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We're really excited to announce the launch of the Verge Network. We want to continue to advocate and champion movements of Missional Communities.

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## Jeff Vanderstelt: How is a Missional Community different from a...? | PRINTABLE

Posted February 8th, 2011

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# MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

Frequently Asked Questions

## Question #2: How is a Missional Community Different From a Bible Study?

by Jeff Vanderstelt:

During our Missional Community leadership training we start with a [definition of missional community](#). Then, we clarify what it is not. A Missional Community is not primarily a Bible study.

The goal of most Bible studies is to study the Bible. We believe the goal of a missional community is to make disciples who make disciples. We clarify that the mission of making disciples with our missional communities will require studying the bible, but often bible studies don't require that you make disciples.

In fact, our discovery has been that many people have studied the Bible for years and have never led anyone to faith in Jesus, equipped people for ministry and sent out more to do the same. It's as if we have come to believe that knowing the Bible equals faith in and obedience to God.

Often when I speak to leaders and people who wish we did more bible studies at Soma, I ask them what was the last book of the Bible they studied. Let's say they've respond with "James".

I then say something like, "That's great! I'm sure you're now caring for widows and orphans, visiting the sick, caring for the poor, etc...!" To which I generally hear, "Well no...not really!?" Then, I say, "But I thought you studied James?" "Well, yes, but I'm not necessarily doing that."

I go on to explain that the intent Jesus has for studying his word is that we would hear it and do it, not just hear it and know it. The next thing I say is: "So how about getting involved in a missional community and doing what

you have studied and know for now? In fact, maybe you should practice obeying what you know with some others for a while before you add more biblical knowledge that you will be accountable to obey.”

The missional community is the best environment to study the Bible because it is only in the context of community that you learn to obey what it teaches and it is while on the mission of making disciples that you come to see how powerful God’s word is for bringing about transformation.

So for us at [Soma](#), we call people to obey the mission of Jesus to make disciples; obey what the Bible teaches; grow as effective ministers of the gospel; get on mission with other believers to reach the lost and build up those who know and believe in Jesus. All of this requires that our people go back to the Scriptures over and over again to inform and equip them for all of this.

Doing mission together pushes our people to study the Bible more intently together. In fact, I have found believers’ hunger for and engagement with the Bible only increases the more they exercise obedience to what it says and also need it to teach others to know, love and obey Jesus.

***What do you think about what Jeff said about the difference between a Missional Community and a Bible Study? Agree? Disagree? What other questions does this leave you with? Join the conversation in the comment section below...***

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*Jeff Vanderstelt is a Church Planter who leads Soma Communities, a body of church planting churches in the South Puget Sound. He also serves as the Vice President (West) of Acts 29 as well as the Church Planters Advisory Counsel for the Conservative Baptist NW Association. Jeff spends most of his time equipping church planters and church leaders in Gospel Centered Leadership and Missionally focused methodology. He has been planting churches for 7 years. Prior to that he was a youth pastor in four different churches over the span of 14 years, the most recent being Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. Jeff has been married for 18 years to Jayne and together they love and shepherd 3 beautiful children in the Gospel and Mission of Jesus Christ. Twitter: [@JeffVanderstelt](#).*

## Article recap from [Question 1: What is a Missional Community?](#)

*Over the coming weeks, we will be asking some of the leading thinkers and practitioners to answer 7 of the most frequently asked questions about missional communities. All of the folks we’ll be hearing from are featured speakers at Exponential 2011: On The Verge. For more information about Exponential 2011, visit [www.exponentialconference.org](http://www.exponentialconference.org). Also, make sure to use and follow the Twitter hashtag #7questions to keep up with the conversation!*

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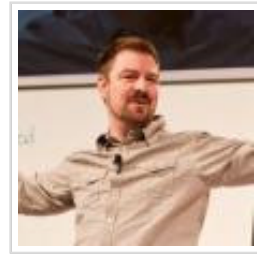
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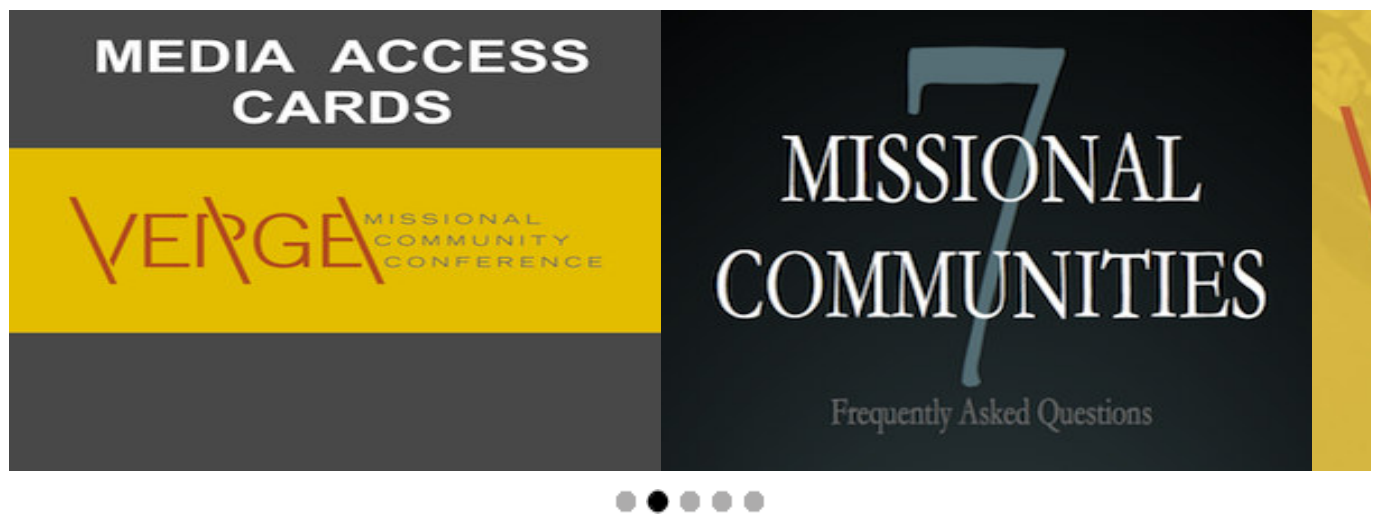
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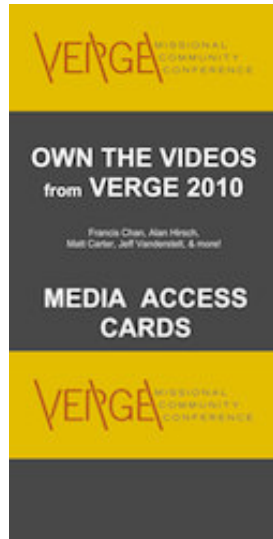
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