

## **THE BIG QUESTION**

Last February, the movement of missional communities got a kick-start through the VERGE conference held in Austin, Texas. In April of 2011, Exponential, the largest church planting conference in the world, will focus their attention on missional communities. Over the last two years, I've traveled extensively speaking to church planters and existing pastors who want to see God's extraordinary movement throughout the church. What do I talk about? Yep, missional communities.

The biggest question I get asked?

**“What is the difference between missional communities and small groups?”**

In our recently released book, *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church*, we give the missiological differences, but here's the bottom line. Church gatherings are “first-decision” environments. That is, a person need only decide to be a God believer to come to the church. Likewise, small groups are 1<sup>st</sup>-decision environments where the living room is full of people who believe in God and want to grow in their devotion, knowledge of God, and deepen their friendships. It's all good stuff and part of any good church. But one need only be self-oriented to participate.

But a missional community is a “second-decision” environment where the 1<sup>st</sup>-decisions are made, but they add a second intentionality of living the life of Jesus, especially to those outside of the body of Christ who haven't made the 1<sup>st</sup> decision yet.

And Yes, a true missional community will be much more inclined to see evangelistic influence. However, at the core, a missional community is about spiritual formation -- those who take part no longer settle for self-focused cognitive growth, but instead, like a bulldog locks it's jaws on a fresh bone, lock arms with friends who doggedly fight against

consumerism/materialism/individualism as they pursue the life of Jesus.

- The witness of the full gospel...Illuminated best by second-decision people.
- The true, deep growth of believers...Happens faster in second-decision communities.
- A successful church plant...Forms naturally as missional communities uniting for a common cause.
- The successful transformation of any church...Begins as a grassroots movement of second-decision missionally-incarnational communities, alongside 1<sup>st</sup> decision small groups and inspire consumers toward the missionary life of Jesus.

*-Hugh Halter*

(dude trying to live a second-decision life and lead a second-decision church)