

On A Mission - study five

SUSTAINING MISSION:
WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

The mission is before us...

In the previous study we looked at the important roles that need to be played for a sustained movement of the good news to the world. The *Insiders* are key, but there are also important support roles in the form of the mobile 'apostolic' people, the local believing community, and the broader believing network. We considered what the support structures might have looked like for the early church, as well as what they could look like for us today.

But having structures in place isn't enough on its own to make sure we keep going in mission. The 'make or break' of it is the *quality* of the supportive relationships. So now it's time to move from structure (what it looks like) to quality (what it feels like)

Exercise 1: Our World, Our Relationships

Let's begin with where we're at! In the last study you will have sketched out your relational diagram of friends and important people in your life, whether they be Christians or not. Now, as you think particularly about developing and sustaining your own involvement in mission, fill out the table below relating to how things look for you...

Write down details about the relationships you have that help you spiritually. Start with the more 'structured' ones (ie where you have a stated intentional purpose for meeting) but also include the 'unstructured' more informal relationships *if they help develop your faith and sustain your mission*:

| Who do you meet with? | How often do you get together? | What do you do when you get together? | What are the most helpful things you do with this person to encourage your faith and sustain you in mission? |
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Exercise 2: The New Testament world

ONE ANOTHERS

In the last study we read through Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians, noting the type of relationships that existed for the nurture and progress of the good news amongst them. Paul made mention of some of the important relationships they had with people from *outside* of Thessalonica, but he also talked about their relationships *amongst themselves*. In particular he urged them to strive for a certain quality to their relationships with one another: 'love each other'... 'encourage each other'... 'live in peace with each other'... 'be kind to each other' (1Th 4:9,18, 5:13,15). Throughout the New Testament the believers are frequently encouraged to put into practise the 'one anothers'.

- Below is a list of 'one another' passages. **Underline or write in the margin the key 'one another' ideas from each of the texts.**

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 14:13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

1 Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Galatians 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephes. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Col. 3:9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

Col. 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

1 Thes. 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

1 Thes. 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thes. 5:13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

1 Thes. 5:15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

James 5:9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 4:8-9 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 5:5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 4:11-12 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Additional "one another" verses are: Mark 9:50; John 5:12, 15:17; Rom. 13:8, 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:33, 12:25, 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Eph. 5:19; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:9, 4:18; 2 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 13:1; James 4:11; 1Peter 5:14; 1 John 3:11, 3:23, 4:7; 2 John 1:5. Note that many of these are about loving one another.

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- From the list of texts above, **summarise your findings**. (Do this in a way that is *practically* helpful for you - eg come up with a list of 3-6 broad categories that capture these passages, or write a descriptive paragraph of the main ideas, or...whatever works for you!)

 - As you think about your summary, and as you remember back to the table in exercise 1, **rate yourself as to how well you are doing in your experience of the 'one anothers'**. In particular, in your support network, **which 'one anothers' do you feel you are strong at? Which ones are you weak at?**

Read the following verses...

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. *No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us*—perfect love! 1Jn 4:11-12 (msg)

“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. *This is how everyone will recognise that you are my disciples--when they see the love you have for each other.*” Jn 13:34-35 (msg)

God becomes visible and we are identified with Jesus *when* Christians love one another. This could have an enormous impact on those who aren't Christians...if only they have the chance to see it! Somehow, we need to be able to love other believers in such a way that those who aren't Christians get a chance to watch this love in action.

- In your group, **brainstorm some ways that those who aren't Christians could have access to see the 'one anothers' going on amongst your network of Christian friends**.

Wrap Up

As you think back to the work you did in exercise 1, you may have noted some gaps – perhaps you spend enough time with other Christians, but in reality not much of that time really helps develop your faith and mission; or perhaps you are getting enough encouragement, but not enough prayer support; or it may be something else. The question is: **how are you going to get more intentional in your relationships to plug the gaps?**

Through the course of this study, you will also have had some ideas of things you could be doing to help you. This is more than a paperwork exercise. Note down these things here and resolve to do something about it...this week! **PTO**

OPTIONAL EXTRA – RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCE PEOPLE

Everyone is a volunteer! To this end, you need to choose carefully which people you listen to and take counsel from, whose leadership you accept, and what 'believing community' you choose to belong to. All these support structures should aid not just in the nurture of your faith, but also in mission. The following passages from 1Thessalonians give a 'flavour' of the quality of relationship that existed between Paul (and his fellow workers) and the Thessalonian believers...

1Thess 2:1-12; 2:17-3:2; 3:7-12; 5:12-13

- From these texts and your thoughts in general, **note down the qualities you should be looking for in leaders and resource people**. How does your current situation match up? If needed, what steps can you take to improve things?

End of study 5