

LEADING YOUR CHURCH TO BE ON MISSION



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3 Steps To Leading Your Church To Be on Mission

Matt Carter

We all say that we desire to pastor a missional church. But how do you know you're successful? You know you're pastoring a missional church when your church is full of missional people. When the people sitting in the pews are actually living on mission for God.

I started The Austin Stone Community Church ten years ago. Our church is full of young people. The average age is twenty-six years old.

But getting them all to actually live like Christians is very hard to do. I constantly wrestle with how we cannot be a church that just gathers on Sundays to sing songs together and then leave, thinking we're all living the Christian life. I also wrestle with how to mobilize all these people in a country where Christianity is rapidly declining.

Missional Communities are the main thrust of how we are attempting to do this. We are taking our people and challenging them to live incarnationally for the Gospel in their context.

But beware. As you begin to make changes in your churches toward missional living and you see the missional temperature in your church begin to rise, one of the temptations that will happen is you will fall more in love with your mission than with your Savior.

You never want to be at a place like this. If you are, then your Savior will have no part in your mission.

You see this in Revelation chapter two. The New Testament church was full of churches that loved their mission and walked away from having Jesus as the center piece. As they did that, Jesus removed His lamp stand, His manifest blessing and presence, from their place. The last thing in the world we want to do is pastor a church where Jesus has removed His blessing.

Don't love your mission more than your Savior.

Biblical Foundation for Missional Communities

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)

Think about this verse in the context of your church. Apostles. Prophets. Evangelists. Shepherds. Teachers. That's you and me, the leadership of the church.

God gave us these giftings for a reason. So we can equip the people in our churches, so they can do the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.

16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
Ephesians 4:16 (ESV)

This is a really convicting verse in light of the fact that we're seeing Christianity decline in the United States right now. What makes the body of Christ grow? When each part of the body is working properly, so that it builds itself up in love.

So, if the body of Christ in the United States is not growing, what does that say about each individual part of the body of Christ?

We did a survey on a random Sunday that shows how horrible of a job we were doing at equipping our people. We asked the question, "What is your spiritual gift and how are you using it?"

Less than 10% knew what their spiritual gift was and how they were using it to build up the body of Christ.

Paul says the body of Christ grows when each part of the body is functioning properly. We can pat ourselves on the back all day long for having seventy-five hundred people attend a service. But if we're not helping them discover how God has uniquely designed and gifted them to get into the fight, we're not being a missional church.

Attractional Model vs. Releasing Mode

I began to struggle with a few things over the past few years. The first is the concept of the American attractional model of church.

The American attractional model is when the large Sunday gathering is the engine that fuels all the other ministries. You have a big gathering and then send them out to the other ministries. As opposed to a cell group model or home church model.

I don't think we just need to chunk the attractional model of church. There are still people in the world that the home church model isn't going to reach. And there are some things the larger attractional model of church can do that a home church model might not be able to.

We work in an under-resourced neighborhood in Austin. It's very impoverished. A while back, there was an apartment fire. All twenty-four of the apartments were burned down, leaving a bunch of refugees homeless, with nothing.

Due to the size of our church, our resources and our ability to communicate, we were able to mobilize hundreds of people and thousands of dollars within a matter of

minutes. Through twitter we mobilized people to go buy water, diapers, formula, and other necessities and bring them to a certain location. Within twenty minutes we had sorority girls walking up, arms full of stuff for the refugees. I don't think we could have done that with a smaller church model.

God is and can still use the larger, attractional model of church.

Having said that, I'm also convinced that the current attractional model alone is incomplete in being able to penetrate and reach the churchlessness and lostness of America.

Bob Roberts wrote a book called Transformation. He asked the question: In an attempt to reach America for Christ, what if we planted a thousand mega churches? What if that was going to be our strategy over the next ten years?

That would work, right?

Wrong. That just happened over the last 10 to 15 years. Yet, there are less people per capita sitting in church now than there were ten years ago.

What we're all trying so hard to do is not working.

There might be something more we need to be doing than gathering a few thousand people in a building to come hear us preach.

Restlessness within the American Church

The second thing I wrestle with is the growing sense of restlessness in the laity of the American church.

When my parents went to church, they went every single Sunday. They tithed. They served in the nursery. Every once in a while, my dad would pass the offering plate. That was the extent of their Christianity. Go to a service, write a check, hand out some bulletins, change some diapers and you are a fantastic member of the body of Christ.

But I'm convinced this generation of Christians are not okay with that. Eighteen to thirty year olds are not okay with sitting on the sidelines of ministry. I have a church full of them that tell me this.

They're hard wired to want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. They're not afraid of challenge. I have over a hundred college students graduating from the University of Texas and are going to the unreached people groups within the next year. They're going to places where they might not make it out of. Seventy-five percent of them are women too.

They want to experience life for themselves. They want to see the world change and be a part of that change.

The reason eighteen to thirty years old are leaving the church in record numbers is because most churches don't get this. For far too long our model has been for people to come to us where we will feed them spiritually, provide programs for them and make them comfortable. The church would place the responsibility of mission on paid clergy and foreign missionaries.

But there is a growing tension with this generation. They're sitting in the pews, reading the Bible, wondering out loud why the picture of Christianity they're reading about in the book of Acts is so radically different than the Christianity they're living.

They're wondering when they get to see the Holy Spirit manifest Himself through them. What gift did the Holy Spirit give them with their salvation. They want God to use them too, not just their pastors.

We need to figure out how to take these people and get them in the fight, where they're playing a meaningful role in the kingdom of God or we're going to lose them. I don't care how good of a preacher you are, they are not going to spend forty years in your pews, passing out bulletins.

Train, Equip then Release

Lastly, what led me to this realization about the attractational model was a big 'aha!' moment regarding church growth.

We were out of space at our main campus, having to turn people away at two of our services. So we started a multi-site. Then they were almost full too. We were at a crossroads as a church.

Do I build a bigger building, spending another fifteen million dollars of God's money? Do I start another campus? Do I hire more staff to do all of this? We can do all of that. But for what? What's accomplished? We will spend all that money, but we're going to reach about three thousand more people.

If we reached three thousand more people at The Austin Stone, nothing changes in the city of Austin.

Instead, what if I called three thousand people that are already at The Austin Stone to leave? What if I told the seven thousand that are already here that we were going to take three thousand of them, train and equip them, then kick them out of our church, releasing them into the city and to the nations and the world?

If we do that, there's no telling what could happen to the city. Everything could change.

Jesus' Model

What was Jesus church growth model? Was it to preach really well, gather a huge crowd, build a building then start some programs for the kiddos? Did He get them in small groups so they could eat chips and dip on Tuesday nights? So He could get book contracts and speak at conferences? No.

Every time Jesus gathered a crowd He would run them off. At the height of His popularity, He had thousands of people following him around the Sea of Galilee. He tells them they're following Him because He's feeding and healing them. Unless they eat His flesh and drink His blood, they could have no part of Him. They all took off, leaving just twelve guys standing beside Him wondering why He just did that. Then Jesus asks them if they want to leave too.

Jesus' model was to take twelve guys, pour His life into them, teach, equip and train them. Then release them.

Missional Community

Is it possible to do both? Attract people by the thousands and release people by the thousands?

The model is Missional Community.

We use to have community groups, smaller groups of people living in community together. It was to make sure no one was getting lost in the big crowd of a Sunday service, get people connected. We saw these groups turning into small group Bible studies, with chips and dips. Which is great, but that's all they were.

So we challenged, trained and equipped our small group leaders to turn to their groups and challenge, train and equip them. We challenged the groups to come together to live radically on mission together. To be the church. To live incarnationally, to live missionally, together in their neighborhoods and work places.

Its been a really slow multi-year process. But we're beginning to see progress and we've been blown away at what's been happening.

Transitioning to Missional Community

Three things we did to transition between small groups to missional communities:

1. Change the definition of success for your small groups.

You're going to have 33% who will take to it immediately. 33% that won't understand it and another 33% who won't want to do it and will tell you no.

Continue to have them gather and do a Bible study. But look to see if they have moved beyond that. Has the group found a place, or group of people, that is far from God, in

the city, where they are engaging missionally and incarnationally for the sake of the Gospel and the name of Jesus Christ?

That is the new definition of success.

Are they still getting community? Yes. There is nothing on the planet that fosters deep community better than mission. When we aimed for community, we got neither community or mission. But when we aimed for mission, we got both.

2. Change how you're training and discipling your small group leaders.

We are training them like missionaries. We had to change the mindset of American, come to church on Sundays, consumers to being missionaries.

That starts with teaching them how to feed themselves. If you're an American Christian, you can get by from just sitting in the pew, being fed. But if you're a missionary in the Sudan, you better know how to listen to the Holy Spirit of God yourself and know how He leads you or you're going to be ineffective.

We also training them in as much theology and ministry practice as we can. So if God leads their group to leave and do their own thing, they're equipped to do it.

This is happening and its beautiful. It's cool to watch a group step out on their own, try something crazy and start their own home church in their apartment complex.

3. Raise the bar on what your groups can do.

The people in your church can do more than you have ever dreamed if you would just challenge them and give them a chance to do it.

One of our leaders was a Senior Vice-President at one of the largest companies in Austin. He made lots of money, lived in an unbelievable house in the nicest part of Austin. He starts hearing the message about living on mission, giving his life away, getting in the fight and using the gifts that God gave him. He started believing that the power of the resurrection actually lived inside him.

He sold his house and bought several houses side by side in the under-resourced neighborhood where our church works. He and his wife moved into one of them. Single moms have occupied the other houses. He and his wife started a missional community who train, equip, educate and love on these single moms. He's changing that neighborhood. People are coming to Christ. It's just awesome.

If we had never challenged him or raised the bar or released him to use his money, time, and giftings outside of the four walls of our church, there is a good chance that he would have spent the rest of his life sitting in the pews of our sanctuary, listening to sermons, singing songs and would die, going straight to heaven. Having never known the thrill of getting in the fight for the purpose and name of Jesus Christ.

Your people are more hungry than you ever dreamed. Challenge them, train them and then release them to give their lives away. Not just to come to church, but to be the church.

Matt Carter serves as the Pastor of Preaching and Vision of The Austin Stone Community Church, which has grown from a core team of 15 people to more than 7,000 Sunday attendees since the church began in 2002. He desires to see the church become an advocate for the welfare of the city of Austin has led to the creation of a network that exists to actively pursue the redemption and renewal of the city for the advancement of the gospel. The For the City Network provides a platform for organizational collaboration by offering physical space to local nonprofits and creating a funnel for volunteer engagement. In addition to pastoring at The Austin Stone, Matt is a cancer survivor, co-author of For the City, Creation Unraveled: The Gospel According to Genesis, and The Real Win (with NFL Quarterback Colt McCoy). Matt is also an active speaker for camps and conferences nationwide. He holds a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Matt is married to Jennifer, and they have three children.

5 Mistakes That Will Destroy Your Church's Effectiveness (And What To Do About It)

Doug Phillips

What if your church spent thousands of dollars and devoted thousands of hours on service projects around your city that made no impact? What if it turned out you were spending all those resources on projects on a mercy ministry that wasn't really biblically merciful? Perhaps that sounds completely improbable but it happens all the time.

There's a biblical mandate and a method of mercy and often times, our efforts miss that mark. Though our hearts are in the right place in these efforts, the ultimate goal is restoration for others in the city. There are four mistakes that the church can make and four things a church must do to make sure our impact is truly merciful and lasting.

Mistake 1: Promote community service

How would someone in your church describe your local missions efforts? Would they point to community service days, neighborhood clean up efforts, or clothing and food drives. When this is the case, people tend to think of service as an event, with a start and an end. Once the event is over, so is their service and they are left with a good feeling to carry them through the rest of the week. What motivates their action?

If people are serving their community because they want to "give back" then they will automatically assume a position of superiority over the one they are serving. This is not only unbiblical, but can be dehumanizing. The advantage, and dare I say appeal, of most community service is that it actually costs very little of us. It doesn't impact our budget or our daily lives all that much. Once it is over, we can go back to the way we were before the event.

We often reference the story of the Good Samaritan as our example, but most of our efforts fall woefully short of this example Jesus offers to describe how to love our neighbor.

Mistake 2: Duplicate efforts by starting something "new"

Stop and think for a second...How many programs and ministries have your church started to serve others in the city? Now, think about how many churches are in your city. How many programs have they started? Usually, each of these have been started by Godly people who are seeking to love those around them.

There is also an unavoidable narcissism that creeps into every new venture that whispers, "If this succeeds, you will be the hero." This narcissism is subtle, but I fear it

has led too many people to start something “new.” The advice I give most people when they want to start something is that it almost always exists already.

Mistake 3: View people as projects

Are your city restoration efforts relational or transactional in nature? How many people have had their lives changed as a result of your local missions efforts? Can you name the people you have helped? The reality of most of our efforts is that they consist mainly of one-way transactions where people with financial resources give to those that have less.

This allows us to keep people and their problems at a safe arms distance, but we are left to wonder if those transactions actually help. We don't know what happens next because we don't know the person we have given to. People notice this, and so does the city.

Mistake 4: Seek the welfare of your church

You may be thinking, isn't this a little crazy? What if something happens? What if we get taken advantage of? What if someone gets hurt, or worse? We don't have the budget for this. The root of all of these thoughts is a desire to protect our church and ourselves. If the primary concern of the church is the comfort and safety of the church, it is obvious to the city around it, and to the people they seek to serve.

Mistake 5: Ignore training and networking opportunities

Do you have other churches and organizations that you're connected to that are on the cutting edge of biblical resources and training? Do you have a support network that will help you make great decisions about what's next for your church?

These mistakes can be crippling and a big waste of time, resources and money. But they are avoidable. Here are five solutions:

1. Teach biblical mercy

Apart from Christ, we are poor, needy, enslaved, broken, and desperate. We don't help because we have so much, we help because we are no different. This perspective alters the way we think about service. Service changes from an event to an identity. It also puts the proper perspective on any cost or pain we may endure in the process.

Imagine if the church understood biblical mercy, which starts with Christ leaving everything and laying down his life so that we could have it. What if the church was so captivated by the mercy of God toward us that it actually produced the rivers of living water flowing from us into our city that our scripture tells us about? As long as our mission's strategy remains disconnected from mercy, it will be ineffective.

2. Create solutions

How could your church create real solutions to the problems plaguing your city? There are no doubt unique gifts and strengths in your body that could be an incredible asset to the rest of the city. There are government agencies, non-profits, social workers, foundations and many other people who share your love and vision for a restored city.

The problem is, they don't see the church as a relevant solution to this problem. It would be an amazing picture of unity for the church to stop creating duplicative programs and start investing their time, money, and resources in helping other groups succeed. I would contend that it would also be a better stewardship of resources and ultimately more successful.

3. Develop people through relationships

Look to the model we have been given in Christ who loved deeply, took time for individuals, and taught his disciples to do the same. Developing people requires relationships and relationships are messy and complicated.

4. Seek the welfare of your city

Jeremiah 29:11 may be one of the most quoted passages used to encourage others. Ironically, that verse actually falls in the middle of a passage where God is telling a conquered and exiled Israel to remain in Babylon and make it their home. He tells them to seek the welfare of their city.

It is in the midst of this difficult calling to make a foreign land their home and seek the prosperity of the city and a people that have conquered them, that he gives them the comfort of Jeremiah 29:11.

5. Seek out training and networking opportunities

Get connected to organizations like the [For The City Network](#), who provide ongoing and intensive training and networking opportunities so that your church can be an effective salt and light in your city.

THE FOR THE CITY NETWORK CAN HELP

These are the questions that led us to start the For the City Network, a non-profit in Austin that seeks the welfare of our city by maximizing and catalyzing individual, community, and city restoration efforts. For the last five years, we have been working

to restore our city and we have learned a lot along the way. **To help others accelerate the learning curve, we have developed a two-day training we call an Intensive.**

Intensives are hands-on trainings where you can learn from an experienced network with a vision and practical strategy for city renewal. Capped at 15 people to ensure a customized learning experience, the Intensive includes

- vision casting
- neighborhood tours
- exclusive resources
- strategic planning
- and more!

All of these crafted experiences and resources are there to help you build out practical next steps for your church to take toward city renewal and holistic ministry.

We've designed this Intensive as a way to be exposed to proven strategies and different restoration efforts. This is an opportunity you will not want to miss! Begin exploring what God has for your church and your city!

Doug Phillip grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas and is a graduate of Southern Methodist University. With his wife, Becca, and their three children, they moved to Austin in 2013 to join the For the City Network team. He currently serves as the director of Partnerships and City Initiatives, helping churches and nonprofit organizations mobilize people into local missions and achieve citywide goals. His desire is to see the church excel in mercy ministry, orphan care, mobilization and city impact.

3 Temptations That Will Sabotage Any Ministry

Aaron Ivey

I've been leading a band for over 10 years. I've made countless mistakes over the years, but now more than ever I see the crucial role of a worship leader to not just pastor their flock, but to also pastor and shepherd their band. We're going to take a three part look at everything this entails.

What does it mean to shepherd?

We think feeding the sheep means a heroic, lone-wolf, sort of saving the sheep. I don't think that's the example Jesus gives us. I think what we actually see is a sort of community shepherding. In Mark 6, Jesus doesn't send the disciples out by themselves. He sends them out two by two.

Our old bass player Steven Bush likes to say that a shared table is a shared life. Jesus broke bread with those He led, and there's something radically compelling about sharing life, food, drink, laughter, and struggle with those you lead.

You also need to be a person that's worth following. Here are 3 temptations will sabotage any ministry:

(Adapted from [In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership](#) by Henri Nouwen)

The Temptation to be Relevant

You cannot measure your worth by your twitter followers. Your sheep don't need you to be culturally relevant. Our culture is marked with loneliness, isolation, lack of friendship and intimacy, broken relationships, boredom, feelings of emptiness and depressions, and deep sense of uselessness. A culturally relevant shepherd will lead his sheep off a cliff.

Are you in love with Jesus? Do you know the heart of God? Answering those questions should come well before questions about how far your influence reaches.

The Temptation to be Spectacular

We crave approval of the masses. And this plays out in how we lead. It can become more important getting people to buy our CD than making those in our immediate community feel cared for. This is fatal for any shepherd.

Your band doesn't need a boss most of the time. They need vulnerable brothers and sisters who know and are known, who care and are cared for, who forgive and are asking for forgiveness far more.

Your band doesn't need a spectacular shepherd; they need a faithful, devoted, shepherd to lead them.

The Temptation to be Powerful

The long painful history of the church is the story of people tempted over and over again to choose power over love, control over the cross, and being a leader over being led. Matthew 20:28 gives us a different picture:

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Have you developed healthy, intimate relationships with the sheep you lead? Or have you opted for power and control of them instead?

Which of these temptations do you fall to most frequently? And do you resist this temptation?

Aaron Ivey is the Pastor of Worship at The Austin Stone Community Church. Aaron lives in Austin with his wife Jamie, and four children: Cayden, Deacon, Amos and Story.

6 Dangers You Must Address To Save Your Youth Group

Justin Lopez

We hear many stories of teenagers being saved during those formidable youth group years. By the grace of God, many meet Jesus after hearing the Gospel at a lock-in or while building a campfire at a winter retreat. But balancing cultural – or generational – relevance with eternal truth is difficult. How do we appeal to this group? What should we do to declare and demonstrate His love to them? How do we make teenagers into disciples who make disciples now and in their years ahead?

Pastoring and shepherding the younger generation is critical. These teenagers will be the men and women who lead our churches and ministries in the decades ahead. We want these future church leaders to be Gospel-centered, mission-minded, Word-saturated, servant-hearted people, right?

There are dangers facing every youth group, and for the sake of the Church, its flourishing, and the advancement of the Gospel, we must address them.

Here are six common dangers:

1. Too many youth have a poor understanding of the Gospel and how it applies to their lives.

While many people can explain the Gospel in some way, shape, or form, very few have learned to apply it to their own lives. The result is a religion largely motivated by legalistic rules that leads to guilt and shame when rules are not met or self-righteousness when they are.

Many students also struggle to see themselves as truly broken and in need of a Savior. Others will fall on the side of misunderstanding grace as a license for sin. Underneath it all is a fundamental misunderstanding of the Gospel.

2. The American consumer mentality has severely skewed the way youth view the church.

Because so much of the emphasis on reaching youth is aimed at getting them in the door and staying there, many are not attracted by Christ, but rather by entertainment or friendships. While this may be effective in initially exposing them to Christ, it cannot be their only experience of Him.

There will inevitably come a day when church will not be focused primarily on their entertainment. For many, this will be a time of disillusionment with the church and one of the reasons so many youth do not remain a part of a church body after they leave home.

3. Youth are more technologically connected than ever, yet experience more isolation than ever.

While youth may have more “friends” than ever before, they are being conditioned to only have friendships at a superficial level. They live in a world that prioritizes managing and puffing up their image, both online and offline.

As a result, youth have few people, if any, who actually know them truly and deeply and can help them in their walk with the Lord.

4. There is a tendency to swing the pendulum too far toward either mission or community, neglecting one for the other.

Youth tend to operate in extremes. Depending on their background or whom they follow on Twitter, many youth, full of zeal, will tend to overemphasize either mission/“outreach” or community/“going deep”.

Either bent, if not coupled with the other, will lead to burnout or a “huddle” mentality. The eventual result will be a church that slowly fizzles out.

5. Youth have a hard time seeing how they personally fit into God’s redemptive story.

Because many youth are new to the faith, they may have not yet seen God use them personally to impact the Kingdom. They see all of the “Christian celebrities” before them and can easily believe the lie that God only uses the more known or trained people with certain skills, passions, and gifts to advance the Gospel.

They feel disqualified, inexperienced or inferior, paralyzing them in life and ministry.

6. Many youth lack the desire and ability to study and apply the word of God to their lives.

Because it is easier than ever to find teaching and blogs about the Bible, more and more youth do not know how to study the Word for themselves. Some are apathetic because they do not see the Bible as relevant to their life or situation and others see personal study as too difficult and would much rather listen to a podcast or read the latest Christian book or devotional. Personal study of the Word is critical for every believer, including youth.

These six dangers are real, and as church leaders, we must address them with fervor. But how?

A few years ago, youth groups from across the country began to contact Verge and the [For The City Network](#). They had concerns about the dangers facing their youth groups,

and they wanted something different. They wanted to lead their crew of awkward, crazy teenagers well.

They wanted them to fall in love with Jesus and do mighty things for His Kingdom. They wanted to bring their teenagers to Austin to learn more about what it meant to love God and His people through seeking the restoration of all things. And they wanted to serve. And they wanted to make some fun memories.

So, together with the For The City Network we created [SWITCH](#) to address these dangers and serve these youth groups. [SWITCH](#) is a weeklong experience for youth that is a little bit mission trip, a little bit conference, and a little bit camp. Youth from across the country come to Austin to serve, learn, and have a lot of fun.

Each of these experiences can individually address some of these dangers. But youth experiences are usually limited at one area (mission trip, conference, or camp), so the other areas get neglected. We wanted to address all of these dangers in a weeklong experience, so [SWITCH](#) was born!

Every aspect of the week is designed with these issues in mind. Our hope is that after our summer experience, students will SWITCH their worldview and your youth group will avoid these dangers.

So, how does [SWITCH](#) help you address these dangers?

1. Gospel-Centered teaching

The teaching is centered on understanding and applying the Gospel in our own lives and in the lives of others. We seek to challenge youth to serve their city or town while discussing the proper and improper motivations that can drive them to want to serve. The youth will also see and understand their own brokenness and the role of grace in their lives.

2. Fighting consumerism with service

Because serving is a key component of SWITCH, the consumerism that plagues this generation is constantly tested and challenged. Students leave knowing that they were not called to Christ for their own benefit alone, but to seek and save others as they reflect the glory of God around them.

3. Opportunities for community to grow

[SWITCH](#) provides opportunities for youth to grow in community. With skits, games, and other antics, there is a lot of fun built into the week and many memories are made together. We also create environments where they can get to know each other better and more deeply through processing what they are learning and putting into action.

4. The best of both mission and community

Summer youth experiences often reinforce the overemphasis on either mission or community. They are structured so heavily around one aspect that they woefully neglect the other. Traditional camps are great for building community and depth in relationships, but they are formed in the absence of mission, so they can break down in the real world once camp is over.

Mission trips are great for helping people see and understand how to live on mission, but can often do so at the cost of community. Conferences equip youth for ministry, but can have little practical application and implementation.

We designed [SWITCH](#) to have the balance of mission and community packed into one week. We like to say we're a little bit mission trip, a little bit conference, and a little bit camp.

5. Seeing how they fit into God's redemptive plan

One of the reasons people have a hard time seeing how they fit into God's redemptive plan is that they have not tried to fit into it at all. We often discover where we are called as we step out in faith and try new things.

We also must value the specific way God has made each individual teenager. He or she has specific passions and gifts, and as pastors and leaders, we must value these differences and encourage the younger generation to employ their specific passions and gifts for the glory of God.

When a person sees how a week of their life can impact someone else through trying new things and exploiting what God has written on their hearts, they can more easily see and believe that He can and will use them to do big things in the days to come.

6. Learning how to value the Word

Each morning at [SWITCH](#), we spend time in the Word, training students in how to study the Bible. They are then able to take what God is teaching them and apply it to their life as they are serving the city and connecting with their friends and leaders.

We want students to see that the Word of God is, in fact, living and active and applies to and guides their daily life more than anything or anyone else.

We know that one week cannot change these trends or completely remove these dangers. But what if youth made the SWITCH and believed in living on mission with community as their lifelong purpose for His glory?

Our prayer is that through SWITCH, God will move in their hearts, helping you pastor and lead them into a deeper love and passion for Christ and His calling on their lives.

Justin is the Executive Director of the For the City Network – a nonprofit in Austin, Texas aimed at connecting and mobilizing the church into relationships with the marginalized. Through partnerships

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How Not To Create a Missional Movement

Todd Engstrom

I am from a very weird city down in Austin, and I have been a part of The Austin Stone for almost 10 years. I came to The Stone as an attender in graduate school, and have grown up with the church. I've basically gotten to watch as the church was born, became a child, and over the last few years has for lack of better words, kind of gone through puberty. We've got some pimples and our voice was cracking, but thanks be to God that we're moving past that stage as a church.

Rather than present our polished vision, values and practices, I want to take a little different tack – I want to candidly talk about putting these ideas into practice in a real church. More specifically, I want to be completely honest with you about our failures at The Austin Stone. Over the last 7 years, we have been in the process of transitioning to missional communities, and we've made plenty of mistakes.

The title of this article is “How NOT To Create a Missional Movement”, but it could easily be titled “Boneheaded Mistakes that We Made”. (In fact, this article is part of a FREE eBook called 3 Ways To Kill a Missional Culture. [Click here](#) to download your free copy.)

What Unifies Us?

Before I do that though, I want to remind you what unifies each of us.

I always face the temptation to focus on what makes my ministry different. You've probably already heard plenty of missional ideas. You may be excited, you might be evaluating what you've heard, or you may even be defensive.

But all of us want the same thing:

We all want people to receive the gospel and follow Jesus.

Each of us has been saved by grace through faith in Christ, receiving the gift of God. Each of us simply want others to know, love and experience the hope that we have in Christ.

Everyone one of us is trying to make disciples of Jesus.

Anyone who has ever tried to make a disciple knows that mistakes come with the territory.

So I'm going to be transparent with you.

The Story of The Stone

In order to understand our failures, you'll need to know some of our story.

Matt Carter planted The Austin Stone almost 11 years ago with two overwhelming desires. First, he wanted build a church on the foundation of the Scriptures, not necessarily a model. Second, he wanted to plant a church where the only explanation for what happened was Jesus. In Matt's wildest dreams, he never thought we would be where we are today.

When it came to strategy, to be honest, we were pretty clueless. All we ever really wanted is for people to see Jesus for who he is and what he has done, and to help our church tell our city about him.

We knew we had a really great preacher and a great worship leader. That's about all we knew.

Pretty quickly people started coming. And then a lot more people started coming. I guess church planting isn't so difficult when you have Chris Tomlin as your worship leader.

To be honest, though, the idea of "missional" couldn't have been farther from our brains. I actually don't think it had even been invented at that point. But good stuff was happening so we were pretty thrilled.

Like just about every other church that grows, we built the things that churches were supposed to build. We had a small group ministry, were training leaders, we were going to build a facility and were continuing to grow like crazy.

And that's when we met this guy named Stew.

Story of Soul Searching and Asking Big Questions

I remember visiting our new pastor in his apartment down on South First Street in Austin. I knew something was a little off with this guy when I was greeted at his door by his son Wesley Grant who wasn't wearing pants. I felt like I stepped out of Austin into the developing world. Stew was a minimalist, so there wasn't much in his apartment.

After getting some pants on Wesley Grant, we sat down to eat a meal together. Over some tacos, I listened to Stew's story of seeing how the gospel was rapidly expanding in places like India and China, and listened to his dreams for the church to become a "movement". I can say I had two primary thoughts:

- Hesitancy, because this sounded a little crazy
- Excitement, because it sounded like the church in Acts

Stew brought a fresh and exciting vision and strategy to The Austin Stone. He knew our conviction to be a church committed to the Bible, and led us repeatedly through the

book of Acts, and light bulbs started going off. We had to become a movement, not just a great church.

Many of you are in that place now. You dream of seeing the Church in your city look like the church in the book of Acts.

Where We Began

I think the biggest realization was that we were well on our way to repeating the cycle of almost every American church:

- **Great Sundays**
- **Professional Christians**
- **Immature disciples.**

But we wanted more, just like you do.

Stew and the Holy Spirit caused a great deal of unrest in our team – we wanted to be like the church in Acts, but didn't have a clue what to do. So we started talking with different people.

We hung out with Alan Hirsch and tried to digest his accent, white boards and big words. We met with Jeff Vanderstelt and learned about identities, rhythms and missional communities. These friends challenged us – a very “successful” church – to consider what it would look like to think like missionaries.

We began to evaluate everything that we did in light of movements, and we got very excited about change.

So like a young bunch of idiots, we went for it. Missional communities seemed awesome, so we told our whole church “GO AND DO”. We cast compelling vision, created some VERY intense curriculum, and then hosted a few trainings because we were such experts. Then we set people loose.

We lowered the bar for leadership, and invited many people to lead. We had communities baptize people, and adopt causes in the inner city.

We bet the farm on this missional idea, and some great stories began to emerge.

The Result

After the rush of a new vision had worn off though, there were some indications that something wasn't quite right. Have you ever had a meeting with a leader in your church that makes you scratch your head?

I knew we had some problems when I had to confront a leader of a missional community because she had been casting demons out of the backs of some women in

her group. It turns out that she hadn't opened her Bible in 9 years, and claimed to hear directly from God, and thought she was the son of God.

It turns out she wasn't. Not even close.

We had lowered the bar for leadership, but I think we accidentally created something that resembled an "open bar".

Our Early Efforts

This story was simply evidence of a larger symptomatic problem. We had rushed into creating a missional culture, but the results weren't pretty.

After about 2 years, we checked our progress. About 10% of our communities had taken the vision and run. Most of this 10% was worn out, and some had even left the church because we "weren't missional enough". About 60% of our people wanted to try missional community but were confused and frustrated. Then there was the final 30% that just did business as usual.

So let's recap that:

- 10% burned out
- 60% frustrated
- 30% just ignored us

We had the best of intentions, but had some pretty poor results.

In our zeal for movement, we did some serious damage to the people God had entrusted us with.

After some serious soul searching and a lot of reflection, here's where we went wrong in our attempt to create a missional culture.

An Easy Way To Not Create a Missional Movement

As I've spent time with other churches who are processing the missional conversation, the dangers are present for just about everyone.

One way we were able to NOT create a missional movement was casting vision without practices. We told people where we wanted to go, but not what they should actually do.

Our Story of Gospel-Centered

After casting a vision for mission, we kind of swung the pendulum to casting vision for the gospel. But we were still primarily were only casting vision.

We became a broken record for gospel-centrality. When anyone asked the question “what should I do?”, basically the answer was “repent, believe the gospel and go on mission”.

So if someone came up and asked:

- How do I reach my neighbors? Repent, believe the gospel, go on mission
- How do I serve the poor? Repent, believe the gospel, go on mission
- How do I fix my car? Repent, believe the gospel, go on mission

We became annoyingly gospel-centered. To some extent, that’s a good thing.

But a vision of gospel mission without practices is frustrating for people who want to be on mission.

People are told to believe the gospel, and they have a desire to be obedient to Jesus, but are left without any way to actually do it. Or even worse, they’re killing it on mission but still feel like a failure.

We had told our people true things, but had forgotten to teach them helpful things.

Derek’s Story

I recently had a coaching conversation with a friend who leads a missional community in my neighborhood. We sat down for an ice-cold beverage at a local establishment, and I asked him how things were going.

After taking a long drink, he looked at me and said “I feel like a failure as a leader.”

When I asked him why, he responded “I can’t get people on mission.”

I started to ask him about some of the people in his community, and their stories. It turns out there was:

- A couple who was in a rescue adoption situation – they were a newly married couple who was in faith adopting a family member’s child out of an abusive home
- There was a woman who was diagnosed with kidney stones in their group, and they prayed for her to be healed. The next day received a report from the doctor that the stones were gone!
- They have had several non-Christians regularly join their community for a meal
- Another guy in the group was currently studying the Bible with someone who didn’t know Jesus

How in the world did this guy think he was failing???

I think it's because he heard vision and the gospel, but didn't have anyone affirming the basic practices of Christian discipleship. He had heard us talk about reaching our city, but hadn't had anyone regularly teach and celebrate simple acts of obedience.

Our city is going to be reached
one neighbor,
one conversation,
one kind act of love at a time.

You see, we failed to equip him to act the vision in his suburban context – in the mundane of every day.

This is the work of equipping the saints for the work of ministry. The gospel certainly is the foundation of equipping, but it doesn't make practical stuff unnecessary. We had failed to help our people act themselves into a new way of thinking.

Equipping the Saints

Ephesians again is a gentle reminder for us as we pursue missional communities.

Ephesians 4:11–13

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

I want to draw your attention to verse 13. Let's think about maturity for a moment.

The image Paul is using here is one of a maturing body – bodies function properly because the different faculties are being disciplined over time.

A healthy body is fed appropriately,
trained repeatedly,
and challenged consistently.

Maturity and health don't come from growing quickly. Maturity and health come from discipline incrementally over time.

Part of the way we failed in maturing our body was giving a simple set of exercises that we could stick to beyond church attendance. We had to teach consistently people A

WAY TO read their Bibles, we had to teach consistently people A WAY TO repent of sin, and we had to teach people consistently A WAY TO share the gospel with real people.

For a church to be mature, we need to equip the saints in the gospel, yes, but also in simple practices. You can have a vision of being a church that makes Christ known, but without consistent, thoughtful training and discipline, all you have is an unrealized desire.

That's because vision without practices is just a good idea.

I want to implore you to cultivate a simple set of transferrable and reproducible practices that you equip people to do repeatedly over time. Let me say that again:

Simple, reproducible, transferrable. Repeatedly, over time.

Alan says it this way – “you need to act yourself into a new way of thinking”. There are a lot of tools out there which are helpful. They won't magically make you missional, but you need tools to help people put vision into practice.

Don't kill a missional culture by casting vision without practices.

For us at The Austin Stone, the simple community practices of [Life Transformation Groups](#), Family Meals, and Third Places helped the 60% of people with a desire to change actually take steps of obedience.

Specifically, we taught people to gather in small communities in three different ways over time. The Life Transformation Group is where we gather to be a disciple, the Family Meal is where we gather to be a family, and a Third Place is where we gather to be missionaries.

Sticking to these practices over time, and applying them in a variety of different contexts has helped that 60% act on their desire to live differently.

Todd Engstrom is Executive Pastor of Ministries at The Austin Stone Community Church and Director of church planting for The Austin Stone Institute. Todd is a speaker, writer and consultant for the Verge Network.

Without This Your Missional Movement Will Fail

Kevin Peck

From all my experience leading my church and working with other churches, I've seen in us a tendency to play this either/or game with discipleship of our own and evangelism of the masses. We'll either spend all our time developing our own, shutting off outsiders, or open our doors wide to the world and keep it shallow with our training.

But what do the Scriptures say?

The Scriptures show us a glimpse of heaven in the future. What we see there is multitudes upon multitudes of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation worshipping Jesus (Rev. 7:9). That is our end. All of the world will be reached, and the evangelists' wildest dreams will come true.

They also show us how we'll get to that end. Just look at the history of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus comes to earth, grows to an adult, begins His earthly ministry around 30, and dies around 33. During those critical three years, He spends a disproportionate amount of time with 12 men. Investing in them, living with them, correcting them, teaching them, showing them how to advance the Kingdom.

Of course he preached, but he didn't only preach. Of course he healed, but he didn't only heal. He spent the majority of his time preparing a rag-tag group of men to continue His ministry and take His message to the ends of the earth after he left.

So let me get this straight. Not only will the evangelist guys get what they want, but from what it looks like, the all-development-no-outsiders guys are also right?

The reality is that yes God has the end in mind, and yes He also gave us the means. Not only did God destin the world to bow at the feet of Jesus, He also designed how it will come to pass.

[pullquote]The fundamental way that we are going to see Jesus save people across the globe is through discipleship.[/pullquote] That's right, the good-old-fashioned, life-on-life, person-to-person, dirty, messy process of teaching people to obey all that Jesus has commanded. Showing people with our words and our lives how to follow and magnify the Risen Savior.

That's it...it may not be sexy, it may not sell books, but it is how God designed His redemption plan.

We've all heard this before, I know. But think about it...to most of us it seems nuts. The Son of God comes to earth and rather than staying and preaching for forty years, he spends three years investing in 12 men and then He leaves!

Can you imagine that strategy meeting? King Jesus chatting it up with the angels in heaven?

"So, Lord, what's the plan?"

"Well I'm going to be born a child, grow up as a blue-collar worker's son for 30 years...spend three years ministering to less than 1% of the world's land mass, and then entrust 12 men with world evangelization."

What?! Surely we could come up with something new, maybe more efficient, maybe even as a back up plan? No. There isn't a plan B and there doesn't need to be one. Discipleship is God's choice plan for redeeming the world.

This is not profound. It's not new. It's simply not finished. And most of us simply refuse to accept it. When it comes down to it, for most of us being as successful as Jesus was at developing leaders would feel like a wasted life.

See how that's a problem? To think little of this model and to reject this model is to reject God's ordained means to accomplish His mission.

The reality is if you reach only 12 in your life, it's a win. It will probably feel like you're spending too much time with a few and neglecting the many, but this is precisely how God will redeem every last one of His own!

Kevin Peck is the lead pastor and an elder at the Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas. In partnership with founding and preaching pastor Matt Carter, he has seen God grow the Austin Stone from a small gathering of young people to a city-loving church of over 7000. Kevin's passion is to equip and mobilize Christ-exalting leaders in the home, church, city and globe. He has received a Master's of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a D.Min in Leadership from Southern Seminary. He is the joyful husband of Leslie and father to three beautiful girls, Ellie, Halle and Ivey.