



# First Focus



Developing a  
Missional Road Map

## On Missional Lifestyle

*A missional lifestyle is simply a commitment to an intentional perspective. This perspective is that we are committed to God's calling for us to influence people by taking the gospel cross contexts and cultures. A great effort is placed on avoiding the lull of our everyday lives which erodes our intentionality to communicate the gospel in a urgent, bold and effective manner.*

A practical step disciples can take towards being missional is **to develop a missional road map**. Just like any road map, it is designed to get you where you want to take people and how to get them there. The key is make this **an exercise of your heart**. The best missional road maps use your story and personal points of emphasis to make a path you are passionate about taking with other people. This is not an evangelism plan like the Roman Road or 5 Spiritual Laws, but a helpful tool for the person being intentional to others in the gospel process. Here is my missional road map that I have adjusted and embraced over time: **1. Identify 2. Intercede 3. Invite 4. Include 5. Influence**. The first step is **to identify people**. Often times this is the biggest hurdle. Have you ever asked someone else where another person stands with Christ? Often the answer is: 'I don't know, I have never thought about their relationship with Christ?' This is not gossip, but simply researching and identifying **where people are**. The "accuser" has an upper hand if we presume that sheer inquiring of information is invading one's personal space. Identifying people draws our mind to being aware of other's needs and obstacles. It also sets us up to **intercede** well. We want to be intentional about opportunities the Spirit is guiding us toward and be as responsive as we possibly can. **Being intentional about inviting people** is an often under appreciated social skill. I am not just talking about inviting people to church, but anything, coffee, movies, dinner, a game night, etc. It is with this in mind that we can **include people** in our lives. There is a deep emotional longing, to be included in community. Powerfully and simply treating others as you want to be treated, we intentionally include them **because we want to be included**. It is through this life integration that we come to a place where **we can influence**. Remember small influences are great influence. Bringing nuance and perspective to one's heart is an art of precise focus and detail; not the work of a sledgehammer.



## On Groups

*Groups require energy. Discipleship that brings life change is a consistent culture of responsible thought, deep reasoning, and common direction.*

Imagine if Pastor Jason and Pastor Brad, once arriving on a Sunday morning, decided to let Raymond Pendley pick whatever random song he likes, then the next song Brad asks if the orchestra and choir to sing this song Linda Daniels heard on the radio that morning. Finally Pastor Jason allows Greg Leath to come and take the offering anytime he wants. The result would be chaos, off-putting to any guests, and distracting. Thankfully, Pastor Jason and Brad put great energy and preparation into the service.

My question to you is this: **"What would happen if you put that amount of energy into your group ministry?"** Groups should receive similar care and attention as the worship service. This is not easy nor simple, and often the most difficult part of our Christian community.

We must embrace a consistent cycle of **learning, trying, and changing** what works best to minister to our community. This cycle requires time, patience, endurance, organization and a unified direction for the group. Remember growth happens through community, and thus has a great eternal value.

# On Marriage

*If we are all honest, we struggle with how to balance work, family, and other aspects of life, and this struggle often leads to a stress filled marriage and home. This stress often causes fatigue and conflict. What can we do to keep from being consumed with daily challenges?*

Think of this helpful question. How do we keep our relationship with our spouse a priority? Men, our wives deeply desire our attention and conversation. **Identifying laser focused priorities** in our marriages are key to bringing the idealistic to a reality.

Broad priorities are more difficult to be intentional with and more likely to become broken in the storms of life. Being as specific as possible with our convictional commitments builds an self-adjusting fluidity, if we confirm how it is received from our partner. People continually change. A primary challenge of marriage is this learning how to love and care for the person to whom you are married to in this moment. It requires an approach that is **sensitive, responsive and intentional.**

The goal of marriage is not self-fulfillment but creating a space of **stability, love and consolation.** This is an environment that is a warm personal haven from a world that is broken and fractured. The reason that marriage is so painful at times and yet wonderful is because it is a reflection of the Gospel, which is both painful and

wonderful at once. The Gospel is— **we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared to believe, and at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever hoped,** — the ultimate space of stability, love and consolation. A gospel-centered relationship is the only kind of relationship that will really transform us.

Love without truth is simple sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is painful harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God's saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also a radical, unconditional commitment to us.

The hard times of marriage drive us to experience more of this transforming love of God. But a good marriage will also be a place where we experience more of this kind of transforming love at a human level.

*“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

**1 Corinthians 2:12**



## On Disciplines Finding Refreshment

What if we come to call our quiet time, simply an individual worship of God. While being faithful to set a regular time to do spiritual activities are important, God also desires that our whole life be filled with habits to develop a love for Him — **habits that involve our heart, mind, and soul.** Here are some helpful less common disciplines you can incorporate into your life and your time alone with God.

### 1. Silent Solitude

Quiet is the one thing missing in most of our quiet times. Solitude keeps our quiet time from becoming another task to be scheduled into our hurried lives and checked off from our to-do lists. Disconnect yourself and rest your mind.

### 2. Contemplate Our Context

We must realize that we are strangers in a foreign land and then live according to that reality. Ideas will always exist in our culture and this world that will be in strong opposition to those of God revealed both in nature and through Scripture. We need not shy away from the culture we find ourselves in but rather be ready to engage it.

### 3. Printed Prayer

Have you ever felt like you knew exactly what you thought about something but then when you sat down to write it or share it with another, you realized that you hadn't completely thought through the matter?

**Prayer is the act of reflecting on our lives and communicating our experience to God.** One of the greatest things you can do is write your prayers out. You'll find you don't drift off, and you will keep from repeating the same ideas. It can give you an objective view of your thoughts that would be otherwise impossible.





# On Prayer

A starting point on your theology of prayer

When conversations arise about prayer, they are often practical or driven by the discipline of remaining faithful. However, **prayer is also a rich theological endeavour.** Try to explore your personal theology of prayer.

Theology is not simply an exercise of the mind, **but it adapts and reveals itself through our lives.** A major theme we see in Scripture is that prayer must have a "high view" of God. How we pray is determined by who we think we are praying towards. A "high view" of God would be consistent of many things, but begins with a God who is all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful, and has a purpose and plan for our life.

**We must identify and shape our prayer life as we become aware** of our true thoughts about God and

ourselves. How we understand the **trinity** will be exposed. What kind of love do we believe that **the Father** has for us? What kind of mediator does **Christ** reveal himself to be to us? Do you pray as if the indwelling **Spirit** is guiding you?

St. Augustine would recommend **identifying the character of your heart.** Slowing our hearts down enough to look at it is often difficult, but this consistent wandering is a characteristic of our desolate heart. If we don't view our heart as desolate, then **it will veil us in seeing what we are truly doing through prayer.** A desolate heart is a heart in need and out of order.

Our love priorities are skewed and we replace what should be our primary love with what should be second,

third or fourth. For example, if we look at money as our primary source of security and safety, then when our wealth is threatened, we will turn to God for help but our prayers will be **more like worrying in God's direction.** Afterwards, we will be more distraught than before because it will not provide any peace and erode our hope. This is due to our lack of understanding what we are truly doing as we pray.

Prayer is effective when we allow it to reorient our hearts to our need of Him alone. **Prayer then puts our desolate hearts in perspective** of the only thing we truly need, a relationship of peace and security with God found in the good news of Christ.

# On Parenting

## Fight for your kids, not with your kids.

I tell myself this everyday. Let's frame this so we understand our primary objective. **Parenting is a battlefield of the heart.** Parenting's ultimate goal is not good behavior; it's a receptive heart. Our responsibility is not simply to love them. Our primary responsibility is to help them **love God.** We are responsible for their heart.

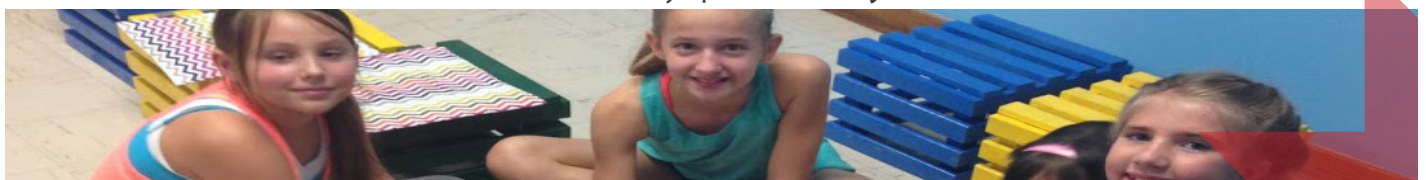
The only way to their heart is via the gospel. The fight is for their heart. This is anything but a formula, but a long-term shaping a different kind of love. This is a love that

sacrifices, is compassionate, & open to forgiveness, but also reorients its values to others & God. In *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*, Reggie Joiner wrote, **"Children need more than just a family that gives them unconditional acceptance and love; they need a tribe that gives them a sense of belonging and significance."**

The Gospel is the only way to integrate a true "Christ-flavored" family culture into their heart. But let me go a step further & acknowledge that parents also need this gospel-centered family space. **Know your**

**child's heart,** not simply the sin, but also the sinful heart desire that manifests the sinful behavior. Pray and **promote the gospel alternative** to their heart rather than focusing solely on the behavior.

We must also model this approach & not provoke our children. Remember, they are continually becoming more aware of their sinful nature, so encourage them & avoid unrealistic expectations & overprotection.





## On Missional Lifestyle

1. Who in your life needs the gospel?
2. How will you build those relationships intentionally?
3. Have you asked them about their relationship with Christ?
4. Have you invited them to your group? If not, why? How can we, as a group, overcome any existent obstacles?
5. How can our group be an encouragement to you and this person?

## On Disciplines

1. How can time alone with God be your personal worship of Him?
2. When was the last time you spent time alone with God? Describe that time (frustrating, rewarding, satisfying).
3. Do you really want to have quiet time? If not, why? If yes, when will you do it and how will you spend that time?"

## On Marriage

1. As you consider all that your spouse does for your family, how can you help your mate handle life's daily pressures?
2. Why do you think that so many couples struggle with stress? What are some ways that they attempt to deal with it?
3. Look over your spouse's calendar together, eliminate at least one item from your schedule so the two of you can spend time together.
4. How can you spend quality time with your spouse in a way that they recognize and crave.
5. In the midst of all the demands on you, how do you make your relationship with your spouse a priority.
6. In what ways might your family simplify life?
7. How will we continue to grow as a couple and strengthen our marriage?

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Galatians 5:13 ESV



## On Prayer

1. Think of the privilege of prayer. Realize God is present. **Ask Him to help you pray.**
2. Read a Scripture passage.
3. Discern one or two truths you learn there.
4. Choose the one that most impresses you and write it in a sentence.
5. How does this truth **help me** praise God?
6. How does it show me a sin to confess?
7. How does it show me something to ask God for?

## On Parenting

1. In the midst of disciplining your child, how can you speak a positive vision of what God wants them to be as opposed to a guilt-motivated vision?
2. Would your child see you as someone who more often builds them up or criticizes them? Discuss.
3. Do your children see you accepting and acknowledging God's discipline in your own life, avoiding bitterness and striving for peace?