

The GlobalChurch Project

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Melba Padilla Maggay

Local Church Small Group Resource

This resource is designed to help your small group discussion. It's shaped to inspire you to consider new ways for understanding the mission of the church. Questions are organized in themes. Consider choosing the themes appropriate to your small group context. You don't need to cover all the questions. Allow for a time of response.

Small Group Preparation:

- Video: Melba Padilla Maggay, 57 minutes.
- Scripture: John 9:40-10:18
- Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

- The culture of **power** and **power structures**
- **Social construction** and **transformation**
- **The church's prophetic role**
- **The renewal project of the church**
- **Engagement** and **mission**

Beginning the conversation

Consider the questions suggested below to start the conversation for your small group. They'll consolidate the content of the video, after you've viewed it.

1. What were the major themes in Melba's responses?
2. Discuss the terms: mission, culture and engagement. What is your understanding of these terms? How does Melba explain each of these concepts?
3. Discuss the difficulties of the content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
4. What informs Melba's understanding of the role of the church in local contexts? What approaches does she take as she shapes her theology?

Going deeper

Explore the major themes raised in the video. Critically engage with Melba's theology. Consider the questions that respond to the issues raised in your preliminary discussion.

1. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: How does Melba describe the powers and power structures in her local community in the Philippines? How is the church involved with this notion of 'power'?
2. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: How does Melba suggest the church is becoming embedded with "worldly power structures"? What are the examples she uses to illustrate this?
3. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: What is Melba's biblical justification for resisting corrupt power structures? How does she describe the power of refusal? "Sometimes we must say: I'm sorry but we are Christians, we are not going to do this." How are her examples 1. difficult and 2. challenging?
4. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: Describe the "tremendous resource of prayer". How is prayer central to Melba's theology and doctrine? How is it associated with the notion of 'power'?
5. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How does Melba describe the church to be *transforming culture*? What are the examples she uses for the church's engagement in "struggles for justice", in the Philippines and globally?
6. **Social construction** and **transformation**: What is the difference between personal compassion and social construction? What does Melba inspire the church to pursue?
7. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How does Melba suggest that social transformation relates to the discipline of the cross? How does transformation 'come out of' weakness? How is transformation "marked out for those who are serious in their discipleship"?
8. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How does Melba describe the movement from despair to hope by the spirit of God? How does she describe the church to participate in this journey?
9. **Social construction** and **transformation**: Describe the aspects of mission, described by Melba: 1. the cultural mandate, 2. the great commandment, 3. the great commission. How do these aspects contribute to her understanding of mission?
10. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How is Melba's understanding of mission framed in a larger eschatological picture of the new heaven and new earth? How does she describe the church as the "beginning community"? What is the significance of this for church communities?
11. **The church's prophetic role**: How does Melba encourage the entire church community, rather than just those with political gifts, to be prophetic? What is the role of the church and the government in prophecy and social action?
12. **The church's prophetic role**: "Resistance requires a critical and reforming element within the church. To keep the faith alive you must have a reforming and critiquing element." Describe the prophetic role of the church. Why does Melba see this as important?
13. **The church's prophetic role**: How does the church embrace the tasks associated with the images of prophets, priests and kings? How does Melba describe these roles to be shared in the body of Christ and how does Christ, the head of the church, unify these roles?
14. **The church's prophetic role**: Describe Melba's notions of radical pessimism and radical optimism? What does it mean to consider the radicality of evil? How is the church prophetic in this context?
15. **The church's prophetic role**: "Moments where social transformation occurs, are moments where heaven comes down". What is Melba's understanding of the Kingdom of God, and how is it a present reality?
16. **The church's prophetic role**: How does the scripture in John 9:40-10:18 illustrate the call of God for the church, and the prophetic responsibility of the church? How does this illustrate the church's prophetic witness?
17. **The renewal project of the church**: How does Melba encourage the church to "recover the wholeness of what it means to be a church in a global context"? Discuss the church's project in renewal. What does Melba describe this to be? What is the role of the church in renewal?

18. **The renewal project of the church:** Describe the priestly task of the church. How does Melba explain this? “People, wherever they are, able to bring the power of God to the world and the needs of the world to God”. What does she mean?
19. **The renewal project of the church:** Describe the kingly task. What does it mean to “manage all that is created under God”? How does Melba describe biblical leadership and governance, and how is this evident in her discussion and examples?
20. **The renewal project of the church:** How does the person of Christ “bring together” heaven and earth? How does this illustrate renewal?
21. **The renewal project of the church:** How is the attitude of “solving problems” and “feeding the multitudes” problematic to evangelism? How is the notion of “relief in exchange for conversion” problematic?
22. **The renewal project of the church:** Discuss the importance of intercultural dialogue in the global project of the church. How does Melba describe this to be central in the process of collaborating theologies?
23. **The renewal project of the church - the presence of God:** How does the church as a community offer a *gift* in bringing the presence and power of God to the world? Describe the witness of Melba’s ministry of presence: “Working with the poor is difficult, it cannot be done without the presence and power of God.”
24. **The renewal project of the church - the presence of God:** What are some of the images that Melba draws on to describe the presence of God? How is the kingdom at work, “always in our midst”?
25. **The renewal project of the church - the presence of God:** How is God renewing the whole of creation? How does Melba describe God’s work of renewal in terms of relationships, and communal sanctification, by the spirit of God?
26. **Engagement and mission:** How does Melba encourage the church to engage like figures of Scripture? What does she describe as distinct about Joseph, David and Daniel and Nathan, as they engage? How do these figures illustrate effective and prophetic involvement with God’s mission?
27. **Engagement and mission:** How does Melba suggest that the People and Power Revolution in the Philippines illustrated the evangelical community’s engagement with “struggles for justice”? How does Melba explain this involvement in terms of Revelations 13, in contrast to Romans 13? How does Melba interpret these scriptures?
28. **Engagement and mission:** What is the role of leaders in engaging with the church’s “struggles for justice”? How does Melba define the role of leadership, and how does this extend the mission of God?
29. **Engagement and mission:** “Christianity is certainly eventually subversive against the powers. It is not revolutionary, it doesn’t tear everything down because it is hard to rebuild. Subversion begins in personal relationships, like Paul to Philemon and is incredibly powerful.” How does Melba emphasize the graduality of subversion, and how does Scripture show the gospel to be subversive? Use Melba’s examples.
30. **Engagement and mission:** Discuss: “We need a global community to take on global powers. Including local bodies of Christ, we could have a great deal of influence against the great powers”. How important is cohesion, and how does Melba describe this with reference to the People’s Power in the Philippines?
31. **Theology:** How does Melba integrate her mission, culture and theology? What shapes and informs her theological method?

Informing theology

Ensure the discussion is specifically drawing on your local setting. Make sure the discussion is relevant to the lives of faith for your small group. Encourage relevant and thoughtful examples from each participant.

1. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: “The church is on the side of power or powerlessness, social compassion or social construction.” How is this significant in your own contexts? Draw on your own examples.

2. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: How should the church manage its power? How are your small groups and local church contexts conscious of its power? How do you manage this?
3. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: “The cross outlines what it means to be in power: that is, it is always under the cross. We have to be prepared to serve out of weakness.” Describe examples for this, in global leaders and members of your own church communities. What does the cross teach on power? How does this encourage you?
4. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: “Many get waylaid by the temptation to power. There are few leaders who can actually handle power.” Describe the temptation of power. How is this a contextual challenge for you and your small group? Describe how this reminds you, “to be prepared to say no, again and again to these temptations, and rely on the power of the cross and the resurrection”?
5. The culture of **power** and **power structures**: Describe the spiritual strongholds of the mind. What are some of the obstacles that serve as barriers to your and others’ knowledge of Christ?
6. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How does your church community consider the extensiveness of social construction and transformation? How is your church involved in the task of transforming local and global communities?
7. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How is God at work transforming humanity, you and your small groups, and transforming churches? How is God’s work a project of social transformation?
8. **Social construction** and **transformation**: How does true transformation require “a deep sense of the tragedy of things”? How is *imagination* utilized in the God’s work to move people from a “sense of desperation” to a “sense of hope”?
9. **Social construction** and **transformation**: Discuss the importance of having a global community that incarnates the concern of God to the poor? How are your groups and communities incarnational and how do you draw on the example of Christ?
10. **The church’s prophetic role**: What does it mean for the church to be prophetic? Share examples of how your small group and church communities are practicing in the prophetic role in a variety of contexts. How do you hope that God would strengthen the prophetic gifts in your small group and church contexts?
11. **The church’s prophetic role**: Describe radical hope in terms of immense confidence in the spirit of God. How does this notion use prophesy to socially transform? Share with one another the possibilities of this in your ministries.
12. **The church’s prophetic role**: How does it encourage your church communities, that people will recognize the voice of God with reference to John 9:40-10:18. In what ways does this encourage the church to be prophetic?
13. **The church’s prophetic role**: How are you and your small group and church communities involved with prophesy and speaking God’s Word to the world? What are the Scriptures that direct you in this task?
14. **The renewal project of the church**: How are your small group and local church contexts engaged in the task of renewal? How is this associated with the priestly task of ministering the presence of God? Describe the opportunities and the challenges. What do you require of God, that he continues his work in your lives?
15. **The renewal project of the church**: How do you understand the kingly function of the church? How do you recognize this in your various contexts: that much of the world’s poverty is associated with the fact that we are not governing ourselves properly. Is this notion relevant in your own contexts?
16. **The renewal project of the church**: How is your ministry one of “integral mission”? What does it mean to see the presence of God everywhere and to articulate it?
17. **The renewal project of the church**: How can your small groups and churches better utilize their resources to extend the mission of God?
18. **Engagement** and **mission**: “Oppressive regimes should be resisted”. Discuss the challenges of discerning the relevancy of scripture in various cultures of power and nationalism. How do you discern God’s

work in local and global contexts, and how are your small groups and churches engaged with the task of discerning Scripture?

19. **Engagement and mission:** When has the church rightly resisted? Discuss some of the governing principles behind this. How would you caution churches to advocate and to resist? In what ways can you lead your communities in this?

20. **Engagement and mission:** Describe the interpretive principle that Melba uses for “reading the times”. How does Melba inspire you to pray that the church would discern the will of God for justice and advocacy? How might “reading the times” be a new interpretive principle for your reading of Scripture? How can you encourage this reading in your small groups and churches, and what are some of the associated challenges?

21. **Engagement and mission:** “Subversion begins in personal relationships. People make a sharp distinction between church communities and social activists, but when Philemon starts to treat the slave on an equal footing, that is subversive.” How does Melba encourage the church in “lifting up the lowly and overthrowing the mighty”, and how is this subversion biblical? Discuss biblical subversiveness with your group. What are the challenges of this, and how does this evidence the work of God?

22. **Engagement and mission:** “You cannot change deep structures without the sprit of God”. How is imagination and hope apart of the project of the church? How can your small groups and communities become more imaginative and yielding to the hopefulness of God?

23. **Engagement and mission:** “In a culture where few can think imaginatively, the church is required to be imaginative”. How can the church involve symbols to capture people’s imaginations? What is the creative purpose in the church and how does this capture the character of God?

Informing community

Facilitate the space for your group to respond to the discussion. You might consider this section as a personal time of written journal responses to the following questions.

1. What is God encouraging me, our small group and our community, to do?
2. In responses to the issues raised in the video, what are areas I want to ask for God’s forgiveness in? What do I ask that God would change and heal in the areas of engagement and mission?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community to be and prayer for the prophetic role in the church to strengthen?
4. How can our communities better engage, and pledge our allegiance to the renewal project of the church?

Prayer

Spend time in prayer over what you’ve learnt.

Invite the ministry of the Holy Spirit to clarify, heal, and inspire change for your participants and communities.

Links

Website: www.theglobalchurchproject.com

Book: Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (IVP Academic, 2015)