
Fleshing Out the Journey from Stranger to Missionary, Part 3

Christianity Today calls it “[the craziest statistic you’ll read about North America missions](#).” What is it? One in five (20%) non-Christians say they do not know a single Christian. Nearly 13,500,000 people in North America do not know a single Christian, much less have a relationship with them. Even more startling, if you remove the number of non-Christians who once professed to be Christians, the percentage increases to 60%!

If we are going to reach our world for Christ, we have to embrace the Great Commission with a comprehensive vision to see strangers become missionaries. As I argued in my original article, churches can give the appearance that they are experiencing growth when in actuality they are merely adding already church members through transfer growth, representing a very small percentage of people in most places. We can no longer tolerate the naive assumption that non-Christians will be attracted to our gatherings or that they will become religious consumers of our spiritual goods and services. They want community, not consumerism; authenticity, not activities. The greatest apologetic for those far from God is showing and telling them a better story—stories of lives changed by Jesus and compelled to love others as Christ as loved them.

Picking up from a previous post, I want to add some additional practical ideas to encourage follow through.

6. Acknowledge the Present Reality

We need an honest and realistic starting point. It hit me hard in the gut to realize that **I was busy doing “the Lord’s work” while failing to know, much less lead, any “strangers” in my city to Jesus.** It is easy for us to look at people and see the color of their skin, how they dress, what car they drive, etc. without acknowledging that they have souls that will never die.

- The present reality is a spiritual reality: the massive majority of people in my world are rebels and traitors, not sons and daughters of God.
- The present reality is a missional reality: the massive majority of people far from God do not seek God nor is there fear of God in their eyes (Rom. 3:10-18).
- The present reality is relational reality: the massive majority of people in my world do not know a single Christian. They are *strangers* to God and *strangers* to Christians.
- The present reality is an evangelical reality: what strangers know about God is very likely to be misguided or ill-informed and their understanding of the gospel message darkened.

7. Anticipate God to Work in Your Dependency and Weaknesses

Paul says we should “continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). What are we looking out for? Paul assumes that believers who pray in faith are going to have their eye on what God is going to do in answering their prayers. A life devoted to prayer is

a Godward orientation that confesses our neediness and accesses God's provision. Perhaps nowhere is that more applicable than engaging strangers to see them become disciples of Jesus.

As we walk toward outsiders, we look toward heaven for God with a watchful eye for how He's going to work in our lives. Right after the call to watchful prayer, Paul requests prayer for himself and fellow co-laborers. He specifically asks for open doors of opportunity to preach the gospel and an open mouth to speak boldly and clearly the message of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Christians on mission, praying kingdom prayers, will be looking to see how God is making His kingdom come and will be doing it on earth and in their lives as it is in heaven.

A simple way to pray in regards to fleshing this out is the "3-Open Prayer." As you begin your day and walk toward "outsiders" (strangers), pray that God would open three things:

1. Pray that God would open the door for opportunity to be used to represent Christ in word or deed
2. Pray that God would open your mouth and life to speak and show the gospel of Jesus Christ
3. Pray that God would open their heart to believe and receive Christ as Lord

Jesus works in circumstances because He is sovereign; Jesus works in us because He is our shepherd; Jesus works in sinners because He is the Savior who speaks with the voice that raises the dead. **Praying, believing, and watchfully expecting God to work will change the way you go about your daily life.**

8. As You Lean Forward on Mission, Lean in to the Spirit

Our default position, regardless of our limitations, is to highlight our inadequacies. 'This kind of life and mission does not apply to me because of _____.', 'I cannot live this out because _____.' I don't want to minimize the merits of our weaknesses or struggles; in fact, I want to highlight them. God uses weak people to display His strength. God uses our struggles to work His power.

We need to highlight God's sufficiency to fill our inadequacies. The Bible says the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us (Rom. 8:11). The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. How big was that?! That same Spirit dwells in you. What's so big in our lives that the Spirit who dwells in us cannot address? We don't go into the world to make disciples as if Jesus was not risen from the dead; we go because we were risen and ascended into heaven and given us His Spirit. You *will* be My witnesses, Jesus says, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The guarantee of our usefulness in God's kingdom work is manifested by the Spirit's power in us to do what is beyond our abilities.

If we live in our strength, we will fail. If we rely on our own resources, we will give up. **We can lean forward on mission when we lean in to the Spirit.** In our humble dependence, God accomplishes His good work in us and through us. Don't let your circumstances outwardly, or inadequacies internally, keep you from being used by the Spirit eternally for the welfare of

strangers far from God.

9. Don't Do It Alone

Jesus called Twelve. He commissioned 72, sending them out two-by-two. Jesus knew that we need the support and accountability to stay the course. Submit your plans and ambitions to the Lord and to others in your gospel community to support you in prayer, join you in the work, and encourage you when it seems like nothing is happening. Maverick Christianity is not biblical Christianity. We are a family on mission. We may not all be engaging the same people because our rhythms may take us difference places in different ways to difference contexts. But we are all on the same team, all having the same mission and goal, and we need one another.

If you are looking to flesh this out among believers who are not making disciples, you will likely have to start alone if no one wants to do it with you. But pray that God will use your example as a catalyst to mobilize others for mission. **Often times people don't know what life on mission looks like until they see it lived out.**

10. Get Messy with Mercy in Your Heart

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Those who get the mercy of God will be dispensers of the mercy of God. Pharisees don't get messy because they don't see their sin and need for mercy. Sinners saved by grace are equipped with the same mercy they received to live as ministers of mercy toward others. That means you don't engage strangers who qualify by their self-righteousness to become your neighbors. Knowing how God has dealt with you so compassionately, you freely give yourself to get messy in the lives of strangers and not shrink back because of their sin or rebellion against God.

Do I really believe that God saves sinners? That no one is beyond the reach of God's grace? That where sin abounds, grace can abound all the more? That the Holy Spirit is the Great Evangelist? That the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for ALL who believe? Then a **right understanding of God and His gospel will motivate us to get messy.** Jesus came for those who are sick, not those who are well. Good news for us is that a whole lot of people qualify. The fields are white unto harvest!

Read Part 1 [here](#).

Read Part 2 [here](#).

Read more from Timmy [here](#).