



A GUIDE TO
MISSIONAL
GATHERINGS



Pushing back darkness together

In response to God's love, we care about people who live in darkness without God. We push back darkness in our city because God first pushed back darkness in us. "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son..." (Col 1:13). As Christians, we increasingly care about what God cares about. At Frontline, we are committed to push back darkness through *gospel proclamation* and *kingdom demonstration*. We push back darkness by proclaiming the good news about Jesus. This means we should move towards unbelievers and look for opportunities to tell them about the one who rescued us (1 Pet 2:9–10; Matt 5:13–15). We also push back darkness by demonstrating the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. This means that we care about the spiritual and physical needs of those in darkness around us. We seek to right injustices and serve our city with the light of Christ (1 Pet 2:11–12; Jer 29:7).

We tend to remember that we won't *grow* alone, but we frequently forget that we shouldn't *go* alone. We gather because we're a spiritual family becoming friends (the family meal), and we gather to become more like Jesus (discipleship groups). But we also need to gather for the sake of people far from God—what we call "missional gatherings."

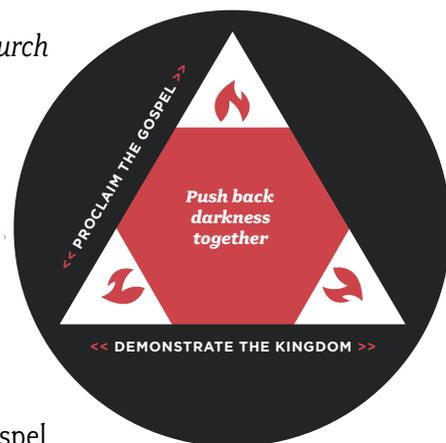
What are missional gatherings?

Frontline community groups gather in three varied ways that we call "rhythms"—family meals, discipleship groups, and missional gatherings. In the rhythm of *family meal*, we learn to love people as we gather around the common table for the sake of community. We set aside an entire evening to prepare, eat, and clean up a meal together. As we linger over the meal, we listen, we talk, and we pray. Slowly, over time, we become friends. In the rhythm of *discipleship group*, we learn to love God as we gather in groups of three to four men or women to apply one bit of Scripture to one bit of our lives, to share what's good, hard, and bad, and to pray—for each other and for our three. Finally, in the rhythm of *missional gatherings*, we learn to push back darkness as we gather for the sake of people far from God. While there are a potentially infinite number of ways to gather missionally, Frontline prioritizes three. We gather missionally: (1) by extending gospel hospitality at the family meal whenever we are privileged to be joined by people far from God, (2) by regularly spending intentional time together in natural and neutral "third places" which are part of the fabric of knowing and being known in our city (golf courses, coffee shops, gyms, parks, barber shops, neighborhood association meetings, etc.) and (3) by locking arms with city partners thoughtfully chosen by each congregational leadership team and serving shoulder to shoulder as we meet needs and build new relationships. (See frontlinechurch.com/citypartners for more information.) *What are some tangible ways that you see our church loving God, loving people, and pushing back darkness? What are ways we can grow in this?*

Not only the gospel

Recalling his time living among and ministering to the believers in Thessalonica, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, "...being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."

According to this passage, a biblical pattern for Christians is to share not only the gospel but also our own selves because people far from God are becoming very dear to us. Pushing back darkness through *gospel proclamation* and *kingdom demonstration* is a beautifully balanced "both-and" that fends off *activism* on the one hand and *pietism* on the other. In other words, 1 Thessalonians 2:8 corrects the *pietistic tendency* to only share the gospel abruptly with strangers—answering questions they may not even be asking—while at the same time never bothering to learn the names of one's own next door neighbors.

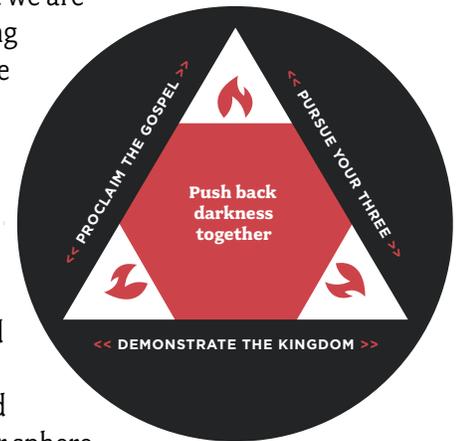


1 Thessalonians 2:8 reminds the pietist that they still have to build bridges of trust that can bear the weight of gospel truth. Once we've proclaimed the gospel with words, we must still adorn the gospel with our lives. Living lives of sacrificial love is always the ultimate apologetic for the truth we proclaim.

On the other hand, 1 Thessalonians 2:8 corrects an *activistic tendency* to view evangelism as arrogant and self-righteous. In our activism, we might prefer to only perform acts of service for our neighbors in hopes that the gospel will be caught rather than taught. But for Paul the gospel is news, and therefore it must be heralded—proclaimed with words. To say “Preach the gospel, if necessary use words,” is the same as saying “Give me your phone number, if necessary use digits.” Paul reminds the activist that no matter how many times they mow their neighbor's lawn, their neighbor will never come to know through that loving act that we are all under God's wrath and only Jesus can rescue us. They are, and ought to be, building bridges of trust, but they must also prayerfully seek opportunities to carry across the weighty truth of the gospel.

Pursue your three

The mission of God is global in sweep and scope, but unavoidably local in how it unfolds. Our great triune God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, and is sovereignly saving people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, but we are embodied souls, bound by time and space. In the words of Zach Eswine, we cannot be Everywhere-For-All, Know-It-All, or Fix-It-All. Wisdom recommends small steps and notices small steps, so we pick three. Who are three people far from God, within your sphere of influence, for whom you will commit to pray and engage in intentional gospel relationships? These people could be your children, family, friends, co-workers, or neighbors. As one author has put it, whom would you most love to see become a disciple of Jesus? Who is your heart best shaped to reach for Jesus?



Why motivation must come before methods

If we only discuss strategies and techniques for reaching people far from God, and skip right over the motivation required to sustain that mission, we will never overcome the inconvenience and sacrifice required to gather for the sake of the lost. Identity precedes action. If we don't have a settled sense on the heart that we are adopted sons and daughters of the Father who are also called and commissioned as missionaries, we will never be able to keep our hand to the gospel plow. Writer Wendell Berry famously asked “What are people for?” In Galatians 5, Paul gently reminds us that we have not been called to live as individualistic, autonomous, spiritual consumers. He writes, “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh [i.e., self-indulgence], but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'” (Gal 5:13–14). Christ has not set us free from the tyranny of self so that we might now become more functional idolators—joyfully returning to lives of selfish self-interest with a new sense of psychological well-being!

Instead, the Father's invitation—through the work of Christ and the power of the Spirit—is to slowly begin to “walk by the Spirit, and... not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). The call to join the mission of God is not a masochistic call to spiritual duty divorced from spiritual delight. Instead of ignoring and deadening all our own desires in order to serve others, our great triune God is giving us new desires, and inviting us to increasingly find our fulfillment and satisfaction *in* the interests of others. As the Spirit of God increasingly leads us outside of ourselves through blessed self-forgetfulness, we are freed more and more to love God, love people, and push back darkness. We have been *called into* a spiritual family, and we have been *called out* on God's mission. What are the people of God for? Paul says “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” We have been called and commissioned to “implore” our friends and neighbors “on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”



because of the great good news that “for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (1 Cor 5:20–21)!

Lesslie Newbigin has described the Church as “a community of hope” in contrast to “one of the most striking features of contemporary Western culture... the virtual disappearance of hope.” Jesus reminds us that we are called to serve as salty brightness in a world that is steadily growing more and more pessimistic and hopeless (Matt 5:13–16; Eph 2:12). We “are the light of the world” and “a city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14). For this reason, Newbigin writes, the local church “stands in the wider community of the neighborhood and the nation not primarily as the promoter of programs for social change (although it will be that) but primarily as itself the foretaste of a different social order.” Newbigin concludes:

If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society, if Christians are to occupy the ‘high ground’ which they vacated in the noontime of ‘modernity,’ it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns... It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known, and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole of society.

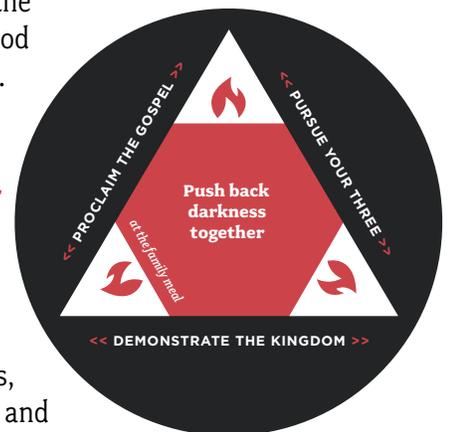
An introverted concern for our own lives will never satisfy, but as we “look not only to [our] own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4), we will find fulfillment, and we will increasingly serve as sign, instrument, and foretaste of the in-breaking kingdom of God. As the people of God demonstrate the kingdom of God, what the watching world sees will surprise them. As the people of God proclaim the gospel of God, what the listening world hears will sound like good news.

1: Push back darkness together... around a family meal

Confusing as it may seem, notice that the family meal serves as one of Frontline’s three community group rhythms—alongside of discipleship groups and missional gatherings—while at the same time also serving as one of the three kinds of missional gatherings! The family meal purposely straddles two of Frontline’s three community group rhythms. The family meal serves to strengthen spiritual family ties, but whenever someone far from God pulls up a chair, the family meal instantly shifts and unfolds in order to embrace the outsider. In this way, through the warmth and hospitality of table fellowship, an appetite for spiritual family is awakened and sharpened in those far from God.

In her moving book *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, Rosaria Butterfield recalls the day she—a tenured professor at Syracuse University and an ardent lesbian activist—was invited to dinner by a local pastor and his wife:

Ken and Floy did something at the meal that has a long Christian history but has been functionally lost in too many Christian homes. Ken and Floy invited the stranger in—not to scapegoat me, but to listen and to learn and to dialogue. Ken and Floy have a vulnerable and transparent faith. We didn’t debate worldview; we talked about our personal truth and about what “made us tick.” Ken and Floy didn’t identify with me. They listened to me and identified with Christ. They were willing to walk the long journey to me in Christian compassion. During our meal, they did not share the gospel with me. After our meal, they did not invite me to church. Because of these glaring omissions to the Christian script as I had come to know it, when the evening ended and Pastor Ken said he wanted to stay in touch, I knew that it was truly safe to accept his open hand... If Ken and Floy had invited me to church at that first meal I would have careened like a



skateboard on a cliff, and would have never come back... So, Ken was willing to bring the church to me. This gave me the room and the safety that I needed to match Ken and Floy's vulnerability and transparency. And so I opened up to them. I let them know who I was and what I valued. I invited them into my home and into my world. They met my friends, came to my dinner parties, saw me function in my real life. They made themselves safe enough for me to do this.

You can learn more about how to facilitate fruitful, sustainable family meals by reading *Making Family Meal Meaningful*, Frontline's guide to the family meal rhythm.

2: Push back darkness together... *in a third place*

We don't just pray for our three in our discipleship groups, but we also gather with our three in natural, neutral, and regular ways that are hospitable, help us form new friendships, and introduce lost people to the Christian community. As we seek to identify and intentionally pursue our three, we will face numerous barriers. Here are five common ones, with some thoughts on how to understand and overcome them.

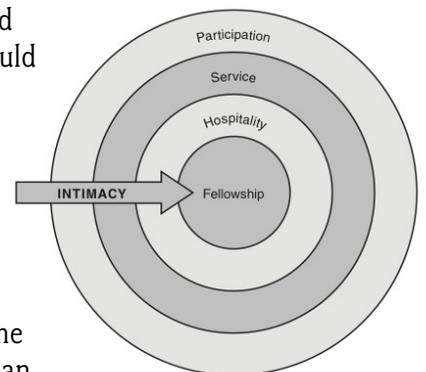
(1) My three would never want to visit my community group. We gather in *community* (the whole group gathering for worship, Word, fellowship, and prayer) and *discipleship* (smaller groups of believers of the same gender who commit to meeting outside of the group meeting time). But Todd Engstrom suggests there is a third way we need to gather—as missionaries in a third place. Engstrom writes that a third place is where a healthy group becomes intentionally oriented around those who don't know Jesus. Unless we intentionally make time for people outside our community, we often won't do it. Few of us naturally drift into mission. So what does it mean to obey Jesus and be a missionary? Obedience means gathering for the sake of people who don't know Jesus.

Engstrom explains that serving together won't be enough. Mission is ultimately about people, not projects. We must think through ways we can integrate people into our communities, and not just serve them at arm's length. As we wrestle with this challenge, we'll realize that we do indeed need to create this third place—a place to introduce our lost friends to our community. Good places to invite people are: (1) natural, (2) neutral, and (3) regular.

Engstrom concludes that an effective third place is neutral ground that is informal and non-committal. It naturally fits into the rhythms of your lost friends' lives. Where should communities on mission gather? It depends on the people you're trying to reach! Ask the questions like (1) "Where do the people we want to reach already spend time and naturally go?" and (2) "How can we gather there?"

(2) You want me to name my three? I don't even have any non-Christian friends.

Some of you are thinking, "Pick three? I don't have any meaningful relationships with people far from God." In his book *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support*, author and pastor Brad House suggests we look at the mission of God from the perspective of "the four spaces." He deadpans that the Church all too often resembles an albino tiger—rarely seen in the wild. While the spaces of (1) fellowship and (2) hospitality are important, they are the most intimate, they require people to come to us, and therefore they offer the most resistance to seekers. We must go beyond requiring people to come to us. As sent ones, we must also go to them (Matt 28:19). Engaging in fellowship with other Christians and extending hospitality to spiritual seekers are both good and needed, but in order to break out of the Christian ghetto, we must also increasingly (3) serve in our city, and (4) participate in what is already happening in our city. At Frontline, we repeatedly proclaim (and rightly so) that we are *A Church For the City*. The more we serve our city and participate in the life of our city, the more we will fulfill the promise embedded in that statement. Service and participation are humble acts that increasingly

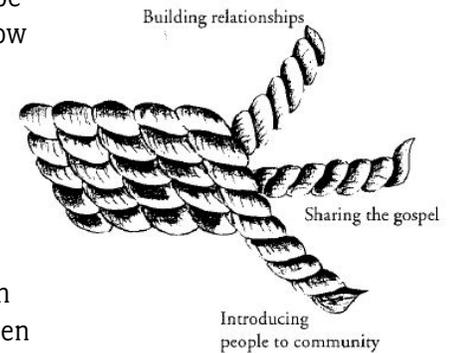


lead us out of our comfort and out of ourselves. If we lack any meaningful relationships with unbelieving people, it may be because our lives rarely depart from the rhythms of fellowship and hospitality.

We tend to underestimate how lonely most people are, and we tend to overestimate how much they will resist our overtures of friendship. If we thought more in terms of making friends with people far from God, and we thought less transactionally about evangelism, we would realize that we know far more about being ambassadors for Christ than our fears and insecurities would lead us to believe.

If you remember nothing else, remember this: *If you can be a friend, you can be on mission!*

(3) *If I'm honest, I'm scared to share the gospel with my three.* Others of you might be thinking, "I have meaningful relationships with people far from God, but I don't know how to love them with gospel-intentionality, and I don't know when and how to present the gospel to them." Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, in their book *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community*, suggest we look at mission from the perspective of "the three strands." If you grew up in church, you probably heard a lot about the need to (1) build relationships with people far from God, and (2) look for opportunities to share the gospel with them. However, you probably didn't hear much about the need to (3) introduce them to the Christian community. It is a lot easier to answer questions people are actually asking, and when the gospel message is adorned by the conduct of the gospel community, it provokes curiosity in onlookers. Non-believers are not reached best by Lone Ranger Christians. Non-believers need to be invited to hang out with Christians who are hanging out with other Christians. That is one of the primary ways in which they will experience Jesus' vision for melting their hearts. "By *this* all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). Introducing them to a Christian community that is exercising the kind of mutual love that can't be counterfeited is, in the words of Francis Schaeffer, "the ultimate apologetic."



(4) *I feel guilty when I share the gospel, and I feel guilty when I don't.* Some of our fear and reluctance about sharing the gospel with our three may come from failing to consider how the gospel enables us to be winsome and humble, instead of driving into the ditch of abrasive and arrogant evangelism on the one hand (a form of religious moralism), or into the ditch of apologetic and unwilling evangelism on the other (a form of irreligious liberalism). Tim Keller writes:

The liberal/pragmatist approach is to deny the legitimacy of evangelism altogether, while the conservative/moralist person does believe in proselytizing. because 'we are right and they are wrong.' Such proselytizing is almost always offensive. But the gospel produces a constellation of traits in us:

- *First, we are compelled to share the gospel out of generosity and love, not guilt.*
- *Second, we are freed from the fear of being ridiculed or hurt by others, since we already have the favor of God by grace.*
- *Third, there is a humility in our dealings with others, because we know we are saved only by grace, not because of our superior insight or character.*
- *Fourth, we are hopeful about anyone, even the "hard cases," because we were saved only because of grace, not because we were likely people to be Christians.*
- *Fifth, we are courteous and careful with people. We don't have to push or coerce them, for it is only God's grace that opens hearts, not our eloquence or persistence or even their openness.*

Keller concludes: "all these traits not only create a winsome evangelist but an excellent neighbor in a multi-cultural society."

Rosario Butterfield, reflecting on her unlikely friendship with Ken and Floy Smith, and how this constellation of traits was present in them, writes:



My Christian life unfolded as I was just living my life, my normal life. In the normal course of life questions emerged that exceeded my secular feminist worldview. Those questions sat quietly in the crevices of my mind until I met a most unlikely friend: a Christian pastor. Had a pastor named Ken Smith not shared the gospel with me for years and years, over and over again, not in some used-car-salesman way, but in an organic, spontaneous and compassionate way, those questions might still be lodged in the crevices of my mind and I might never have met the most unlikely of friends, Jesus Christ himself.

Mission begins with making room for God to come in.

(1) **Simplified living** must come before (2) **sensitivity to the Spirit** and (3) **strategic boldness.**

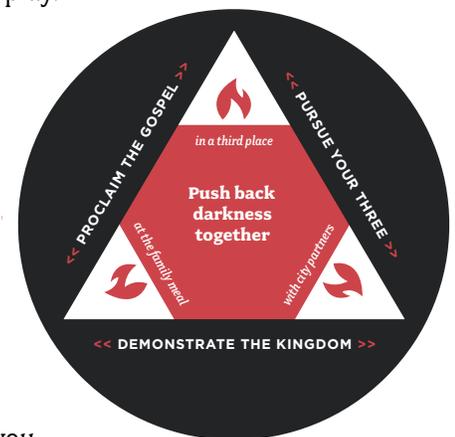
(5) I don't have any time for my three. Here is yet another obstacle you might be facing. Some of you are saying, "I want to get better at being a missionary, but I don't feel like I have any margin in my life." You might be helped by being reminded that mission always begins with making room for God to come in. Many people who already are operating with little to no margin in their lives hear the call to move out on the mission of God as added homework. However, moving out on mission is often less about doing more, and more about doing it differently, doing it with different people, or doing it in a different place. While mission will ultimately always require sacrifice, from another perspective going on mission in your surrounding community requires simply asking questions of *geography* and *affinity*. Where do you live? What do you love? Who has God placed in front of you? What are you passionate about? Embracing mission requires being willing to be increasingly led by God out of a selfishly introspective approach towards day-to-day life, and into greater and greater mindfulness of both God and others—increased sensitivity, increased intention, and increased kindness.

Most of us embrace the general principle that saying yes to what is important always requires saying no to something else, but we often fail to apply this principle to our pursuit of the mission of God. How might God be calling you to simplify your life in order to create margin—space on the page? Before we can be missionally sensitive to the Spirit, and before we can be boldly strategic in our pursuit of the lost, we will first need to fight to live simpler lives. God is already on mission where we live, work, and play. But we are often in too much of a hurry, and too focused on ourselves, to notice his repeated invitation to join him in pursuing people with whom we interact every day, every week, every month.

3: Push back darkness together... *with city partners*¹

While we might know we're called as Christians to serve and care for the poor, identifying opportunities and overcoming the inherent challenges often stop us in our tracks. We don't know what to do, whom to do it with, and even if we knew that, we're crippled by our own fear and hang-ups. As leaders, we often think we need to have a long-term plan for city renewal before we can even take a step. Here's the good news: you don't need a degree in social work to be a friend to the poor, and you don't have to be a mayor to lead your community toward relationship with the most unlikely of friends.

Help your community group members process and plan together how to extend hospitality, meet needs, and build relationships with the marginalized in your area. Take the time to stop and write out the opportunities, options, and ideas that are generated as you read and process these ideas out loud together. Getting them on paper is very freeing! Then you can think through the barriers your particular group might be facing in your unique time and place. Finally, you'll make a plan to move towards the invisible people in your city together.



¹ Much of the content and language in this final section is taken with permission, and with modifications, from a resource created by Saturate (saturatetheworld.com), entitled *Feasting With the Poor*.



You can begin in one of two broad ways: (1) by coming alongside the established work of a trusted ministry in our city and looking for opportunities to develop meaningful relationships along the way—ministries we refer to as Frontline’s “city partners,” or, (2) by extending hospitality and friendship to someone you already know personally or have the opportunity to grow in knowing personally, and then organically meeting their needs as they grow in their trust of your gospel community, and you grow in awareness of their needs. The first approach moves from meeting needs to building relationships (relying on city partners to help us form new relationships), and the second approach moves from building relationships to meeting needs (relying on relationships to help us identify new needs).

The marginalized in your city are those who don’t get to experience the full life of your city. They are overlooked, unheard, isolated, or pushed to the fringes of your city’s culture. Neglected children and orphans exist in every city. Few will visit the elderly, shut-ins, Alzheimer patients, and retirement homes in your city because our culture tends to view them as past their usefulness and relevance. Every day, your city welcomes refugees and immigrants who hope to build a new life and experience freedom. Your city is made up of single parents, people struggling with mental disorders, teenage runaways, and those struggling with substance abuse. These are the people your city tends to ignore—the poor and powerless. But they are not ignored in the kingdom of God.

Jesus pursued people both because they were created in his image and because he loved them. These people were welcomed into Jesus’ community as his beloved ones and his disciples. In fact, he not only welcomed them but also pursued them on their turf. Jesus calls his people to not only meet needs (clothe, visit, and feed) but also welcome people into relationship. Jesus healed people and even raised the dead, but some of the most powerful expressions of his love for occurred when he invited people to his dinner table.

How can your community share meals with the marginalized? Try to think of as many ideas as possible. Sometimes, one of the biggest challenges with pursuing relationships with the poor is the distance between the poor and ourselves. Tim Chester describes this reality well in his book *Unreached*:

Friendship evangelism is great, but it does not enable the gospel to travel beyond our social networks, unless there are intentional attempts to build friendships with people who are not like us.

John Mark Hobbins of *London City Mission* similarly observes:

Many people live in networks which take precedence over their address, and many churches have grown because of this. But the reality for many people living in social housing or in cheaper housing is that their address is very likely to define their daily life.

If you are going to engage in a life of mission to the marginalized, you will have to plan for it, prepare for it, and strategically change your life to create avenues of engagement. And all of this just to break through social, economic, and geographic barriers and get to a place where you can increasingly share life with the oppressed! Mission to the poor requires a concerted and collective effort towards unlikely friendships and distant neighbors. This is the greatest strength to having a common mission as a gospel community that has committed to doing life together—we will have to work at it and do it together. This mission requires a self-giving love for our city.

Start slowly and pick one

Your community group will not be able to magically begin pulling off all three missional gatherings (family meal, third place, and city partners) right out of the gate. The process of leading the members of your group from merely “considering their own needs in the presence of others” to pursuing their three in community can take months or even years. Pick just one to start. Then prayerfully and patiently begin walking it out together. Slowly start pushing back darkness together at the family meal, or in a third place, or with a city partner.





Here at Frontline we ask all of our members to commit to pushing back darkness through gospel proclamation and kingdom demonstration. We also ask all of our members to commit to name and prayerfully pursue three people far from God. This diagram illustrates how the three primary ways in which we gather missionally provide unique opportunities to fulfill those commitments.



at the family meal << **PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL** >> in a third place

Proclaim the gospel >> at the family meal. Family meals afford us unique opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Natural conversations unfold at the dinner table. Hospitality builds trust. Conversations go deeper. Acquaintances become friends. Before we know it, we're naturally sharing the good news about Jesus over a meal.

Proclaim the gospel >> in a third place. You begin asking your barber thoughtful questions. You learn the names of his wife and children. You begin praying for them regularly. After a year you're given the opportunity to share the gospel with him right in the middle of a haircut. Eventually he accepts an invitation to lunch with you and another Christian friend.

at the family meal << **DEMONSTRATE THE KINGDOM** >> with city partners

Demonstrate the kingdom >> at the family meal. As we sit together at the family meal, we provide a glimpse and foretaste of the coming kingdom of God. In *A Meal with Jesus*, Tim Chester writes:

What are the Christian community's meals for? They achieve many things. They express so much of God's grace. They provide a glimpse of what it's like to live under God's reign. They express and reinforce the community that Christ has created through the cross. They're a foretaste of the new creation. They're a great context in which to invite unbelievers so they encounter the reality of God among us. But they're not "for" any of these things. It's a trick question. Everything else—creation, redemption, mission—is "for" this: that we might eat together in the presence of God. God created the world so we might eat with him. The food we consume, the table around which we sit, and the companions gathered with us have as their end our communion with one another and with God... We proclaim Christ in mission so that others might hear the invitation to join the feast.

Demonstrate the kingdom >> with city partners. We also demonstrate the kingdom as we work alongside city partners to repair what has been broken by sin. We become the hands and feet of Jesus when we humbly serve the most vulnerable in our midst. As we show the invisible people in our city that we see them, we raise hope in their hearts that maybe Jesus sees them too.

in a third place << **PURSUE YOUR THREE** >> with city partners

Pursue your three >> a third place. Maybe you don't have any meaningful relationships with non-Christians because you're like an albino tiger—rarely seen in the wild. Spending meaningful time in places other than your workplace or your home can help you form new friendships. Or perhaps you might just need to approach third places you already frequent with greater gospel intentionality. Maybe you're already standing on the sideline of your daughter's soccer game. How might you intentionally move towards the other parents you don't know, instead of passively gravitating towards a Christian parent you already know? How might you invite that Christian parent to join you on the mission of God?

Pursue your three >> with city partners. As city partners help you serve people you'd never normally meet, you are surprised to find that by God's grace your service isn't being received as transactional, dehumanizing, or condescending. Instead, a genuine relationship has been sparked, and you stay in touch long after your city partnership has concluded. You're not only finding new ways to serve them that you never imagined, you're finding that you have things in common with them that you never imagined. Before you know it, someone you served through a city partner has become your friend.



EXERCISE #1

1. Take five minutes and prayerfully and thoughtfully select and write down the names of three unbelievers you feel particularly called to pursue. Then, for each person in turn, answer the following questions posed by missiologist Alan Hirsch:
 - 1) Am I in close proximity with this person to whom I feel called?
 - 2) Am I spending regular time with this person? If not, why not?
 - 3) Am I too busy to develop a meaningful relationship with this person? If so, how could I create margin for mission?
2. Go around in order and briefly share at least one of the people you selected, and why you chose them. If any of you are struggling to identify someone in your life, invite the group to process with you who you might identify.
3. Conclude your time by praying out loud for the people you have named—especially for your relationships to grow and deepen with them, for God to give you all creativity in how to spend regular time with them, and for God to give your community group opportunities to collectively love them, serve them, and share the gospel with them.

EXERCISE #2

1. Take a moment and write down all the activities, however mundane, that make up your life: (1) daily routine (traveling to work, eating meals, doing chores, walking the dog, playing with your kids); (2) weekly routine (grocery shopping, watching favorite TV shows, exercising); and (3) monthly routine (playing pick-up, getting a haircut, going to the movies). You should have a long list of activities!
2. Then, for each activity, missiologists Steve Timmis and Tim Chester suggest you ask yourself 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.
3. Write down your answers and share them with the group. (If you're struggling to come up with good answers for how to add community, missional, or gospel components to your activities, invite the group to look at the list of activities you wrote down, and prayerfully brainstorm with you.)

EXERCISE #3

1. Who are the vulnerable in your city? *Where do they live? Where do they spend their time? How does the city treat them? Does your community have any connections to any of these groups of people?*
2. Brainstorm. How can your community share meals with the marginalized? *Try to think of as many ideas as possible.*
3. What are the barriers to relationship with the poor for your community and in your context? What organizations can you partner with to walk through some of those barriers?
4. Describe the “distance” and “barriers” that currently exist and how can you overcome them. What is one step you could take or experiment you could do as a group to seek to share a meal with the marginalized in your community? *How can everyone participate in that step? What will you ask people in your community to do? When will you do it? How will you reflect and learn from this step?*

