

## Learning Missionary Skills (iPOC3)

### *Sending Church Element #11 - Getting Missionaries Established*

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All of us have a Great Commission responsibility. Some people are called to live out this calling in another cultural context, but all of us are called to live it out wherever we are. It is about having a life of obedience, following Christ wherever he may lead us. It is about having an identity as a missionary wherever we live, work, and plan. That's what living missionally is all about. Living missionally doesn't come down to a formula, but I (Larry) must admit I was inspired by a certain brand of computers in regards to how to think and live missionally wherever I am. This little non-formula is called "iPOC<sup>3</sup>".

I am not a huge fan of acrostics, but iPOC<sup>3</sup> reminds me of some basic things that I can do on a daily basis, no matter where I am, to participate in God's mission:

### **iPray**

Prayer should be the foundation for all we do. Through prayer, I have seen people who were previously closed to spiritual things really open up. I have seen hard-to-reach areas become receptive through prayer. Prayer is the essential framework for living a Spirit-dependent, missional life. We often make space for prayer during our quiet times, but prayer should also be an active part of the rest of the day. As you move about in your daily life, pray. Pray for open doors. Pray that God will show you people with whom you can talk. Pray for opportunities. *Pray that God will open up the hearts of the people wherever you are.*

The problem is, prayer can be challenging in our current mania for technological entertainment. Wherever we are, our iPhones and tablets alert us to interesting events, store sales, and a barrage of news articles at every moment of the day. As Jordan Monson put it, "For two thousand years, the most private and undistracted place was behind the closed door. Now, the noise has relocated indoors. If our computers and devices are near, it's the worst place to try to pray. Walking through Times Square is less distracting than sitting alone in a room full of technology."<sup>1</sup> His advice is to utilize the handy Do Not Disturb feature on our phones and to go prayer walking.

While prayer walking may sound archaic, it really does make sense. When you are walking alone, you have no choice but to focus on what is going on in your head. You aren't checking your

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<sup>1</sup> Jordan Monson, "Private Prayer Walk," <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/private-prayer-walk>

email, shooting a quick text, or flipping television channels. A change of scenery might be just the thing you need to listen to what God is telling you.

## **iObserve**

As you pray, you also observe where God is at work. Observe the people and discover possible needs you can meet and ways you can connect with them. Observe the city and neighborhood where you live. People are greatly affected by the places in which they live, and by studying their environment, you can learn quite a bit. *The more you know about your city, the more you know how to pray for the people in it.* Check out our book, *Tradecraft: For the Church on Mission*, for tips on mapping your city and learning to observe how God is working there.

## **iConnect**

This part can involve almost anything as you relate to people. Connecting with people can be striking up a conversation with a post office clerk. It can be walking with an elderly person as he or she crosses the street. It can be helping someone carry his or her groceries when it's clear the load is a little too heavy.

We can also connect with our closest friends and family members. If you want to deepen these relationships, you have to get to know their likes and dislikes, their hobbies and favorite shows, their flaws and goals. If we don't know these things about our friends, we will struggle to connect. It will be harder for us to share the gospel with them if we don't know what angle of the good news they need to hear. After all, the gospel is usually shared in the context of a relationship. People want to know that you care about all of them, not just their spiritual beliefs. Meet them where they are and give the relational space to grow.

At the end of the day, evangelism is more than a simple formula. It is your posture toward people. Evangelism is highly relational, and God will provide you opportunities to connect with people if you seek them.

## **iSeek Spiritual Conversations Continually**

The second and third Cs of iPOC<sup>3</sup> drive home the importance of seeking to enter spiritual conversations continuously with people as you connect and as God opens doors. You may even be able to strike up a lasting friendship with someone during a typical day. If that's the case, who knows, you may even find the person is interested in spiritual things and open to hanging out regularly to talk about life and spirituality. It may provide you the perfect opportunity to share the gospel with them. From my experience, that is a much better, less threatening, often more

sensitive option than simply taking that person to a local church in order to be taught more. *That's because, as followers of Jesus, we are all equipped with the ability to speak truth into others' lives and tell them about Jesus.* If that sounds intimidating, go back to Acts 1:8: "you will be my witnesses," Jesus says. He will give us power and help us in this. He promises.

To recap, iPOC<sup>3</sup> comes down to ... I pray, I observe, I connect, and I seek spiritual conversations continuously. It's simple, it's straightforward, and hey, it's often a lot of fun!

Don't stress that iPOC<sup>3</sup> is another program or yet another item on your checklist to do in your church. It is simply an easy way to remember what we should be doing as we go about our day. Living missionally is about who we are and what we are becoming. Pray and seek out what God might want that to look like in your daily life.