes A Church Missional?”, by J. Todd Billings, and “Defining Missional,” by Alan Hirsch (both *Christianity Today* articles) are two good resources.

Here are three ways that you might choose to introduce the topic. Pick your favorite (or do more than one) from the following:

Option #1

Choose two teens to perform the following impromptu dialogue between the Apostle Paul and a modern day pastor, “Pastor Tim.”

PAUL: Hi, Tim. Thanks for joining me here. Can I get you something to drink?

TIM: Oh, thanks, but I don’t drink.

PAUL: I know that. ... I was just talking about a cup of coffee.

TIM: Oh sure, that would be great.

PAUL: So, God has asked that the two of us have a conversation about the church and how things are going these days.

- TIM:** Has He been looking at our attendance patterns?
- PAUL:** I don't think God is really thinking about your church in particular. I think He is concerned about the church universal, you know, the body of Christ He has established to do the work of Christ on earth.
- TIM:** So, He is thinking about the Baptists and the Lutherans and the Catholics and the Presbyterians and the ...
- PAUL:** Actually, I think it is not even about denominations or various groups of churches. I think God's concern is with the mission Christ left on earth and how that is getting done.
- TIM:** Well, when you were alive and ministering in the time shortly after Jesus died, you went around starting churches in all kinds of towns, right?
- PAUL:** Yes.
- TIM:** And you worked to build up those churches and get as many people in those communities to connect with as many other believers as possible, right?
- PAUL:** Yes.
- TIM:** And then you taught the people in those churches how to live and how to interact with believers and non-believers. You even wrote them letters to encourage them and discipline them and urged them to be united with each other. It seems to me that now we — I mean all the churches combined — have gone around the world and have established churches everywhere, and we are doing with those people the same things you were trying to get established. Is that not what God wants us to do?
- PAUL:** Well, yes, in a way, but I think a shift has taken place. It seems to me that the focus for many pastors — and for most Christians — is to get as many people involved in church as possible.
- TIM:** Isn't that what *you* were trying to accomplish when you went around planting all those churches? Didn't Jesus establish the church and then give it a mission to include and gather in as many people as possible into its fellowship. Isn't that the mission of the church — to seek and to save the lost, as Jesus said?
- PAUL:** Sort of. But rather than thinking of it as the church having a mission, I think it is more accurate to think of God's kingdom as a mission having a church. I think God's priority is the mission, but we have made the priority the church. And when we say "the

church” it is hard for us to think of that in terms other than a particular portion of the body of Christ that comes together and meets at such and such a location. Have we replaced “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done ...” with “Thy church grow strong, Thy church live on ...?”

TIM: Aren’t those really the same thing — God’s kingdom and the church?

PAUL: Perhaps. But I think *that* is what our conversation needs to be about.

After this dialogue engage the class in discussion using some of the following questions:

1. What is the difference between “the church has a mission” and “the mission has a church?”
2. Is this conversation between Paul and Tim just about semantics? Are they really saying the same thing, just using different language?
3. What do you think Paul’s concern is?
4. Who do you relate to more, Paul or Tim, and why?
5. What is your view of “the church”? Is it all about growing itself? How much of what the church does is aimed inward and how much is aimed outward?

Option #2

Show the YouTube video “Missional Community ... Simple,” a 2:39 minute segment by Jeff Magu.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJP35eEKGLs>

Talk about Bob (in the video) and his hobby of flying remote control airplanes. Use questions like the following:

1. How would our church respond to Bob when he became a Christian?
2. Did Bob do the right thing or the wrong thing to come to church on Wednesdays rather than meet with this airplane club? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What if Bob were a teenager and the only time youth group met was Wednesdays. Then what should Bob do?
4. What does being a “missional community” look like in our location?
5. How could our youth group be more “missional?”

Option #3

Pokémon GO

(July 6, 2016, was the initial release date for Pokémon Go in the USA. If you are unfamiliar with the game, “Google” it and do some reading ... or ask a young teen with a smart phone!)

Ask students to pull out their smartphones and find out if there are any Pokémon in the room ... or in the church. Invite students to share some experiences with their best catches. You might give a prize for the most creative places or ways or pictures the teens show and tell about. Find out who has been playing the longest, who spends the most time with the game, who has captured the most Pokémon, etc.

Ask the teens to talk about the pros and cons of the game. Is it good, bad or indifferent?

“The church” and the general public have responded in a variety of ways to this phenomena, including:

1. Ignore it (and it will eventually go away)
2. Ban it (no Pokémon playing on church property due to people getting robbed, accidents, etc.)
3. Embrace it (have Pokémon Go parties, tournaments or youth group competitions)
4. Use it (Use existing connections to other players/friends to bring Jesus to the party)

Which of these four approaches have you seen? Which do you think is right? When does the church take something in society and say a flat “no” — we should avoid it and not be involved. And when does the church try to redeem, use for good, use as an open door something that is happening? Ask for examples they have seen.

(We are not expressing an opinion here. We are just using this as a tool to get the students to talk about how a church approaches ministry.)



Scripture Speaks

Move from engaging the students and initial discussion about what it means to be “missional” to a time of looking at Scripture. How did the early church “do church?” Here are three different scriptures you might look at. Choose the passages and the approach that works best in your setting.

Option #1

Look at how the church got started — Acts 2

Ask students to turn to Acts 2. Remind them the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are the birth and life of Jesus and that Acts is the birth and life of the church. Acts 2 is the account of how the church was born. Have them use their Bibles and work their way methodically through Acts 2 citing major things that happened in the forming of the church. Be sure they back up their statements with scripture references. Write their findings on a white board, butcher paper or whatever is available and works for your setting. (If your group is large, you could divide them into small groups and have each group come up with ways to divide Acts 2.)

They (with your helping) might come up with the following:

1. It was the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1)
2. The disciples were all together in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1)
3. The Holy Spirit came on all of them (Acts 2:3)
4. They all began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled (Acts 2:4)
5. Many people gathered because they heard them speaking in their native tongue (Acts 2:5-6)
6. Peter gave a speech (a sermon) (Acts 2:14-36)

7. Lots of people responded and were baptized (Acts 2:37-41)
8. They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer (Acts 2:42)
9. Believers were together and had everything in common (Acts 2:44)
10. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)

A simpler way to divide the text:

1. The Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1-13)
2. Peter preached (Acts 2:14-36)
3. The people responded (Acts 2:37-47)

Allow the students to create their own divisions as long as they support it with scripture references.

Ask some of the following questions about the church being established:

1. In what ways were the people urged to *come* and participate in church?
2. In what ways did God's presence *go* to the people?
3. How is the church *today* similar to and how is it different from the description of the early church in Acts 2:42-47?
4. What would have to change to have *our church* look like the Acts description?
5. Is that even possible in today's culture?
6. Would we have to all escape the culture? Move to Nunavut?

Option #2

Look at Jesus' Great Commission — Matthew 28:18-20

Give the setting for these words of Jesus: He has gone to the cross, He has been raised on the third day, He has appeared to the women and to the disciples (in other gospel accounts), and now Jesus meets them in Galilee (where their journey together started) and He gives them this final commissioning.

See if anyone has these three verses memorized and spend time as a group trying to memorize the passage.

Ask the teens why this passage has been held up by the church as super important? Write the parts of the passage on the board:

- 1 – All authority has been given to Jesus
- 2 – Go and make disciples of all nations
- 3 – Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- 4 – Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you
- 5 – I am with you always to the very end of the age

Ask the teens:

1. Which of these five do you think is the most important and why?
2. Which of these has the church grasped the best? The worst?
3. Is this commissioning more about bringing people *to* church — or about bringing church *to* the people? Talk about that concept in light of this scripture.

Option #3

Look at how the fledgling church left the nest — Acts 8:1-4

Give the background for this scripture passage: After the church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), it began to grow in Jerusalem where all the believers were gathered and had all things in common. Stephen, one of the ones chosen to wait on tables, began speaking out for Jesus so strongly that the Jewish leaders rose up against him and stoned him to death. And Saul (Paul) was there, giving approval to the act.

Now read Acts 8:1-4. Lead in discussion using these and other questions:

1. Was this a terrible day or a fantastic day for the church? Explain your answer.
2. What is the significance of “Judea and Samaria?” (See if anyone connects to Acts 1:8.)
3. Why did some get scattered and others stayed? What is the significance of who stayed?
4. If the people preached the Word everywhere they went (8:4), should the apostles have gone since they were more qualified to preach the Word?
5. Is this just the way it happened or do you think God was directing this?
6. If you were a believer in Jerusalem would you have rather stayed or gone? Why?
7. Did the persecution end up helping the church?
8. What if public worship of God was suddenly banned in the USA? What would “church” look like? Would that be better or worse than the way it looks today? Why?



Self-Examine

Now that we have introduced the topic and looked at Scripture, lead them in taking a look at themselves, their church and their youth group to see how well they are matching God’s design for the church.

The following monologue can be read or re-phrased in your own words:

Together, everywhere ... that is a phrase in the opening of Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth. He says this letter is to “the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours.” *(cont.)*

When Paul said “together. . . everywhere” his everywhere extended to the land around the Mediterranean Sea. But now our idea of “everywhere” encompasses the entire world! Paul was writing his letter to a specific church, but also to *the church* universal — to all believers.

That is the same way God has called us to live our lives. He wants us to be living letters to our local communities, but also to *the church* universal, the church around the world, the church *everywhere*. And He does not want our lives to be all about ourselves ... He wants them to be about God’s mission to win the world.

How can we live this kind of missional life — that touches people around the block as well as around the world? In Paul’s day the impulse to *go* into all the world was sparked by the very command of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20) as well as by the necessity of telling the good news to the world who had never heard. And everywhere he went, this was a “new” word.

That impulse is still alive today in the hearts of missionaries going to people groups who have never heard about Jesus and in Wycliffe Bible translators who are putting the scriptures into new languages. But shouldn’t it also be alive in the hearts of teenagers who are thinking about a biology test, a soccer game, a Friday night date, or where to go to college?

I think yes — but what does that look like? Before we brainstorm some specific ideas, let’s look at what we are already doing.

Make a list of various youth group activities over the course of a year. Get the students to be as thorough as possible, listing all their youth group activities. (Examples might be: Sunday school, Bible quizzing, lock-ins, sporting events, concerts, fund raisers, Bible studies, small groups, retreats, camps, etc.)

Now go through the list and write either “inside” or “outside” by each of the activities, depending on whether it is for people who are “inside” the church (already Christians) or if it is for those “outside” the church. If some of the activities have both labels, have the students talk about that.

Explain that we are not saying that all “inside” things are *wrong* and all “outside” things are *right*. Jesus Himself did some things strictly to benefit the disciples. But the point is that not *everything* was for the benefit of those who are already “in.” This can easily become a problem in the church or youth group.

If your group likes music you might consider listening to one of these choices:

- “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns
- “The Blessing” by John Waller
- “Let the Church Rise” by Jonathan Stockstill

Ask the students how the song speaks into your discussion.



Brain-Storm

Now turn the group’s thoughts to brainstorming ways they can be more missional in what they do.

Make a list of possible activities whose purpose would be “making disciples” or furthering the kingdom of God.

As the list is being made, here are some points which can be brought out:

1. Missional does not just mean a “service project.”
2. Missional is more than social justice (although engaging the poor and being agents of justice are crucial parts of being missional).
3. Missional is not limited to a certain location. If all the brainstorming ideas center around your community, encourage them to also think about the world. Similarly, if all the ideas are more globally focused, then remind them there is a mission field at their doorstep.
4. Missional does not mean “attracting to *our* church.” (Or to any church for that matter. We want to draw people to *Jesus* and to His mission. Now certainly that will involve a local church, but the “church on the corner” is not the focus — Jesus is.)
5. Missional is greater than just some “activity.” It is what we should always be, both as a group and as individuals.

As the list is growing, feel free to add your thoughts and ideas which could include things like:

- Sponsor a child (International Child Care Ministries)
- Be involved in social justice (Set Free Movement)
- Go on short-term missions trips (VISA Ministries)
- Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity
- Support Crisis Pregnancy Centers, etc.



Prayer

Lead the class in prayer for various options you have listed. Ask the students to pray for the concerns that capture their hearts. If they know specific people who are already involved in the options they have listed, pray for them by name. Also pray the Lord would direct your group (and each individual) to ways to be more missional in the world.



Choose

Remind everyone that becoming more missional is not something that happens by doing a single activity, or developing a new program, or having a single lesson. It is a *mindset* the Christian (and the church) is called to have in the world. This lesson is not so that we can check “missional” off the list of topics for another year. Instead, it is one more reminder that we are all to be about the mission of Jesus — which hopefully is also the mission of the church — and we are to do it together ... and everywhere!

Look over your brainstorming list and choose at least one thing you can do in the next 12 months that will help you be more “missionally focused.”

Caution: Be wary of creating work that someone else will have to follow through on. Only solidify an action plan if *you* are the one who is going to follow through on it and see it to completion.

Call for one or more of the students to wrap up in a sentence or two what this lesson was about. If needed, do some correcting or some filling in ... but if the students’ sentences of explanation are good ones, then let them have the final word today.