

## Everyday Church Study Guide.

Adapted from Risen Church, Trevor DeBenning and Timothy Jang Small group guide

### KEY TERMS

**Attractional Church Model:** A congregation that advertises heavily and focuses its programs/events on bringing people into the church building, where they will hear the gospel preached by a pastor.

**Attractional Communities Model:** A small group/community of people who share ordinary life, and focus on bringing people into their group/community and their lives, where they will see and hear the gospel preached on a personal level.

**Christendom:** The union/alliance of church and state, established in Europe under Constantine in the fourth century AD. Christianity became the dominant religion and dominant force in society.

**Marginalization:** To relegate a social group or idea to the fringes and out of the mainstream; to make seem unimportant.

**Modernity:** The belief that through the exercise of reason alone we are capable of attaining a utopian human order.

**Nominal/Notional Christian:** One who says he/she is a Christian but who does not faithfully practice the faith or possess any visible fruit of being saved. Nominal Christians do not possess a trusting, faithful, dependent relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pluralism:** A social system that promotes all religious, ethnic, racial, political, and social groups within the system as equally valid.

**Post-Christian:** When Christianity is no longer the dominant civil religion but when the culture assumes values and worldviews that are not necessarily Christian. It is the loss of Christianity's monopoly on culture.

**Secularism:** The belief system that denies the reality of God, religion and the supernatural. It maintains that the only reality is the natural world.

**The Crowded House:** Steve Timmis's and Tim Chester's church.

## *Chapter 1 - Life At The Margins* 1 Peter 1:1-12

### **Overview**

85 million Americans have zero contact with the church, are non-believers, and have no desire to ever attend church. The growing secularization of our culture and rapidly declining church attendance make clear that Christians live at the margins of our culture.

This week, as we begin *Everyday Church*, we will learn that since our culture has no time for the message of Jesus, we need a different mindset to be a meaningful, transformative part of society. We are going to discover how to do church and mission in the context of everyday life. Our small groups need to be focused on Jesus and His mission. Our task is "to become church for them, among them and with them." (pg. 27) As we do that, we will not only survive, but thrive, on the margins

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. In 1 Peter 1:1 Peter address his readers as strangers or exiles. *Everyday Church* states, "Christians are like immigrants, foreigners, temporary residents, refugees. We do not belong. We do not have the rights of citizens, we are outsiders, living on the edge of culture." Do you feel this way in our culture today? Read the chart on pg. 20. Have you seen or felt any of these shifts from Christendom to post-Christendom? Which ones? How?
2. What specifically stood out or struck you in this chapter and why? Was there anything that bothered you or that you disagreed with?
3. In 1 Peter 1:6 Peter writes that his readers "have been grieved by various trials." On page 33 of *Everyday Church* we read, "Because of their Christian faith they were being . . . alienated in their relationships and . . . experiencing a loss of honor and socioeconomic standing." Have you experienced life as being uncomfortable because of your Christian faith? When and How?
4. In our study we are learning that, "we can not only survive on the margins, we can thrive." What encouragement were you able to take from this chapter? Look at 1 Peter 1:10-12. What encouragement can we find here?
5. On pg. 27 we read, "The task is to become church for them, among them and with them, and under the Spirit of God to lead them to become church in their own culture." What does this look like for Risen, or your small group, to be that kind of church?

## *Chapter 2 - Everyday Community 1 Peter 1:13 - 2:8*

### **Overview**

This week we will learn how we in the church are more like missionaries in a foreign land than we might think. Timmis writes, "This is the situation in which the church in the West finds itself. The culture has moved on. We need to wake up and realize we are in a missionary situation." (pg. 37)

In the first chapter of Peter's letter he describes the new identity of his readers as first generation Christians. It is this identity that makes them distinctive from the society around them. They are much like the ancient Israelites who were called to be a distinctive and holy community in their culture. We will discover how our engagements with our neighbors are shaped in a gospel-centered way that is lived out by our identity and not our activities.

"The Christian community demonstrates the effectiveness of the gospel. We are the living proof that the gospel is not an empty word but a powerful word that takes us men and women who are lovers of self and by grace changes them through the Spirit to love God and others." (pg.56)

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. On pages 41-42 Chester and Timmis use the example of a diplomat assigned to a foreign country. In what way are you and our church diplomats in Santa Monica & LA?
2. As a group, answer the missional questions on pages 42 & 43.
3. According to 1 Peter 1:22, our "key distinctive" as believers is "brotherly and sisterly love" (see also pages 53-55). How do you believe this plays out in your own life? What are the practical ways love is demonstrated in your life?
4. God says, "Be holy because I am Holy. Be distinctive because I am distinctive." (pg. 48) What should you be distinctive about? How are you being distinctive from the culture around you?
5. On page 56 we read, "People are often attracted to the Christian community before they are attracted to the Christian message." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What will you do to be on mission this week?

## *Chapter 3 - Everyday Pastoral Care 1 Peter 1:22- 2:3*

### **Overview**

Our gospel community matters! As Christians we have been born into a new family, an alternative community that makes us strangers and aliens in the larger culture. This new family is so important. We are God's demonstration of the gospel. We are His means of pointing to Him as our ultimate hope.

This week we will discover how we are born into this family through the enduring Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). We will learn that if, "the Word created our new family, and it sustains our new family, so we are to be a Word-centered community that craves that Word." (pg.

65) Realizing that, "It is only the Word of God that creates an enduring community life and love." (pg. 60)

We will also discover how creating Word-centered communities will enable us to "speak the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15). "We do not read the Bible simply to be informed, but to be conformed to the image of Jesus. We read the Bible to stir our affections. We read it until our heart cries out, "The Lord is good!" (pg. 63)

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. Read the quotes Tommy mentioned on pgs. 63 and 65, how do you believe that we are doing as a word-centered community?
2. On the bottom of page 67, we read about pastoring one another in everyday life. There are eight categories listed. Which ones are you personally best at, the worst at? What about in your small group community?
3. We see five principles of community-based, gospel-centered, mutual pastoral care on pages 65-75. How well do you see yourself as a pastor to others in your community?
4. Look at the chart on page 82. Do you see yourself in any of the descriptions of pastors whose pastoring goes awry because we don't trust God's greatness, glory, goodness, or grace? How so? What needs to change?
5. How can we move from a "desire to create community to realizing that it exists already and, thus, living it out?

## *Chapter 4 - Everyday*

### *Mission 1 Peter 2:9-3:16*

#### **Overview**

In our culture, we learn rather quickly that "church" is a building, or an institution. For many the church is simply a place we meet together and invite people to attend. It is an organization with a mission statement, ministries, committees, and events. It's where we go for once-a-week events.

This week we will be learning that church is not so much about how we structure ourselves or to worship, but about who we are as the people of God. We will see how we are called to display the goodness of his reign to the world through everyday means.

In 1 Peter 2:9 we read, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you." We are called to extol God to the nations through our very lives. Our community life will give credibility to our words.

We need to understand what it means to be a church, to really grasp what it means to follow Jesus. People know what to expect from the church on the corner, yet being the church is our everyday mission. Only by being the church will we reach a hostile world and bless our city.

#### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. From the opening paragraph on page 85, Timmis gives his definition of church. What are your key elements of that definition? What do you see as the role of the Church in missions/evangelism?
2. On pages 91 – 92, we find eight suggestions for being missional in everyday ways without overloading our schedules. Which ones are you already living out? Which would be the easiest for you to begin to incorporate into your life as everyday mission?
3. What are the differences between house groups and gospel communities? (pages 103 – 108)
4. If someone asks you why you have the hope you have, what would be your answer?
5. Read and discuss the questionnaire on pages 107 - 108. What one step can you take this week to move things forward?

## *Chapter 5 - Everyday Evangelism 1 Peter 3:15 - 16*

### **Overview**

Most of us are not natural evangelists. We may know that person who just seems to talk about God or faith with everyone they meet, but not us. Just the thought of having to strike up a conversation about Jesus with friends or strangers conjures up nervousness and fear at the upcoming awkwardness of our attempted "presentation." So how can we talk about Jesus in the context of everyday life? How do we do everyday evangelism?

This week we will discover that evangelism begins by talking about Jesus with our Christian friends in the context of everyday discussions. In allowing our unbelieving friends to overhear us "gospel" one another in our daily interactions, we will have opportunities to expose them to a community genuinely centered on Jesus. You can read more on pages 111 and 112.

Remember, though, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate evangelist. He alone will persuade people of the truth. Our role is to live good and attractive lives under the lordship of Christ, lives that will provoke questions from those with whom we interact. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

This week will learn how to begin conversations about Jesus with people who have no interest in him and see no necessity for Him.

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. On page 111 in *Everyday Church*, we read, "If you find it hard to talk about Jesus with Christians, then how do you expect to talk about him with unbelievers?" How often do your conversations with fellow believers incorporate your faith and the gospel?
2. What are some reasons you don't share your faith?
3. Which of the four truths listed on p.124 do you consistently struggle to believe? How does that impact your life?
4. Look at "Adapting Typical Modes of Conversation" on pages 127 – 129. Looking back over conversations you've had this week, give an example of an opportunity you had to adapt a conversation toward the gospel.
5. Who could you be praying for and begin reaching out to in order to connect to your gospel community?

## *Chapter 6 - Hope At The Margins* 1 Peter 3:8 - 5:14

### **Overview**

Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Yet most of us in America do not face such persecution for our faith. Still, Peter's epistle is full of references to suffering, rejection, persecution, and hope.

This week we will be talking about how our perspective of Christian hope changes everything, that true Christian hope "changes our attitudes to living on the margins, and it changes our attitudes to our time, money, and careers, freeing up resources for mission." (pg. 131)

In 1 Peter 4:12 we read that painful trials of suffering are normal, that they should be expected. Again, in 1 Peter 1:6 we read, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials." Rejoice? What could possibly be the source of such joy in hardships?

This week we will discover that it is our "living hope" that is to determine our priorities – whether it be money, career, or the pressures of leadership.

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. "Suffering is normal for Christians." (2 Tim 3:12) So why does suffering come as such a surprise to us when it happens?
2. Read 1 Peter 4:16, 3:17, 4:8, and 4:13. What can we learn about responding to suffering? Hint: look at pages 132-137. Why is this significant?
3. Read 1 Peter 4:9-10. What does it mean to you to be a steward of God's possessions? How might you use your time, talents/gifts, and treasures to be better on mission in our community?
4. "Living in missional community not only requires forgiveness, but also time." (pg. 143) How can you identify two ways you can demonstrate gospel intentionality with your time this week?
5. Read the final line of page 148 through the second paragraph of 149. Close your time by praying together, glorifying God, praying over your group, and praying for unbelievers.

## *Conclusion - Next Steps*

### **Overview**

As we look to live lives that are on mission in community, we need to ask, "Can we move beyond church as a weekly service and become a community that shares life and mission? Can we be a people for whom church and mission are our identity rather than occasional events?" (pg.154)

Our small groups (gospel communities) are about just that, the gospel. We are, "the people of God together in community making known the glory of God." (pg. 160) We are designed to be a people that reveal His glory, not as isolated individuals but in community.

In 1 Peter 3:8 & 15, Peter writes, "Finally, all of you, unity in mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind . . . in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Our prayer is that we are just that.

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

1. Of the five reasons listed on page 159, which of these is most preventing you from living out everyday church?
2. Read and discuss, "Questions for Gospel Communities" on pages 149-151. Ask whether the statements following each question are true of you as an individual and of your small group.
3. Spend time celebrating what God is doing among you, and identify areas of growth on which you can concentrate.
4. Take time to close in prayer together as a group, focusing on God and His glory, and encouraging everyone in the group to contribute.