

Gawler Baptist Church
Building Relationship Networks
Term 4, 2009

**Study 4—Going:
Going On Mission in the Neighbourhood**

Read the following passage from John in the Message version. Take particular note of verse 14.

John 1:1-14 (MSG) ¹The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, ²in readiness for God from day one. ³Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him. ⁴What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. ⁵The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. ⁶There once was a man, his name John, sent by God ⁷to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. ⁸John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light. ⁹The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life he brings into Light. ¹⁰He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. ¹¹He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. ¹²But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. ¹³These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten. ¹⁴The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

- What was significant about Jesus coming and living in the neighbourhood?

Mission in our neighbourhood is more likely to happen if we intentionally engage with it. It's right there outside our front door. Our neighbourhood is one of the primary places in which we can undertake mission. It's the context in which we can proclaim Jesus through both word and deed. To do that is to do exactly what Jesus has done.

The following lists 6 simple things we can do in terms of being on mission in our neighbourhood.

1. Seeing God in the Neighbourhood

Engaging with our neighbourhood begins with the understanding that God is as interested, and is as much at work, in our neighbourhood as he is anywhere else. He is present and active in every aspect of our lives, in the ordinary and routine, the everyday things of life and relationships. He is with us and the kingdom comes near to others through us.

Practice 1: Pray that God will open our eyes to see where he is active in our neighbourhood and relationships.

2. Reset Our Priorities

Are we sowing into the kingdom or are we sowing into other things? Do we have a vision of what God can do through us – whether it's in our street or some other network of which we are a part – or are we so busy with other things that the priorities of the gospel and kingdom are crowded out. Sometimes we may need to make deliberate choices that help us line up with the life and work of the kingdom.

Practice 2: Take a look at our priorities and reset them to align with the life and work of the kingdom.

3. Look for What's Happening

Take a close look at our neighbourhood trying to read what is there: signs of life, hope, despair, community, alienation, beauty and neglect. Look for the detail that together paints a picture of the life and character of our neighbourhood.

Here's some questions we can ask of it:

- What do you notice about the houses in your area? Condition?
- What do you notice about the front gardens? Does your neighbourhood feel like a cared-for place?

- How many houses are for sale? Is this a neighbourhood where houses change hands frequently?
- Are there any parks, public spaces? Community buildings or facilities?
- What people do you see?
- What kinds of commercial buildings are there?
- Any churches?
- Are there places in your neighbourhood you wouldn't like to go? Why?
- What sense of connection do you feel to your neighbourhood as you walk through it?

Practice 3: Go for a walk in the neighbourhood with eyes and ears open to really see what's there.

4. Prayer Walking

What better opportunity could there be than praying while we're walking around our neighbourhood! We can pray for those who we know by name as we walk past their place. We can pray for particular things of which we are aware in the lives of our neighbours. We can pray for people whom we don't know as we walk past their house. We can ask that God will bring healing and hope into the neighbourhood. We can ask for opportunities to be his salt and light.

Practice 4: Walk through your neighbourhood and pray for the people and households.

5. Build Relationships

Whenever we nurture a friendship we open up the possibility of an encounter with God for both of us. Just being the people whom God has made us to be is a presentation of the gospel.

But there are times when we need to actually speak and story is one of the best contexts for that. Our neighbours will have their story to tell. Listen to it. In time we will have opportunity to tell our story, part of which will obviously include our faith journey. Through that we can invite our neighbours to envision a new story, a new way of being that comes through living within the kingdom of God. It's a natural part of, and progression within, the relationship and we are able to do it in the power of the Spirit.

Practice 5: As we build relationships with others, invite them to envision a new story of their life with God.

6. Build Church

What if traditional church just did not compute with the people with whom we built a relationship, but they were happy to sit around a bbq as a context for spiritual growth? Could not this have the possibility of becoming a church in its own right?

Practice 6: Grow church right where we are!