

# Christianity + Missional Living

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*“You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-15 | MSG*

## The Eternal Light Of Life

Light illuminates, not just dispelling darkness, but making visible that which is unseen. Jesus came into the world as the light and life of humanity, making visible the way to the Father (John 14:6), shining the glory and light of God and showing us the path home.

He was the way, the truth, and the life – that eternal life that was with the Father in the beginning and revealed to us in the Word-Made-Flesh (1 John 1:2, John 14:6). Whoever follows him is enveloped in his radiance and has no fear of stumbling or becoming lost in darkness (John 8:12).

While Jesus remained in the world, he was the light of the world. At his return to his Father, his light remained still, shining brightly in those who had seen and believed the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

They are his ambassadors; the good news about the glorious, life-giving king placed in them like treasure put in jars of clay. They know their source of empowerment is from God, not themselves, and can boldly proclaim: *“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14)

***They have seen God and He’s not a secret to be kept.***

## **Christians + Missional Living**

As Christians, Jesus’ earthly mission, to reveal the eternal life and light of God to the world, now becomes ours. We are tasked with the great commandment: *“love God, love your neighbour”* and the great commission: *“preach the gospel”*.

We are not just followers **of** Jesus, but are led by him out of the darkness into the light, to be witnesses **for** him. We are collectively commissioned people of his kingdom, reconciled to God and entrusted with this liberating message of reconciliation – the message of light and life – for all people (Colossians 1:18-20).

The phrase *being on mission* or *going on mission* has commonly been used to refer to those who travel overseas, often to poorer countries, to preach and teach the gospel. They are sent into these areas by their ‘home churches’ to promote their faith or provide services such as education, literacy, social justice, health care, and economic development, as an outworked ministry of their faith. Primarily seen as evangelism, *mission work* is rarely described as something that is undertaken locally, rather, something a Christian would participate in or be involved with overseas.

*Missional living, missional churches, or missional communities* are also phrases that have become popular in recent times. You may have heard them used in podcasts, online sermons or discussed by various authors. You may have assumed these

phrases are referring to a special kind of Christian living or community; one that operates differently to 'regular' or 'traditional' Christian life or church.

*However, the reality is that, as Christians, we are all on mission, right here, in our quiet, suburban neighbourhoods and in our bustling city streets.*

The word "mission" is derived from the Latin *missionem* (nom. *missio*), meaning "act of sending" or *mittere*, meaning "to send". The word mission (Latin: *missio*), as a translation of the Greek *apostolē*, "a sending," appears once in the English New Testament (Galatians 2:8). An apostle (*apostolos*) is one commissioned and sent for a purpose and we find the word *apostle* mentioned over 80 times in the New Testament.

The theme of *mission*, or *sending*, particularly in relation to God's mission, can be found all throughout scripture. His active involvement in humanity's story and His promise of reconciliation and redemption was finally realised in the greatest mission of all, the *sending* of His son, Jesus the *apostle* (Hebrews 3:1)

*"Just as You commissioned and sent me into the world, I also have commissioned and sent them (believers) into the world. I do not pray for these alone [it is not for their sake only that I make this request], but also for [all] those who [will ever] believe and trust in me through their message, that they all may be one; just as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe [without any doubt] that You sent me." | John 17:18, 20–21, Amplified Bible*

Just as Jesus was sent into the world, to witness to the eternal life and light of God, so each Christian has been commissioned and sent as an ambassador for Christ. They have been authorised, by virtue of his saving work, to represent his kingdom and to carry the great treasure of the good

message in their fragile, imperfect lives of clay.

They have been commissioned by Jesus himself, who declared “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age*” (Matthew 28:19–20; compare Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21–22, and Acts 1:8).

Jesus lives in and through them and God has placed each one of them like a city on a hill, to bring light to the whole world. They are to glow – with their open houses and generous lives – like homecoming beacons, drawing all humanity to the light that comes from Him, that in this, ‘His name is glorified’.

The reality is that *every. single. Christian.* is a missionary and *every. single. church.* is missional. It’s the very nature of our Christianity and an intrinsic part of our identity as people of the kingdom.

I am a missionary. You are a missionary. We are all missionaries. And we don’t need to be anywhere else apart from where we are right now to *run on mission*.

## **Like Salt, Like Light...**

‘*Living on mission*’, ‘*living missionally*’ or ‘*missional living*’ is simply the way in which we choose to order and arrange our ordinary, everyday lives; springing from a life framed by grace and pointed in pursuit of King Jesus. It means that we live out his life, his words, his actions and his love towards others; attempting to show *his* love by *our* actions and *his* truth by *our* lives.

Jesus first declared to his disciples, “follow me and I will make you fishers of men” Missional living, therefore, flows from ‘following Jesus’ and representing him in the world, shining in it like light and flavouring it like salt.

The people around us that we interact with, in a thousand ordinary ways, all experience the same joys and difficulties that we do, turning, as we are, on the wheel of life. They have the same questions that we do, the same challenges that we face, and, most importantly of all, are formed in the same image that we are, the image of God Himself.

Living missionally means showing genuine interest in other people, simply because they are *human*, just like us. It means being curious about them, their children, their lives, and their passions.

Like Jesus, we celebrate with them in all their joys and grieve with them in all their losses.

*“On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.” | John 2:1-12, ESV*

*“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.” | John 11:33-35*

We are called to share the good message – that the gospel is able to speak to the heart of every human need – and, as missionaries (in our own backyards!), we look for opportunities to share this hope. In every relationship we encounter, we are acting as ‘ones sent’ for Jesus.

It means loving people well, being generous with our time and our resources, and open with our lives, that in doing so, we’ll prompt them to ‘open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.’ Our lives – our everyday, mundane, messy, uncomfortable, terrifying, joyful, and thoroughly human lives will be the greatest witness of all to the hope that lies

within us.

*So throw open all your doors! Be generous with your lives! Live bright and unafraid: remembering that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.*

## **Missional Churches**

All believers are ambassadors for Jesus' name and the reality of the church includes not individuals simply gathered together in a building, but a collective kingdom and priesthood of people, worshipping and witnessing together to the astounding truth of the gospel narrative and the risen king.

What happens, then, when Christians, 'living on mission', regularly gather together? Each individual Christian is personally on mission – this is a key aspect of their Christian identity, but the truly exciting thing is that now, collectively, these people become a 'church on mission'. The *being* and the *doing* of missional living doesn't change, it just multiplies!

Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Jesus' presence permeates their gatherings and multiplies the fruit of their labour. 'Like yeast through dough, or like stars appearing one by one as the night sky darkens', these local expressions of the church of Christ can cross all earthly boundaries, prevailing against even death itself. The world has never known anything like them. (Jonathan Leeman)

*"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."... | Jesus, Matthew 16: 18-19, BSB*

*“Christ did not die just to save us from sins, but to bring us together in community. After coming to Christ, our next step is to be involved in community. A church that does not experience community is a parody, a sham. Simply put, the purpose of the church is to stand for God’s eternal purpose. In short, wherever the church gathers together, its guiding and functioning principle is simply to incarnate Christ.” – Frank Viola, Reimagining Church*

## **Missional Christianity = Intentional Christianity**

Whether a church is a ‘mega-church’ or a ‘home-church’, has five members or 500, is only made up of over 50’s or is an eclectic mix of ages, it should always, by definition, be ‘missional’. That is: intentionally living as a collective community representing the king and his mission.

A Christians’ individual life is no different. The great commission to preach the gospel and take the good news of Jesus to all the world was given to all believers. We see this commission of witness declared firstly in [Matthew 28:18-20](#) and shown to be affirmed throughout the letters of the Apostles to the church.

Missional living, therefore, isn’t a special kind of Christian identity. It’s the *only way* of viewing our Christian identity and, by extension, our corporate church identity. Missional Christianity is being intentional in our Christianity, open to the work of the Spirit in our own lives and the lives of those around us, active in our communities, and purposeful in our involvement in the mission of God, the great ministry of reconciliation.

We carry, every day in our bodies, the death of Christ so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed (2 Corinthians 4:7-10). Through us, others can also be empowered and equipped to

receive and live out the gospel message, demonstrating God's mission in all aspects of our lives, both personally and as church communities.

This is the essence of what it means to live a missional Christian life.

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” | Acts 2:42-47, ESV*