



Gospel Community

Definition, Vision, and Rhythms

A Gospel Community is a family of disciples (apprentices of Jesus) seeking to live as loving, missionary servants together in the world.

A Gospel Community is not a bible study; however, we may study the bible. A Gospel Community is not a community/small group; however, we may experience community. Gospel Communities are shaped and reshaped by the depths of the gospel as they live into, proclaim, and incarnate it together.

Gospel Communities seek to live out four rhythms in daily life and in community.

As a musician, I'd define a rhythm as, "a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound." However, we're applying this concept to the communal way of life experienced in the kingdom of God. In view of this, rhythms would be defined as, "*strong, regular, repeated patterns that shape and reshape a gospel formed community in such a manner that they would increasingly reflect life on mission in continual, abiding relationship to God in Christ by the Spirit.*" Because these are individual and communal rhythms of life, Gospel Communities should regularly evaluate how effectively they're living into these rhythms and adjust accordingly.

Gospel Rhythm 1: Communion (UP) – This rhythm is centered around the greatest commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Questions: How are we going to intentionally encourage one another to pursue God both individually and communally? How will our gatherings value and foster a personal and communal relationship with God? How are we being shaped by the Word?

Ideas: Praying together. Confessing together. Surrendering together. Texting/sharing scripture with one another. Studying scripture together. Singing together. Praising God together. Partaking in the Lord's body and blood together. Giving thanks together. Participating in Fight Club together.

Gospel Rhythm 2: Community (IN) – This rhythm is centered around Jesus' new commandment, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Questions: How are we going to intentionally pursue relationship with one another? How can we practically love one another? How can we serve one another? How can we teach one another? How can we pray for one another?

Ideas: Eating meals together. Getting coffee together. Listening to one another. Praying for one another. Serving one another. Doing household chores together. Living life together.

Gospel Rhythm 3: Co-Mission (OUT) – This rhythm is centered around the commandment that sums up or fulfills the entirety of the Law, “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself...’” (Galatians 5:14).

In addition, this rhythm is always held in tension with Christ’s command to make disciples (apprentices) in Matthew 28:18-20, “...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Be mindful that this is not a commission but a **co-mission** with Jesus.

Questions: How can we practically love our neighbors, our neighborhood, our co-workers, strangers, etc.? How can we proclaim, incarnate and reveal the kingdom of God as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the kingdom?

Ideas: Serving our neighbors together. Serving the poor together. Hosting our neighbors for dinner. Eating lunch/getting coffee with a co-worker. Initiating gospel conversations. Baptizing and teaching new disciples (to obey Jesus’ commands).

Gospel Rhythm 4: Sabbath/Shalom (OFF) – “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (*in and through Christ*), for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.” (Hebrews 4:9-11)

God values *rest*, decompressing from the busyness of life to enjoy our relationships with God, one another, our neighbors and creation while reflecting on God’s goodness to us. According to Jesus, the Sabbath (day of rest) “was made *for* people, not people for the Sabbath. For this reason the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28). We are not to enslave ourselves to a rigid view of Sabbath rest, but should engage redemptively in how we rest as servants of Jesus. Jesus modeled redemptive rest through engaging in communal worship, teaching about the kingdom, eating food with others, doing good to others, healing the sick, setting people free from sin, delivering people from evil spirits, etc. It was on the Jewish Sabbath that Jesus taught: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest**. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...” (Matthew 11:28-29). Jesus is the culmination of Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:9-11). And we should *make every effort* to enter that rest – see the paradox there? This means being intentional about reorienting our lives around the person of Jesus, the giver of *shalom* (wholeness, health, peace, rest) in how we relationally engage God, people, and creation. This rhythm is vital to the health of any redemptive community. In view of this, **Gospel Communities are intentional about taking time to rest and reorient their lives around Jesus.**

Questions: What are ways that we can practice rest in a way that glorifies God? How can we be intentional about carving out time to rest? How can we resist the temptation to allow busyness to be the dominant theme of our lives? How can we be intentional about carving out time for the purpose of fostering a growing relationship with God, family relationships, relationships with one another, and relationships with our neighbors?

Ideas: Engaging in activities that refresh your soul: gathering with believers for worship, getting away with God, being outdoors, taking a walk, having dinner with a trusted friend(s) or neighbor(s), playing sports, gardening, spending time with your children, creating art, taking a nap, participating in community events, etc.