

# REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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## Teaching Guide

*Redemptive Community and the Kingdom of God*  
*Discussion Guide*

**Introduction to this Week's Reading Assignment**

Christian communities are an important part of making the Kingdom of God accessible to the wider world. This article demonstrates the integral aspect and therefore interdependence of Christian community and Christian mission, showing that it is in and through redemptive communities that individuals and society can experience real change found in Jesus Christ.

**A Note to the Teacher**

In today's world there isn't one standard way to do church. Beyond the distinction of protestant and catholic, churches range in style and size from the mega-churches of the U. S. to small house churches in countries like China. There are parish churches concerned with the neighborhoods in which they find themselves and urban-commuter churches made up of members from across large geographic areas.

The word *community* is used in this article to mean a group of believers who meet regularly for fellowship and worship. It connotes on-going and deep relationships. In some situations, community will be synonymous with church, congregation or fellowship, but because of the wide variety of ways church is done in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this may not always be the case.

Connecting our mission as believers and how we live in community will look different in various situations. This session is designed to help you consider your current community and determine the best way to enhance or build redemptive qualities into it. As a result, the discussions are meant to be evaluative and action-oriented.

**A Note to those who Work with Mission Agencies:**

In this article, *mission* refers to the broader Church's mission, not to a specific agency or personal mission. Organizations can appropriately focus their mission, covering only part of the entirety of the Church's mission. But since as individuals we are all part of the Church, it is important for us to understand our agency responsibilities in light of the Church's mission and to remember that we are responsible for more than the agency's mission.

If we assume that our personal responsibilities do not extend beyond our agency mission we may detract from the coherency of the life we are meant to live as representatives of Christ on earth. Consider someone who works for an agency that focuses on social justice. The agency is right to focus exclusively on social justice but Christians within the agency are responsible for other parts of the mission as well, such as evangelism. The same holds true for Christians working for agencies primarily involved in proclamation; their personal responsibilities extend beyond proclamation to issues like social justice.

## Session Objectives

- 1) To help group members form and articulate a biblical stance on community and mission (stances may differ slightly)
- 2) To help learners evaluate their current community and begin to make real plans to live in redemptive communities that make Christ known to the world
- 3) To begin to build “windows and doors” through hosting a Brush-Up Social

## Resources

- *The Story of Le Chambon; A Transforming Community*. Included on Public Faith disk.
- *The Weapons of the Spirit* (A film of Le Chambon. Available through Amazon.com)
- The transcript of *The Weapons of the Spirit*. Included with this lesson.

## Class Structure

Please plan 2½ hours for this session.

*20 minutes*

**Discussion Launcher:** The Weapons of the Spirit

*30 minutes*

**Discussion:** Redemptive Community and the Kingdom of God

*30 minutes*

**Discussion:** The Biblical Basis for Linking Community and Mission

*30 minutes*

**Evaluation and Discussion:** Current Expressions of Community

*25 minutes*

**Project Discussion:** Brush-Up Social

NOTE: The projects are designed to be completed after each reading and before the discussion. Make sure that the project assignment is given with the reading assignment and that your group members come prepared to discuss the project.

*10 minutes*

**Summing up and Assignment:**

*Le Chambon and The Weapons of the Spirit*  
*Hook and Discussion*

20 minutes

**The Weapons of the Spirit** – Available through Amazon.com



*Weapons of the Spirit* is the astonishing story of a unique “conspiracy of goodness.” Written, produced and directed by Pierre Sauvage, this documentary tells the story Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, in Nazi-occupied France during the Second World War. Sauvage was born and protected in the village of Le Chambon where a community of impoverished Christian farmers sheltered 5000 Jews.

USA/France, 1989, 90 minutes (full-length), color – 35mm, 16mm, DVD, video

USA/France, 1990, 35 minutes (short version), color – DVD, video

English language with some French, subtitled

French-narrated version: Les armes de l'esprit

1. Use part of the documentary, *The Weapons of the Spirit* (or the movie transcript), as an introduction to discussion.
2. Use the article, *Transformative Community: The Story of Le Chambon*, to lead into discussion. Attached to the article is a discussion guide that can be used with the article or with the movie or movie transcript of *The Weapons of the Spirit*.  
\* This article and the discussion guide can be found on The Public Faith disk, in the Redemptive Community folder.
3. Find a movie clip that either shows community as it ought to be or shows it in its fallen state and launch a discussion from there.

## ***Redemptive Community and the Kingdom of God Discussion***

30 minutes

*Discussion Objectives:* As people engage in the discussion they will continue to formulate and articulate their views on community and mission. The discussion should help uncover and correct any misunderstandings. The discussion should uncover points of both agreement and disagreement. Finally, the discussion should help motivate students to continue to grapple with mission and community.

### **Possible discussion questions:**

General response:

1. Your initial response to the article is best described by which of the following adjectives: helpful, unsettling, surprising, brilliant, or ridiculous? Why? What specific concepts fit the selected adjective?

The mission as defined in the article:

1. Is the definition for mission presented in the article different from what you had previously thought it should be?

2. The definition of mission as establishing, “redemptive communities within which and through which Christ is made known to the world” is both specific and yet broad. What things can be included in “making Christ known”? Are there things that can and should be included that were not included in the article?

3. The author could have reversed the order of the mission statement and said that the Church’s mission is to make Christ known to the world by establishing redemptive communities. Does this subtle change make a difference? How and to what degree? Which do you prefer?

4. Why might the author use the words redemptive community rather than redemptive church?

Defining redemptive community:

1. In defining redemptive community the author gives four criteria: Jesus will be the centerpiece of community; The community and its individuals will be transformed by grace; The community will be visible and accessible to the broader world; And it will present alternative Kingdom values for life.

Discuss each of these: Which is most helpful? What insights have you gained from this definition? Is there anything that you would add that the article left out?

## *The Biblical Basis for Linking Community and Mission Discussion*

*Discussion Objectives:* The objective of this discussion is to demonstrate that the concepts presented in the article are biblically supportable, and to allow students to “prove and re-prove” their own assumptions.

It is important that each student can explain their convictions from the Word, whether they are in agreement with the article or not. It is also important for individuals to understand how others come to alternate conclusions and respectfully judge those conclusions based on the Word.

Evaluating the mission in light of community from the Word:

1. Is the definition of mission given in the article biblically supportable? Why or why not?

The Church’s mission is to establish redemptive communities within and through which Christ is made known to the world.

2. By looking at the Great Commission in light of Ephesians, the author is attempting to examine and understand the Word by the Word, giving a fuller picture of both mission and community.

What is the advantage/disadvantage of looking at scripture in this way? What other passages might we look at to round out our understanding of community, of mission? What nuances can we pick up from these passages?

3. Does the Bible support linking Christian mission with redemptive community? Why or why not?

The Great Commission:

Read the Great Commission and look at the article’s explanation of each portion of the command. Are there sections of the article’s portrayal of the passage that you particularly like? Don’t understand? Disagree with? Why?

Read Ephesians 2:19-22.

1. The article states that *our mission is part of God’s broader mission*. Is this justified by the passage? Why or why not? Are there other passages that support this conclusion?

2. The article states that *God’s plan is broader than our individual salvation*. Is this justified by the passage? Why or why not? Are there other passages that support this conclusion?

3. Is the passage in Ephesians strong enough to connect the Church’s mission with redemptive community? What other passages might make this connection stronger?

4. The article suggests that the Church is a visible sign that God is present with his people, much like the role the temple played in the Old Testament. Do you agree or disagree with this?

## *Evaluation and Discussion*

### *Current Expressions of Community*

30 minutes

*Discussion Objectives:* In this section you want to help the student take an honest look at their current community life and determine one or more action points that they can undertake to move toward living in redemptive community.

General questions:

1. Does this article present a compelling vision of community? Why or why not?
2. Does this article present a compelling vision of mission? Why or why not?
3. Did the idea of windows and doors stir your imagination? If so, which one mentioned in the article is most intriguing? Are there windows or doors that were not mentioned that you want to consider?

Evaluate your current community, fellowship, congregation or church according to the four criteria for redemptive community:

1. How well does your community keep Christ as its centerpiece? Where is your group strong? Where is it weak? How can the group grow in this?
2. Are the individuals in the community being transformed by grace? What role does the community play in this transformation? Is the community an active agent in the personal growth of its members? How? If not, what can be done differently to move the group along?
3. Is your community visible and accessible to the broader world? Which windows and doors are most prominent in your community? Which ones would you like to see become more prominent?
4. Does your community present alternative kingdom values to the wider world? If so, how and which ones? If not, how can your group begin to do this? How well are these alternative values received in the wider world?

**IMPORTANT FOR THOSE WHO** are teaching this curriculum within a specific mission's agency: The following discussion will be helpful. It is important that your staff and associates can discern the differences between your agency's mission, the Church's mission and how their personal calling fits with these. Refer to A Note to Teachers in the introduction.

1. Is it fair to say that because most of your disciples don't join your agency that you should disciple toward the Church's mission, which includes both issues of social justice and evangelism and discipleship? Why or why not?

2. Agree/disagree—"as individuals we have responsibilities beyond the company mission."
3. Can we disciple holistically if we don't live holistically? In other words, can we develop well-rounded disciples if we are solely focused on a limited agency mission such as social justice or evangelism and discipleship?
4. How can we disciple toward the greater mission without losing our agency distinctives?
5. Have we at times, either personally or corporately, become so focused that we have detracted from the Church's mission? If so, how?

***Project Discussion***  
***The Brush-Up Social***  
***25 minutes***

This evaluation is designed to be done as a group. If your group did the brush-up social individually, give each person time to present their results using some of the following questions:

1. Have you become compartmentalized in your friendships, rarely interacting with non-Christians in a social setting and to what degree?
2. Was mixing your networks in a social situation comfortable and natural?
3. The purpose of the brush-up social was to broaden your social networks and to become comfortable interacting together with your Christian and non-Christian friends and the friends of others in your group or community. To what degree was this purpose met?
4. How did the social itself go? Was it well planned? Did the people you expected attend? Was it fun? Were there people from various networks, both Christian and non-Christian?
5. Were you successful in taking your relationships with your non-Christian friends a level deeper?
6. Were you successful in cross-pollinating—making a friend with at least one non-Christian who is the friend of a friend and introduce your non-Christian friend to at least one Christian friend.
7. Was there any awkwardness among your guests? If so, why?
8. How did the conversation go? Was it accessible to all?