

Everyday Church:

A Journey Through 1 Peter



Fall 2012 Study Guide



Everyday Church:

A Journey Through 1 Peter

Fall 2012 Study Guide

...see, I send you out like sheep into the midst of wolves...
(Luke 10)

...then they got Jesus in show business, now it's hard to get in the door.
(From "If God Would Send His Angels" by U2)

In 1960, sixty percent of Canadians considered themselves regular church attenders. At this same time, only fifty percent of Americans made the same claim. Canada was, by nearly all measurements, a committed - and nominally *Christian* - nation. In the last fifty years, Canada has undergone an unusually fast societal U-turn with regard to secularization. Now the highest estimate of *any* religious affiliation in Canada hovers around twenty-five percent. Clearly, the world - and Canadian culture - has changed dramatically in the past half-century. Sociologists and observers of religion use (at least) two different concepts to tell the complex story of religion and Canadian society: secularization and tribalization.

Most of us are familiar with the first term. Although the causes and makeup of "secularization" are up for debate, the effects or results of secularization are relatively clear: religion and religious communities lose influence and broad cultural relevance in societies termed "secular." The "secularization thesis," made popular by an American sociologist named Peter Berger, remained academic orthodoxy for much of the latter half of the twentieth century. It proposed a link between modernization and the decrease of religious practice and belief. In Western Europe and Canada, this certainly seemed to be true. As Peter Berger observes, belief in the Virgin Birth or in healing prayer becomes increasingly implausible in an age marked by air travel and countless technological achievements. The more we experience the clear-eyed results of human rationality and scientific reason, the less likely we will turn toward a less-rational faith in a world haunted by a God or gods.



The secularization thesis certainly describes some of the Canadian story. Religious relevance *has* declined as we have become more and more dependent on the technological fruit of modernity. But the link between a fully modernized world and secularity is not nearly as strong as we assume. In the last ten years, Peter Berger and a host of other sociologists (even Canadian observer of religion Reginald Bibby) have publicly stated their unease with their previous understanding of secularization. In the opening essay to, *The Desecularization of the World*, Berger makes public his about-face: "the assumption that we

live in a secularized world is false. The world today...is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than it ever was" (2). Religion - Christianity included - has not sailed off into the sunset as we become more technologically advanced. A persistent minority of people who remain drawn to spiritual and religious questions remain in Canada, while modernization in the Global South (S. America, Africa, Asia) has accompanied religious *revival*. You and I fly on airplanes and use cell phones and visit the doctor and yet we still pray for healing and believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Thus, it is lazy and somewhat false to blame decreasing church attendance in Canada on our increasing modernization. The modern world is not necessarily secular.

But the nature of religion and Christianity in Canada *has* changed significantly. This leads to the second term referenced above. The past few decades, wanna-be-hipsters (and philosophers) everywhere have used the term "post-modern" to describe our age. "Post-modern," like "secularity" remains a flexible term that can mean many things to many different people. But one of the things it certainly *does* describe is our cultural fragmentation. The "post" in "post-modern" declares the end of a societal project, the end of a broadly-shared understanding of the good life, and of what constituted the "centre" and the "periphery" of cultural expression and lifestyle, such as the WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) ideal of the 1950s and 60s in the US and Canada (outside of Quebec, of course).

Now, individual expression formed by interest-specific sub-cultures or "tribes" dominates our cultural landscape. It is difficult to find a single idea or group that includes all Canadians. We increasingly live life in our various "tribes" that provide belonging, meaning, and purpose to our lives.

Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, in his new e-book *A New Day*, shows how the Canadian religious reality is made up of small, vibrant religious communities.



What has changed for Christians, then, is not necessarily the relentless onslaught of secularism but the experience of tribalization and the accompanying reality of a pluralist society. Christianity no longer holds the centre for Canadian society. It has been dis-established as a primary source for cultural cohesion and moral instruction. Christianity is now one "tribe" or subculture in a society made up of countless other subcultures or tribes. We have been marginalized, as have many other communities in our thoroughly multi-cultural and pluralist society.

The marginalization of Christianity provokes a great range of responses. **An initial (and right) response is one of mourning.** We have lost a cultural moment (largely called "Christendom") in which the Christian story informed and chastened our dominant societal narrative, educational hopes, political discourse and moral formation. Christian churches can no longer rely upon public schools, television programs or the behaviour of neighbours to help form and inform the Christian and/or moral development of our children. The Christian story has become strange; it lacks plausibility beyond (and even within) our churches.

But a second response is also needed and necessary: discovering a renewed identity as God's missionary people. The Christendom heritage is not unambiguous. In some ways, the Christian story became co-opted by the halls of political and economic power. The clear identification between "Canada" and "Christian" obscured the call to discipleship and made our churches chaplains to society rather than prophetic communities who bear witness to a present-and-yet-still-coming Kingdom. The present marginalization of the faith allows us to see aspects of Christian faithfulness more clearly that we could not see earlier, and it calls us to discern a new way of living today. As marginal in a tribal society, we are now more like missionary communities, or like the early church in the first few centuries of the Christian story. An era in Canadian Christianity has ended, but our faith has not. We are now in a "new missional era"¹ characterized by new and renewed opportunities to live as God's people.

1 Peter is a book written to "strangers and exiles" in what is now modern day Turkey. It is a book written to marginal and marginalized people that encourages them to live *everyday* lives that are unambiguously *good news* to a tribal and pagan society: "live such good lives among the pagans, that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." It is a book written to a people that share similarities to our cultural situation. Over the next two months, we will explore both 1 Peter and a book called *Everyday Church: Mission By Being Good Neighbours*² in order to actively renew our vision of church, discipleship, and witness in our new missional era.

How to use this Study Guide:

*This Study Guide is an invitation to a journey, and it also will help facilitate a journey. It will involve moments of **discovery, dwelling, and engagement.***

When I discover a new hike, I usually read about the trail first. Perhaps I have heard it gossiped by others, or come across it in one of the many hiking books that provide such information. Either way, I will Google the hike and read about it. I will look on a map and find out where it is, what it is known for and what I can expect. I never actually go on a trail unless I have first *discovered* it and explored its contours in some way. It is simply not wise to launch into the woods without adequate information. After discovering the material and the trail, I find myself *dwelling* in the available maps and trail guides. I gather the things I think I'll need, I study the maps and re-read the descriptions.

But discovering a hike and dwelling in the available maps and hiking guides is a lot different than strapping on the boots and grabbing the backpack and actually *engaging* the

¹ The phrase "new missional era" comes from a book by Pat Keifert called, *We Are Here Now*, (Allelon Publishing, 2007). It is not my own. I will use it throughout the Study Guide, but will only provide proper citation here.

² Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church*, (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2011). It is being released in Canada this fall.

hike. A lot of reading does not make a backpacking trip or provide the richness of a week in the back-country. Discovery and Dwelling must lead to Engagement. Inevitably, the actual hike surprises me - no matter how much work had been done at the front end. But there would be no real hike without the work of discovery and dwelling.



This Study Guide is meant to facilitate a journey through 1 Peter, but also into deeper Christian community and greater participation in God's mission in our neighbourhoods. It is not about information or study, but rather about transformation and experimentation. However, like preparation for a hiking journey, we cannot get to a new and renewed missional journey without also discovering new places for engagement and dwelling in God's Word. Thus, the Study Guide will invites us to *discover* God's work and our place in it, to *dwell* in the Scriptural text, and then to *engage* our neighbourhood and our Christian community with a renewed intentionality in faith, hope and love. Every week, therefore, has two different sections that work together.

Daily Shared Practices

The first section is entitled "Daily Shared Practices." This is meant to guide our morning and evening prayer as well as our daily Scripture reading. The prayers are the same for all eight weeks. Learn them, memorize them and make them a part of your daily rhythm. The scriptural text stays the same for each week. Read it slowly and meditate on it every day as a part of your morning or evening prayer. Our missional journey requires us to be a people of prayer who are shaped in and by the Word of God.

Weekly Sojourn

Our weekly sojourn marks the journey of discovery, dwelling and engagement around our topic. It is meant to be done over five days and it leads to our weekly Mission Group evening. Find time in or around your morning or evening prayer for one of the Sojourn exercises each day as well. Let us journey together and encourage one another as we go: to *discover* our neighbourhood and what God is up to, *dwell* in the Scriptural text deeply so that it can form and inform us, and then *engage* in our setting in a new and profoundly meaningful way.

Week 1: Everyday Life on the Margins

1 Peter 1:1-12

*To the exiles of the dispersion...who have been chosen...
may grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:1-2)*

Movement describes our new missional era. We have moved *from* a stable and cohesive vision of church and society *to* something new. British theologian Stuart Murray Williams describes the shifting identity of the church in our society in this way:

From the centre to the margins

In Christendom the Christian story and the churches were central, but in post-Christendom these are marginal.

From majority to minority

In Christendom Christians comprised the (often overwhelming) majority, but in post-Christendom we are a minority.

From settlers to sojourners

In Christendom Christians felt at home in a culture shaped by their story, but in post-Christendom we are aliens, exiles and pilgrims in a culture where we no longer feel at home.

From privilege to plurality

In Christendom Christians enjoyed many privileges, but in post-Christendom we are one community among many in a plural society.

From control to witness

In Christendom churches could exert control over society, but in post-Christendom we exercise influence only through witnessing to our story and its implications.

From maintenance to mission

In Christendom the emphasis was on maintaining a supposedly Christian status quo, but in post-Christendom it is on mission within a contested environment.

From institution to movement

In Christendom churches operated mainly in institutional mode, but in post-Christendom we must become again a Christian movement.

(Quoted in *Everyday Church*, 21-22)

Murray-Williams' list demonstrates the far-reaching consequences of our new missional era. Our marginalization in a pluralist society (as one option among many) means that we must think about ourselves differently (as no longer at the centre, as no longer settled) and

that we must live as the church differently (as a movement, in mission, as a sojourner). How will we do this?

Thankfully, the biblical narrative gives us plenty of resources for this question. When we are settled and comfortable in our world, we might forget that Abraham - called by Paul the father of all who have faith - remained a nomad his entire life and that the Christian faith carries this nomadic and migratory identity throughout history. We don't need to sit at the centre of society to have impact or be faithful. In fact, the biblical narrative provides many cautionary tales about the trappings of power and privilege (see: Saul, Solomon, Maccabean Revolt, etc.). Remember, the gospel made it to Rome through Paul the prisoner. Studies of early Christianity, such as Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*, show that the rapid growth of the faith happened through the ordinary and everyday lives of Christian slaves, women, and merchants whose lives provided an inviting alternative to a crumbling and decadent paganism. Opportunities like this exist for the church in the West. Our marginalization gives rise to a new missional era where our everyday lives in and with God's world *must* become the primary way that we live as the church.

In the book *Everyday Church*, authors Tim Chester and Steve Timmis put it this way: "We need to do church and mission in the context of everyday life. We must think of church as a community of people who share life, ordinary life. And the bedrock of mission will be ordinary life. So, an everyday church with an everyday mission" (31).

This week, we begin our journey by dwelling in both 1 Peter and our city to see how Peter's words to the exiles and sojourners in Asia Minor (now Turkey) help us to see ourselves and our world more clearly.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 1:1-12

Read the text slowly and meditatively a few times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favour to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

Read through the Stuart Murray Williams list in our weekly introduction (it begins with *from centre to the margins*). Where do you see these reflected in your day to day life? Try to think of a few stories that illustrate one or more of these.

Days 2-3: Dwell

Sometimes, recognizing ways that we have been marginalized helps us to identify with others that are also or who also have been marginalized. As you go about your day-to-day life, be on the lookout for people and groups that are 'left behind' in our society. Who are the forgotten and marginalized in our neighbourhood? Where are the forgotten and marginalized in our society?

Read Psalm 137 and 2 Kings 25. This is part of the historical experience that sits behind the term "exile" in Scripture; Israel was forcibly removed from the land, the temple destroyed, her sons and daughters murdered. Peter calls the church "exiles." Thinking about the marginalized in our society, **re-read 1 Peter 1:1-12**. What language in this introduction provides specific words of confident hope to the "exiles"? What terms catch you as particularly good news for our new missional era?

Days 4-5: Engage

During your evening prayer time, think through your past few days. Where have you spent your time? What have you done with your time? With whom have you spent it? How can you bless those you connect with on a daily basis? Do it.

In your daily prayer, what has God been saying to you about your day-to-day life? Where has he shown you opportunities for sharing your faith, for seeking justice, for blessing another? Act on one of these.

Week 2: Everyday in the Neighbourhood

1 Peter 1:13-2:8

*The tradition of non-conformist dissent [in the church] has been replaced by middle-class conformity. We need to discover or recover the sense that if this year we are not imprisoned, then it has been a good year in which by the grace of God we have got off lightly... (Chester & Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 42).*

In the bestselling novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*, five different women (a wife and four daughters) tell the troubled story of a missionary family to the Congo in the middle of the twentieth century. The husband/father is portrayed in both sympathetic and tragic terms: a passionate man of conviction whose commitments become an immovable hazard; a rock that shipwrecks the family, the mission and the man. In one telling scene, a daughter reports hearing her dad stand in front of the new congregation of Congolese Christians saying, “Jesus is *Lord*” while calling for them to bring their children down to the river to be baptized. The Congolese villagers hurry out of the meeting confused and angry. Why? Because the word for “Lord” and “poisonwood” are very close; and the alligator-filled river is a dangerous place for children. The new missionary had declared that Jesus is *poisonwood* - a sinewy and rash-producing plant - rather than *Lord* while suggesting that the villagers feed their children to the alligators. This begins a long story of stubborn cultural misunderstanding, in part because the missionary failed to study and appreciate his particular setting.



The Poisonwood Bible reflects some of the very worst events of cultural misunderstanding that sometimes took place in previous decades of missions work, but we should not dismiss it. We have already described our present cultural moment as a new missional era; that we can no longer assume clear and direct connection-points with others in our society or even our neighbourhood. When we give our neighbour a gospel tract that explains Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross, our neighbour might respond “who is Jesus?” and “what is sin?” We can no longer assume that we share the same story or assumptions about spirituality, morality, biblical authority, etc. This is our new missional era. In the same way that our missionary predecessors who left our shores to other continents begin by living life among the people they hoped to reach, so also our whole life lived in and with the world here in Canada should bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. We are - like the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians - “ambassadors of Christ” as we go about our lives.

What does it mean to *live* and *speak* the good news of the gospel among our neighbours? What should our everyday life as the church look like in our particular neighbourhood? We will not know how to answer these questions if we do not learn to carefully and generously pay attention to the places in which we live and work. Nor will we be good news if we neglect the Scriptural text as a part of our neighbourhood discovery. This week, we will explore our neighbourhood, looking for bridges and connecting points for the gospel while also hearing again Peter’s call to be a distinct and peculiar people.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 1:13-2:8

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Days 1-2: Discover

Over the next few days, look for answers to the following questions from the book *Everyday Church* regarding your neighbourhood. Write answers to them and bring them to your Mission Group evening.

Where?

- Where are the places and activities in which you can meet people ('the missional spaces')?
- Where do people experience community?
- Are there existing social networks with which we can engage or do we need to find ways of creating community within a neighbourhood?
- *Where* should you be to have missional opportunities?

When?

- What are the patterns and timescales of your neighbourhood ('the missional rhythms')?
- When are the times when you can connect with people ('the missional moments')?
- How do people organize their time?
- What cultural experiences and celebrations do people value? How might these be used as bridges to the gospel?
- *When* should you be available to have missional opportunities?

What?

- What are people's fears, hopes, and hurts?
- What 'gospel' stories are told in the neighbourhood? What gives people identity (creation)? How do they account for wrong in the world (fall)? What is their solution (redemption)? What are their hopes (consummation)?
- What are the barrier beliefs or assumptions that cause people to dismiss the gospel?
- What sins will the gospel first confront and heal?
- In what ways are people self-righteous?
- What is the good news for people in this neighbourhood?
- What will church look like for people in this neighbourhood?

(From Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 48-49)

Day 3: Dwell

After acknowledging the exilic and marginal status of the church while reminding us of God's promised future, Peter says "therefore...set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed" (1:13). He continues by exhorting the church to live disciplined lives. This "therefore" is there for us as well. It is essential that we embrace and enact the peculiarity of the Christian gospel: that we live as those whose hope is set on Jesus *and not* the many other things a community might hope for (a Packers super-bowl!).

Re-read 1 Peter 1:13-2:8 in light of the discovery exercise. In what ways does the hope of Jesus Christ make us odd or provide opportunity for us to live an alternative lifestyle from what we see around us? Where do we already do this? Where do we need to pay closer attention to Jesus' hope?

Day 4: Dwell

Reflect on the following quote from *Everyday Church*. Look back at the Discovery exercise, what would "living proof" of the gospel look like in your neighbourhood? Write a few sentences imagining what this community would do, what it would look like, what qualities it would have.

So the Christian community demonstrates the effectiveness of the gospel. We are living proof that the gospel is not an empty word, but a powerful Word that takes men and women who are lovers of self and transforms them by grace through the Spirit into people who love God and love others. We are living proof that the death of Jesus was not just a vain expression of God's love, but an effective death that achieved the salvation of a people who now love one another sincerely from the heart (Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 65).

Day 5: Engage

Look back over the Discovery exercise. What questions were difficult for you to answer? How well do you dwell in your neighbourhood or know your neighbours? Look for a way to connect with a neighbour this week before Mission Group. Invite a friend over for dinner, or respond to an invitation that is given. Go to the public library for a lecture...look for a way to connect and tell about it at Mission Group.

Week 3: Everyday as Community

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

*Once I thought without a doubt
I had it all figured out, Universe with hands unseen
I was cold as gasoline, Took too long, to see...
I was wrong to believe...in me only
(From "Solitaire" by Wilco)*

The 2000 blockbuster *Remember the Titans* retells (with some creative flourish) the true story of a desegregated high school in Alexandria, Virginia during the 1970s. The movie begins with the scandalous school board decision to replace a popular Caucasian football coach with an African-American one. Since football has such a revered place in the cultural milieu of the U.S. South, this decision heightens racial tensions across the city and threatens to tear the high school and football team apart. The new coach (played by Denzel Washington) responds to this tension by creating an alternative community within the football locker room. He recruits the former coach to demonstrate cooperation across a racial divide and then he creates alternative practices of belonging, cooperation and teamwork among the players.



Even though the players live on opposite sides of town and do not 'mix' while in school or on the street, they slowly form a team when on the football field. As the movie develops, the team becomes a counter-culture, an alternative community who lives out of racial cooperation and friendship rather than rivalry and suspicion. The team becomes a sign of a different way to respond to racial difference; as such, they are both compellingly attractive and offensive to outsiders. They are a small community living out of an alternative set of practices and vision. The story makes for a compelling sports movie, but it also shows the power of *community* and *belonging* in transforming both individuals and a neighbourhood.

Something like this picture of an alternative community is what Peter has in mind for the church when he says, "Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22). In a world of rivalry, division and conflict that bears the scars of violence and nurses the deep wounds of hatred, the church is a people who have "tasted that the Lord is good" (2:3) and so live from the centre of God's love for all creation. As Jesus said, "everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34). The gospel of Jesus Christ creates an alternative community - the church - that creates a new and renewed social space; a new family, new practices and a new hope. This is an *everyday* calling: to love one another in the name and hope of Christ.

Some friends from Albania recently visited our church. They shared a story about a young girl who was rejected by her family. She was supposed to be aborted and was not. She was sent off to live with another family, but her older siblings went and retrieved her even though her father has never welcomed her into his home. But the local Christian community - the church - has welcomed this young girl. Over the years, she has not only been invited, but *loved* and *honoured* by this community. Recently, the church celebrated her tenth birthday with her family. The family still does not understand why she is loved, but they know and appreciate that she has been included in this strange people. As a result, she has come alive and has begun to flourish in this alternative community.

The marginality of the church in North America invites us to consider the shape of our everyday lives together as a community. The time for church-as-spectacle (big shows, bright lights, celebrity speakers, advertising campaigns) is waning in a society that is increasingly fragmented by interest groups, sub-cultures and consumer demand. Like the story of the young girl, it is now the small and everyday ways in which we journey together, love each other and welcome others that creates the possibility for something truly spectacular.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

Make note of the significant moments in your spiritual journey where God spoke to you and shaped you through Christian community. In what ways did community - Christian or otherwise - help you to “taste and see that the Lord is good...”? Be prepared to share this at the Mission Group evening. Throughout the week, ask two other people to share their spiritual journey. Ask them specifically when a Christian community helped them to see the goodness of God?

Day 2: Dwell

Read Isaiah 40:6-8, 12-14, 28-31. What is claimed here about the Word, work, and action of God? What does this Word and work of God do in and with us? Which of these metaphors in Isaiah move, challenge, or catch you?

Day 3: Dwell

Peter links *love for one another* with the fact that we are *born again* (1:22-23). This echoes Jesus’ summation of the law: “Love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself” as well as 1 John 4:7-8 (“anyone who loves has been born of God...”). The implications are clear. The quality of our community as the church bears witness to the vitality and integrity of Christ’s salvation in us. Therefore, Peter wants us to rid ourselves of malice, envy, and other things that divide community. But beware: if we rush to things that we need to *stop* or *start* doing, we will miss the big idea. Peter quotes Isaiah 40 to contrast our flimsy human actions with God’s eternal, creative, and healing Word. That is, Christian community is a *gift of God*, created by God for the sake of bearing witness to his salvation.

Read 1 Peter 1:22-2:3: Think about your weekly encounters with the church. List your frustrations, hesitations, and anxieties. How does Peter’s insight, that community is God’s gift sustained by God’s Word help you to look at these frustrations and anxieties differently? Pray about this.

Day 4: Dwell

In talking about community, we must always fight the temptation to only speak of idealized and idealistic visions of church life. Real-life Christian community is made up of real people. Loving one another means loving one another as real flesh-and-blood persons and not idealized images. A German theologian by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers an important warning for us as we think about our everyday community:

By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world...Only that fellowship which faces...disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God’s sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an

individual and a community the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community...Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.

(Bohoeffer, *Life Together*, 27)

What dreams of community get in the way of embracing and living in our real everyday Christian community?

Day 5: Engage

Love one another because Christ is at work in you. Bless and encourage five different people in your Christian community this week. Be creative. Have fun.

Week 4: Everyday Mission

1 Peter 2:9-3:14

*I was walking, far from home, where the names were not burned along the wall
saw a wet road form a circle, and it came like a call from the Lord
("Walking Far From Home" by Iron and Wine)*

*Go...do not take a purse or sandals with you as you go along the road...
I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves... (Jesus)*

My most profound experience in short-term missions began with a bus fire. I was taking 30 students and 5 adults to help with some evangelistic and humanitarian work in Monterrey, Mexico. Before crossing the border, we had to get on a Mexican-owned bus company in El Paso, Texas. We loaded boxes of T-shirts and soccer balls, computers and other 'mission-trip' paraphernalia onto the bus. Several people in our church and community had given generously; we were armed with good intentions and good gifts. We were going to run a Vacation Bible School for children in a squatter-settlement in Monterrey, run soccer camps and help set up a job-training centre with the gift of computers. We had mission-on-a-bus. We had all we needed. One hour into our trip across the Mexican desert, we began to smell smoke. The bus driver pulled over. I jumped out with him. We noticed a soft-orange glow under a luggage compartment. When we opened it, oxygen rushed in and flames exploded out, leaping up over the windows.

All the students got off the bus. We rescued one guitar and an outfit for clowning. As the sun set, students gathered around the guitar and played worship songs. We were hours from civilization, in a foreign country, and watching all our stuff - our mission - smolder with the setting sun. We eventually arrived in Monterrey around 3am. Instead of bringing gifts to the Mexican community, our need forced us to *receive* gifts from them. It was an inspired and inspiring trip. Our



flammable ministry tools (fill in your 'up in smoke' joke here...) made us vulnerable in a surprisingly life-giving way. We were no longer 'doing' mission - it was no longer an activity that we planned for, constructed and executed. Those plans gave a few hours of light, heat and smoke on a Mexican highway. Instead, our loss and vulnerability made it possible for us to receive from those we hoped to serve. Our lack of 'mission stuff' forced us to respond to and participate in the little everyday things that this small community of Christians were already doing in their neighbourhood. Instead of running camps, we played soccer in the street with kids and were able to share the gospel over water breaks and in down time. Rather than 'mission' being an activity we did, like 'outreach' or 'service,' we learned that mission names what God is up to already.

The past two hundred fifty years have marked one of the greatest and most ambitious periods of the Christian story. From the late 1700s to the middle of the twentieth century, a unique confluence of factors such as evangelical renewal, evangelistic fervor, Western colonial ambition and advancements in travel and communications conspired to launch an ambitious phase of global Christian missions. It is certainly a mixed history. This, the “modern missionary movement” gave birth to both dynamic indigenous Christian communities across the globe and compromised colonial parodies of Christian community. Regardless, it is one of the factors that has made Christianity a truly global and culturally diverse movement. It has brought the gospel to the ends of the earth. However, this movement has also given us a set of images around mission: that it is human activity accomplished across a geographic border that is only supplementary to the ministry of a local church.

When we imagined North America as largely ‘Christian,’ it was difficult to see mission as something that characterizes the life of the local church. It is not so difficult to see that now. But something more profound has taken place than the fact that North America is now post-Christian and thus a ‘mission field.’ Our cultural vulnerability has alerted us to something more fundamental about mission: that it is *God’s* and not ours. Moreover, our vulnerability has made us more attuned to the way that mission is our participation with God’s work in reconciling all creation to himself.

Like the 72 sent out by Jesus in Luke 10 without a bag or sandals, we discover God’s care and work *already present* in the places he sends us and so we come back rejoicing that God’s power and transforming hope was at work *even there*.

In this new missional era, we are called to participate in God’s mission in our everyday lives. In 1 Peter 2:9-12, we are given a series of images from the Old Testament that give some theological underpinnings for our identity as a missional people: like Israel we are blessed to be a blessing. We exist to anticipate and participate in the reconciling work of God. The rest of chapters 2 and 3 provide Peter’s particular instructions to the congregation regarding their everyday lives as missionaries. Wives, slaves, those mistreated and accused of wrongdoing are all to see their lives in light of God’s mission. Even those whose bus burns to the ground.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 2:9-3:14

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Savior and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

Christopher Wright helps us to understand the way in which *mission* describes the shape of the biblical story and the nature of God.

The God revealed in the Scriptures is personal, purposeful and goal-oriented. The opening account of creation portrays God working toward a goal, completing it with satisfaction and resting, content with the result. And from the great promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 we know this God to be totally, covenantally and eternally committed to the mission of blessing the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham. ...From that point on, the mission of God could be summed up with the words "God is working his purpose out/as year succeeds to year," and as generations come and go...Mission, then, in biblical terms, while it inescapably involves us in planning and action, is not *primarily* a matter of our activity or initiative. Mission, from the point of view of our human endeavor, means the committed *participation* of God's people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole of creation. The mission is God's. The marvel is that God invites us join in. (Wright, *The Mission of God*, 63, 67).

This quote points toward the fact that "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." In our new missional era, God has not abandoned the world, but rather is at work reconciling it to himself (2 Cor. 5). Our loss of power in post-Christendom makes us more aware of the fact that the mission is *God's* rather than ours. This week, look for and keep track of 'God sightings' - ways in which God is at work with or without your help. Answer these three questions throughout the week and bring them to your Mission Group: (1) *Where* have you seen God at work in the world? (In big and small ways...put them all down). (2) *What* was he doing? (3) *How* could you join him?

Day 2: Dwell

We participate in God's mission as God's people. As we practice everyday community and see our neighbourhood as a mission field, we must not neglect the church as a "sign, agent, and foretaste" of God's kingdom (Lesslie Newbigin). We tend to think of the church as a building, an institution, or an organizational structure, but Peter wants us to think of it as a dynamic and missionary *people*. In the text, Peter uses a series of images from the Old Testament that serve as a kind of "hypertext link" (*Everyday Church*, 101) to describe a richly-textured view of the church. Explore the passages below and read them next to 1 Peter 2:9-10. Which phrases do you see used in 1 Peter? How do the OT texts give a thicker or richer meaning to the identity of the church?

Read: Exodus 19:3-6, Hosea 2:9-23, Isaiah 43:16-21³

³ Some background: Exodus 19 announces Israel's vocation as a kingdom of priests. A priest is a mediator between God and another. Hosea is a prophecy that warns Israel of her coming judgment since she has been unfaithful to the covenant, and has not fulfilled her calling. Hosea - if you remember - compares Israel to an unfaithful spouse. Pay attention to how this prophecy ends, though. What does God promise in the midst of unfaithfulness? And Isaiah 43 is a prophecy given to Israel while she is in exile about God's restoration.

Day 3: Dwell

Read 1 Peter 2:11-12 in light of the images and texts from yesterday. How do these verses come alive in light of the OT background? Write a sentence that states - based on this set of verses - the calling or vocation of the church?

Days 4-5: Engage

In *Everyday Church*, authors Tim Chester and Steve Timmis give a simple exercise for living everyday mission: for being a church that “lives such good lives in the neighbourhood” that our neighbours give praise to God. Do this exercise and bring it to your Mission Group.

Think of all the activities, however mundane, that make up your normal (1) *daily routine* (like traveling to work, eating meals, chores, walking the dog, playing with the children); (2) *weekly routine* (like grocery shopping, watching favourite television programmes, getting exercise); and (3) *monthly routine* (like gardening, getting a haircut, going to the cinema). You should have a long list. For each one, ask whether you could add: (1) *a community component* by involving another member of your Christian community; (2) *a missional component* by involving an unbeliever; and (3) *a gospel component* by identifying opportunities to talk about Jesus.

(From *Everyday Church*, 104-105).

After doing the exercise, try to enact some of the components you have written down.

Week 5: Everyday Evangelism 1

1 Peter 3:15-16

*We are going to a place where music falls and fills up everything
Now it might be a long time, but we're gonna be alright
'cause we've already started to sing...*
(From "Music" by Butterflyfish)

Whenever I attend a musical, I always turn to Maribeth at some point in the evening and say "wouldn't life be so much better if it were sung?" Now, I'm not much of a singer, but it seems to me that there is something about song that captures the hope and the profanity of life in a way that ordinary prose misses. I wonder this about dance, too. One of my daughters dances her way through life. Ordinary moments of the day such as making her way out the door to school or walking from her bedroom to the dinner table become intricate ballets twisted in time to a melody only she can hear. For a person like me that can't sing or dance, I identify something missing when I attend a musical or watch my daughter dance through her day. I want to join in the melody, to be caught up in the music, to be *moved*.

The Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World creates a "street party" a couple times a day. While families and tourists mill around in the town square, floats filled with Disney characters appear and music booms from hidden speakers. Initially, the street party is pure spectacle. People gather and watch the floats encircle the square and wave at the characters, but then the floats stop and the characters come down off the floats to draw the crowd out into the street. The line between audience and performer blurs for a second and the good news proclaimed from the speakers - "celebrate you" is the refrain in the song - becomes enacted for a few brief minutes. The music and dance sweep away a few tired tourists for a few brief moments.



Something like this is what we ought to mean by evangelism. So often, we equate evangelism with a method of discourse that looks more like sales than dance. We equate evangelism with accosting strangers with gospel tracts or using well-intentioned yet formulaic ice-breakers like "If you died tonight..." These methods for evangelism are relics of a Christendom era when we could assume most people knew the biblical story and so evangelism meant calling them back to what they once knew. This is no longer the case. Evangelism *now* (and perhaps it always did) needs to be more holistic: it is *living* and *speaking* the truth of the gospel. As such, evangelism is like an infectiously joyful dance that we cannot help but invite others into.

In a little book called, *More Ready Than You Realize*, Brian McLaren recovers the term “evangelism” from its high-pressure connotations and he suggests that people are largely *interested* in having meaningful conversations about life, meaning, hope and Jesus. He argues that evangelism is one thing that our world desperately *needs*...just not what we have become accustomed to with street-corner and television preachers. He uses a metaphor of dance to talk about evangelism:

So the gospel comes to you not like a commercial on the radio or a TV or a political slogan in a campaign or a scientific formula in a classroom, but like a song. It sneaks up on you, and then sneaks inside you. Somewhere in your journey through life, you begin to hear this song whose music captures your heart with its rhythm, melody, ambience, and glory, and you begin to move to its rhythm. Thus you enter the dance.

Over time, your whole life begins to harmonize to the song. Its rhythm awakens you; its tempo moves you, so you resonate with its tone and flow and its melody. The lyric gradually convinces you that the entire world was meant to share in this song with its message, its joy, its dance. If more people heard the music, their hatred would give way to reconciliation; their greed would melt into generosity; their grumbling would transform into gratitude; their mourning would be turned to dancing...This is why if you begin to feel the song and live by it, you desire to help others do the same...Anyone who hears the song - truly hears it - must dance. And all dancers seek to share their joy.”

(McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 16-17)

In 1 Peter 3:15-16, Peter concludes his instructions for everyday mission with a reflection on the behaviour and speech of the church. Their lives are to point toward Christ’s Lordship, they are to live in such a way that their conscience is clear. To continue the metaphor above, they live in step with the melody of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. They are to learn to hum and dance to the song the new creation. Such a way of life invites and needs explanation, so Peter also instructs the church to be ready to give an account of the hope they have in Christ. Like Jesus’ instructions to the seventy-two in Luke 10, they must announce that the “Kingdom of God has come near.”

We will spend the next two weeks thinking about evangelism as a part of our everyday mission. This first week, we will try to clarify what we mean by the dance of the gospel. How can we learn to become more attentive to the good news - the in-breaking Kingdom of God - in our midst? How can we learn to see and join in with the dance of God in our midst? The second week, we will think more specifically about announcing, declaring and stating the hope that we have in Jesus.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 3:15-16

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

Look back over your lists from last week. *Where* did you see God at work? *What* was he doing? *How* might you participate in this work? Also, look at our Engage exercise from last week. What ordinary opportunities do you have for mission and sharing the gospel. Write all those here.

Based on your reflections above, write the names of 4 different people that God has put in your path where you see God at work calling them to himself. Commit to praying for a chance to share the gospel with each of them.

Day 2: Discover

The authors of *Everyday Church* publish a list from Jonathan Dodson in Texas that suggests 8 easy ways to be missional. Read through the list, circle the ones you already do and star the ones that you would like to do better. Organize your week in such a way that you can live this way. *Look for opportunities to participate in the things that God is already doing!*

8 Easy Ways to be Missional

1. **Eat with non-Christians.** *Flee the Christian sub-culture.*
2. **Walk, don't Drive.** Be present in your neighbourhood on-foot with your dog, kids, etc.
3. **Be a regular.** Go to the same restaurants, coffee shops, etc. Get to know the staff. Build relationships.
4. **Hobby with non-Christians.**
5. **Talk to your co-workers.** Show interest in them. Pick four and begin to pray for them. Get to know them.
6. **Volunteer with non-profits.** Find a non-profit in the city/neighbourhood and volunteer. Bring friends and neighbours along.
7. **Participate in city events.** Go to fundraisers, summer festivals, clean-ups, summer shows. Root for the home team. Study the culture. Pray for the city. Love the city.
8. **Serve your neighbours.** Help out with projects. Seek them out.

(From *Everyday Church*, 106-107)

Days 3-4: Dwell

Everyday Church suggests that evangelism comes naturally from three priorities: Loving Jesus, Loving people, and Loving life. These three priorities all come together in the gospel story: for it is the story of the reconciliation of all things. It is the story of God's love for all people and it affirms the fact that life wins out over death.

Chester and Timmis follow a broad group of biblical scholars to suggest that the biblical story (and thus the gospel) has four basic movements:

1. *Creation:* We are made in God's image to reflect his glory, to love God and love others. (See Genesis 1:26-2:25; Psalm 8)

2. *Fall*: We have rebelled against God's rule, but our self-rule leads to conflict, slavery, and judgment. (See Genesis 3-4, Psalm 14)

3. *Redemption*: God restores his rule by sending his Son and graciously enables us to live under his rule by paying the price of our judgment on the cross. (See Mark 1:14-34, 2 Cor. 5:17, Galatians 2:17-3:14)

4. *Consummation*: God will recreate this broken world when Jesus returns. (See 2 Cor. 5:17-6:2, Ephesians 2:11-22, Revelation 21)

(*Everyday Church*, 135-136 - verses in parentheses above are my addition)

Spend some time with each of these points. Work your way through these texts over the next two days. How has your spiritual journey reflected and been shaped by this framework? How would you describe the shape of the "good news" in your life in some of the words from these texts?

Day 5: Engage

Chester and Timmis also suggest that *everybody* has a gospel story. The problem is that it is often distorted, and based on a false sense of hope and a false sense of identity. A gospel story is simply any statement of hope:

Creation: My sense of identity: who and whose I am

Fall: My problem: what is wrong with me or the world?

Redemption: My solution: who or what will put things right

Consummation: My hope: what state of affairs or future will give my present life meaning

Listen to the conversations around you. Listen to the nightly news. Listen even to the things you say. Where do you hear gospel stories? What is it that people hope for? What fall narrative do they have? Who or what do they expect to put things right? Sketch a few of these out and bring them to your Mission Group.

Week 6: Everyday Evangelism 2

1 Peter 3:15-16

*...do not move about from house to house...eat what is set before you.
Heal the sick who are there and announce "the Kingdom of God has come near."
(Luke 10:7-9)*

In the 1987 film, *The Princess Bride*, a man named Inigo Montoya (played by Mandy Patinkin) joins a band of outlaws while he searches for the six-fingered man who killed his father. A comically-one-dimensional character, Montoya spends most of the movie demonstrating his expertise with a sword while practicing the lines meant for his father's killer: "My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." Whenever he meets new people in the film, he shares these lines and his quest to avenge his father's death.



I wonder if much of our preparation for evangelism is as one-dimensional as Montoya, minus the sword-fighting and likability. Many years ago, I was on a plane next to a college student that was convinced he needed to share Jesus with me. He was flying back from a conference he attended. He started in on his canned "ice-breaker" question. I no longer remember the details, but it went something like "when have you tried something and failed?" I have sat through countless "evangelism training" workshops and am a keen observer (and participant) in church culture, so I saw the question - with his hip-looking cross necklace and million-dollar smile - coming from a mile away. I was in a good mood, and I appreciated the effort. I tried to play along while also sending enough signals to the young evangelist that I was, in fact, a follower of Jesus and care about many of the same things that he does. As the conversation careened into Jesus' death on the cross for my sins, I think I even started talking about my job as a youth pastor and how this message is such good news. But the phrase "youth pastor" did not send any helpful signals to my interlocutor. He was determined to get to his punch line: I needed to respond to Jesus' offer of new life.

The problem with my airplane exchange was not the young man's fervor, nor his integrity. He was doing what he had been taught and he took the risk of sharing his faith with a stranger. The problem is that his message came across as a block of information, wooden and unresponsive. My responses to his questions were not explored for signs of grace or hope, they were not treated with care. Rather, my responses served as a launching point for the next lines in his script. Now, the young man might have been nervous. He probably was. He was most likely concentrating on the information he felt like he needed to share and was familiarizing himself with it. That is fine. I'm glad that I could be there to help him work through it - even if he wasn't really listening to anything I had to say.

But if we are to announce the nearness of the Kingdom of God, if we are to be a people that proclaim the gospel with our mouths and our lives, then we need to be able to share in clear and concise words the hope we have in Christ *while also* being sensitive and responsive to the questions, conversations and concerns of those around us. 1 Peter helps us to ask: Do we truly believe that the Kingdom of God has come near? That it is present and coming in our everyday life? If so, then our evangelism must be *responsive* to our everyday lives. Our everyday conversation must be “full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that [we] may know how to answer everyone” (Col. 4:6). The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in the grit of everyday life. Evangelism is the practice of calling attention to this present and coming reality.

The young man on the plane had many things right: there is a clear message of salvation. Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. But, he failed to recognize that this Lordship has everything to do with the questions and concerns of everyday life; and so he did not announce good news that I could recognize. Instead, he gave me a canned speech. It was a one-dimensional gospel in a three dimensional world. We do this too. Mostly because we are not practiced in seeing and announcing the gospel in everyday life. Last week we talked about recognizing the gospel and used the metaphor of a dance in which we are invited to join. This week, we want to take the risk of listening, talking and sometimes calling attention to the gospel in our everyday contacts and conversations. May we have an accounting of the hope in us and call attention to the hope of Jesus in and for others as well. May we be a people who “cry the gospel from the rooftops with our mouths and with our lives.”

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 3:15-16

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Days 1-2: Discover

Reflect on some of the 'gospel' stories you hear from co-workers, friends, and neighbours. Here are some questions from *Everyday Church* that can help:

Creation: What do they assume the world should be like? What kind of person would they like to be? Who are their heroes? What would have to be in place for them to feel happy?

Fall: How do they describe their struggles and battles? What do they feel is their most pressing problem? What do they feel they lack? Who or what do they think is responsible?

Redemption: What do they think will make life better? What provides a sense of escape or release? Who or what will deliver their hopes? What are their functional saviours?

Consummation: What are their hopes? What is the long-term project to which they are working? What are the dreams for which they make sacrifices? Have they given up so that their hope has now shrunk so they are just getting through the day?

(*Everyday Church*, 138)

Take one or two of these stories and, after thinking about them in the framework above, look for clear connection points between the biblical gospel and their distorted gospel. Where does their sense of fall or creation or redemption actually affirm the biblical story? Where does it oppose or contradict the biblical gospel?

Day 3: Dwell

Read Luke 18:18-30; John 4:1-30. Make some observations about Jesus' response to both the rich ruler and the Samaritan woman. What is he doing in these responses? What can we learn from in our own conversations with friends, co-workers, and neighbours?

Day 4: Engage

We can begin to understand the gospel stories that people tell by asking good questions. Our goal is to understand our friends and neighbours better, to listen deeply to them for places of connection to God and God's story so that we might draw attention to that. Over the next few days, practice these questions from *Everyday Church* with friends, co-workers, and neighbours as you go about everyday life with them:

- What do you want? When people are asking for advice or seeking help, try to help them clarify what it is that they are looking and hoping for.
- Why? Why does this matter so much to you? These questions get at the deeper idols that motivate us all: that (perhaps) behind the anger about a co-worker's comments lies a deep desire for respect.

- How is that working for you? In light of what our friends are seeking (what do you want) and the deep desires/needs that motivate it, we can ask our friends how these commitments have worked out in their ordinary life.

Day 5: Engage

Make plans to meet with a neighbour or co-worker in the next week. Have them over for dinner. Invite them to watch a football game. Go for a walk in the neighbourhood. Find some common connecting point and make it happen. While you are together, work at conversation. Ask some of the questions above when appropriate and look for signs of God's story in their own. Draw attention to that and see where the Spirit leads. Process this whole experience with your Mission Group.

Week 7: Everyday Leadership

1 Peter 5:1-4

*And I stopped beside a Sunday School
Listened to the songs they were singing
I headed down the road, somewhere a lonely bell was ringing
And it echoed through the canyons
Like a disappearing dream of yesterday*
(From "Sunday Morning Coming Down" by Johnny Cash)

I work in a lot of coffee shops. It's not that I don't have an office, it's just that I seem to work better in a "third-space" kind of environment. When I was a student, I used to study in a coffee shop that had an amateur music night. But it was different than any other open-mic or amateur night I'd ever seen. Every week, a few regulars would gather with their guitars, harmonicas and other assorted folk-music instruments and begin playing music. Although I could notice a core group of performers, the group also demonstrated a remarkable flexibility. At various points in the evening, newcomers would come in and introduce themselves, pull out an instrument and join in on the song. Various moments of musical chaos would then precede a new melody line around which the group finds clarity. It was a remarkable demonstration of a public and improvisational performance and a picture of the kind of leadership we need in our new missional era.



Although the leadership of this amateur night was not immediately obvious - there was nobody standing up and directing the group, nobody sitting in the 'first chair' or shouting instructions - the fact that the group generated creative and fun music at all speaks to its strong and flexible leadership. The core group maintained itself through some consistent and clear practices: one person would begin a jam in a particular key with a particular rhythm and then others would join one-by-one. Furthermore, a few in the core group would be the first to welcome newcomers and to help them find their place in the music. The amateur night worked because the core group had a clear identity; it gave the group flexibility in welcoming newcomers and made obvious bridges to participation in the group. This is the result of leadership in forming a particular culture through attention to core practices. In short, we might say that leadership was exercised around creating a particular culture for the group by focusing on its core practices as a musical community.

1 Peter offers something similar in its call for leadership in the Church. An everyday church that lives with everyday hope at the margins requires leadership that can help focus the identity of the church *as a church* rather than all the other things churches might become. Peter points first to the *character* of such leaders - they must live with integrity and enact the kind of life they call the church toward. He also points toward a clear sense of identity: leadership in the church must know *to whom* they bear witness and *under whom* they live

and lead. They must be able to keep the main thing the main thing. As we live on the margins as an everyday church, we must know *whose* and *who* we are. This is the task of leadership in our new missional era.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 5:1-4

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
— but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

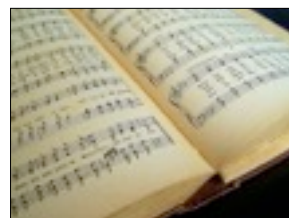
Take some time today to pray for and give thanks for those who have or who are providing leadership for your Christian community. Write them a note or an email expressing thanks for their strengths as a leader.

Day 2: Discover

Take some time today to reflect on *your* leadership in your Christian community. Where do you exercise influence? Who do you serve or lead or build into? Send a note to someone that you either lead formally (if you are, say, a Mission Group leader) or who you build into informally (a friend or discipling partner for the journey). Build them up by sharing some of the things that you pray for them.

Days 3-4: Dwell

Spend two days reflecting on the nature of leadership for our new missional era from 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 5:2-3, Peter provides three contrasting statements (“not as...but...”) to underscore what it means to “serve as overseers.” What are these statements? Dwell in them for awhile. Why is this important? What do you think this means? Where do you see the importance of this for your own community.



Day 5: Engage

Peter says that leaders do not “lord it over” but rather set an example. Look back over the study guide so far. Given our new missional era, what are the key practices that leaders should set an example if we are to be missional communities? List some of these. What organizational pressures or systemic barriers keep our leaders from leading in some of these areas?

Week 8: Everyday Hope

1 Peter 3:8-5:14

*After the storm, I run and run as the rains come
I look up...on my knees and out of luck, I look up...
...There will come a time, you will see with no more tears
and love will not break our hearts but dismiss our fears
(From "After the Storm" by Mumford & Sons)*

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while
you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials...
(1 Peter 1:6)*

An old hymn has the line: "turn your eyes upon Jesus/look full in his wonderful face/and the things of earth will grow strangely dim/in the light of his glory and grace." I know it might be a favourite for some of you, but bear with me here. I think it's wrong. 1 Peter would tell us it's wrong. Dead wrong.

The hymn would have us believe that as we learn to look more fully on Jesus, that the struggle, suffering, desires and fears that accompany our earthly life as well as our limited and limiting earthly hopes such as wealth, success or celebrity will all fade away in the present hope of Jesus' future glory. It sounds good. In light of Jesus' Lordship and our eternal hope, all this earthly 'stuff' will grow dim, will be less real and substantive. But it's not true. The Christian hope is not escapist, nor does it minimize our present concerns, fears and suffering. The Christian hope is that the Crucified One has been raised from the dead and is the firstfruits of a wholly new and reconciled creation. Put very simply: the Christian hope is that what happened to Jesus is the future that awaits all creation; those who die with Jesus will also be raised with him. The Christian hope is not mere optimism that things will just get better, it is an anticipation of an astounding, surprising, cosmic and world-altering work of God.

I think Peter would have us alter the hymn to say, "and the things of earth will become abundantly clear" in the glory and grace of the resurrected Christ. Christian hope does not take us *out* of the world. It helps us to live truthfully within it as a people of the resurrection, in whom the power "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead" is at work (Eph. 1:20). It is often living *without* hope in Christ that leads to a "dimness" regarding the things of the world. We live in a society marked by either the optimistic denial of death, suffering and dysfunction or the dystopian pessimism of its full embrace. Either way, we cannot look fully at what ails us because we are too afraid. We lack hope. We would rather "run away" like the knights fleeing the rabbit in Monty Python's, *Search for the Holy Grail*.

Peter, however, is clear-eyed about the suffering that awaits those who follow Christ. No doubt, his audience was too. They were a marginal people; displaced slaves and merchants,

exiles and resident-aliens on the fringe of a global super-power. In our pluralist age, we may now have more in common with Peter's readers than previous generations. So we can find acute clarity regarding life on the margins made possible by a deep and abiding hope in Jesus Christ. For the hope we have in Christ makes possible truthful living in our world of disappointment, disaster, and dysfunction. We do not have to be afraid of suffering or live in a continual denial of death, for we know the one who raises the dead. To live truthfully in this world, we need everyday hope.

This week, we are invited by the text to consider our everyday lives in light of our hope in Jesus Christ. We cannot be an everyday church, participate in everyday mission or learn everyday evangelism if we do not receive everyday hope in each and every day.

Daily Shared Practices

Morning Prayer

Most High, Glorious God, grant us wisdom and revelation;
may you enlighten the darkness of our minds and hearts.
Give us a true faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from "Vocation Prayer" by Saint Francis of Assisi)

Daily Meditation

1 Peter 3:8-5:14

Read the text slowly and meditatively a couple times. Where does your attention rest? Ask God what he wants to say to you in this text. Make a few notes to this end and pray about what the Spirit shows you.

Evening Prayer: Pray Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[\[b\]](#)
You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Give thanks for God's grace and provision today. Where did he meet you?

Restore us again, God our Saviour and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, Lord and grant us your salvation.

Confess your sins to the Lord. Listen for God's word of grace and healing.

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants
—but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Ask the Lord what he wants to say to you. Reflect on your day. Where have you seen God's gift of peace, righteousness, and justice present in your neighbourhood? Where do you see the need for God to act? Imagine "righteousness and peace" meeting in your neighbourhood.

The Lord will indeed give what is good and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Give thanks again to God.

Weekly Sojourn

Day 1: Discover

Go for a walk in your neighbourhood. Ask God to help you see your neighbourhood the way he does. Use the following questions as a guide and pray about what you see:

- Where do you see (or signs of) suffering?
- Where do you see (or signs of) hatred? To whom is it directed?
- Where do you see (or signs of) loss? Disappointment?
- Where do you see (or signs of) hope?
- Where do you see (or signs of) love?
- Where do you see signs of God's kingdom breaking in?

Day 2: Discover

The past two months, we have practiced hope-ful living - a gospel-shaped life - for our new missional era. We have thought about life in the neighbourhood as a way of participating in God's mission and emphasized the importance of our Christian community as a peculiar people who together bear witness to the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Reflect on some of the big things you have learned over this two-month journey. Where have you seen God at work? Where has God challenged you? Where has your community and sense of calling been strengthened?

What practices or activities from the last two months do you hope to continue? Why?

Day 3: Dwell

In 1 Peter, *hope* and *suffering* are interconnected. Just like our neighbours, we tend to live out of many alternative 'gospel' stories as well. We are tempted to place our hope in our things, our success, our effort, our reputation, the economy, our church, etc. But this is a false hope. It is (at times) the existence of suffering and persecution that can jolt us out of these false hopes and to be re-centered on our present and future hope in Jesus Christ. Our marginal status in the new missional era can renew our hope. **Read 1 Peter 3:8-5:14.** Here, the existence of suffering against the horizon of our hope in Jesus leads Peter to offer a number of exhortations about our day to day life. List as many of these as you can. If you took this exhortation seriously, what would it mean for your use of time, treasure, and talent?

Days 4-5: Engage

Based on your previous reflection regarding your neighbourhood and the 1 Peter text, begin working through your schedule. In order to live everyday community and everyday mission, what practices do you need to continue? Which activities or commitments are presently in the way? Can you let go of them? Bring these reflections to Mission Group and make a commitment to one another to live more fully in light of the hope given you in Christ.