

Missio Dei Communities has been on a journey towards living our lives in “gospel-centered missional community.” We know the “journey” word can get overused, but that really is what it has been. You don’t just arrive there. You move in that direction. Then, just when you think you have it down, that you have found the sweet spot, the journey continues and a new crisis arrives.

The picture below shows a cycle. It has four areas we have found to be critical in this journey. Read through the descriptions of each stage and process through it for yourself and your community. This is not meant to be a roadmap for you to rigidly live by. Rather, it is meant to stir discussion, reflection, and movement.

## Cycle: Towards a Gospel-Centered Missional People



## **Step 1: Crisis / Leap**

The reality in our culture is that the overwhelming majority of Christians are stagnate, bored, and relatively lifeless. It wouldn't even be a stretch to say that it's not just the people in the pew who are stagnate, but the paid professionals are just as stale. We try time and time again to make little changes to tweak this program or that discipline. We stack up our Amazon wish list with the latest books hoping that maybe if we can just read a certain book things will change. But all of these little changes aren't enough to shock us out of the rut. We experience the problem, but do we have an answer that actually works?

The first step in any process is a crisis. There needs to be a shift from what was to what is going to be. Often this requires "a leap."

For example, the first step towards getting married shouldn't be asking the girl's friend if she would say yes if you ask her out. The first step is to take a leap and ask her to dinner! There is a moment where you aren't sure exactly how it is going to work out, but you take that leap anyway.

### ***Missio's Story***

That is how Missio Dei Communities began. We told people that they would need to commit to making a community that didn't even exist yet their church for the next year. We told people to let us know by June 1 if they were in or out. People had to leap. And 30 did. Since then, we have tried to take everyone new who comes into the community through a Transition Community where we call them to make that same leap that the first 30 did.

I remember Don Christensen saying, "Chris, people will start giving when you quit taking a paycheck from the other church and you really step out in faith into this church plant." He was right. People were waiting for me to leap. And the truth was that in order to be a part of planting Missio Dei, I had to leave the comfort of a sure paycheck and large crowds. I needed to leap.

It has been a shock that along the way there have been so many people who know they are in a rut in their current Church/Christian experience. When those people hear what Missio Dei is all about they are inspired and see the truth in it. Sometimes they will even admit that they ought to take a leap. But, we won't hear from them again. They aren't ready to make the changes necessary. It is safer, comfortable, more controlled to stay with the status quo.

### ***Peter's Story***

In Luke 5, Peter gets called to leap, leave his nets and become a fisher of men. Peter obviously does not have all the information. He doesn't know the end of the story. But he does leap right away. He gets out of the boat. He lays down his nets. He follows after Jesus.

### ***Your Story***

Do you have a story of your leap(s)?

If you haven't leapt, why not?

What is the next leap God is calling you to?

## **Step 2: Re:Jesus**

In his book Re:Jesus, Alan Hirsch's contention is that the church needs to be reintroduced to the Jesus that is, rather than the weak and phony Jesus we so often embrace. I couldn't agree with this more. People need not just a new set of facts about Jesus. They need a whole new orientation and worldview that has Jesus as the Hero, Center, King.

But it is not just a reintroduction to Jesus that people need. They need to see how the gospel of Jesus has implications for every aspect of life. They need to learn how the Bible is the True Story of the world and what that story is. They need to learn that the gospel gives them a unique identity that they could never earn or deserve. Each of these is not just a new set of facts, it is a complete reorientation of our worldview.

### ***Missio's Story***

We spent about 7 months in this stage. From the time people took the first jump in June 2008 until January 2009, all we did was hammer down on the Gospel as opposed to Religion and Irreligion, the True Story, and Identities.

We saw some people Re:Jesus really quickly. They saw the difference. They grasped it. They could articulate it right away. For others, it has been more of a process. The coins took more time to drop here and there, but they are dropping!

### ***Peter's Story***

Luke 6-Acts 1: Jesus spends over 3 years with the Peter and the disciples pounding the gospel of the Kingdom into them.

### ***Your Story***

To use a Tim Keller illustration, how has the coin dropped for you this last year?

## **Step 3. Re:Align.**

I think this becomes the most painful step for many. Leap seems like a big risk. But, there is adrenalin and excitement around starting something new. Re:Jesus is so liberating and mind-blowing to see how much bigger the gospel is than you'd previously thought. But Re:Align is tough because these new ideas and worldview you have with the gospel is still sinking in. Our old religious habits are still so ingrained. But the nuts and bolts of your everyday life starts getting challenged.

### ***Missio's Story***

Whereas the first two stages focus on the Gospel Identities (Family, Learner, Servant, Missionary), we talk a lot more about Gospel Rhythms in this phase (Bless, Listen, Eat, Speak, Sabbath). And we tell stories of what Re:Jesus looks like lived out in people's (our) lives.

Where Re:Align pushed on individuals in MDC has been in where they live, who they live with, and how they spend their discretionary time. It has been a blast to watch people make some pretty dramatic reorientations in these areas.

Another area of Re:Align has been people feeling freed up to share intimate areas of their lives. The Re:Jesus stage tells people they are free to share and be wrong, and be challenged. But it is during this stage that people actually play this out in community. The big question that each has to answer is, “Will I open myself up?”

### ***Peter's Story***

Acts 2-9: During these Chapters, Peter is the primary player. He finally “get’s it.” He stands up, gives a few killer sermons, and emerges as the leader of the Acts Church in Jerusalem. He even starts to make some travels further out into the world.

### ***Your Story***

Where is the gospel pushing you to realign your life?

Where are you weak in the BLESS rhythms?

## **4. Thrive: Gospel-Centered Missional Community Engagement**

Honestly, this is still a question mark. Will this happen? What does it look like? We don’t know. We have seen glimpses of it in individual people’s lives and in a couple missional communities.

We are not entirely sure. But it would seem someone who has taken the leap, been reoriented by the True Story, and opened themselves up to realign aspects of their lives would then hit a sweet spot in life and mission.

During this time, all the other three aspects are still continually happening. We need continual repentance and constant leaps of faith.

### **Other Thoughts**

The cycle probably starts over with a Leap 2.0. Once you hit the sweet spot, God’s blessing of ministry leads to a need to multiply for the sake of the mission. So you multiply. This is another jump.

In equipping the community, we have noticed a difference in what we are doing. We have gone from drawing lots of grids that show the True Story to telling stories that illustrate life in the True Story.

Perhaps a problem with many “missional churches” is that while they rightly call people to leap from the status quo, they don’t spend the time and focus on Re:Jesus. So when people try to Re:Align, they don’t have a basis for it. There has to be a theological “why” behind every practical “what”.