

The GlobalChurch Project

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Mike Frost

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: Mike Frost, 31 minutes.
- Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20
- Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

- **De-fleshed** and **enfleshed human experiences**
- **Incarnational Theology**
- **Post-modernism**
- The **Reign of God**

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 Mike's responses? What is Mike's understanding of the church and the mission of God?
2. Discuss the difficulties of content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
3. Theological method: How does Mike describe the Christian faith in terms of culture? What approaches does he take and what does he draw on as he shapes his theology?

Going deeper

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

1. **De-fleshed and enfleshed human experiences:** "We have increasingly learnt to live in our heads". What is the de-fleshed human experience? How does Mike contrast it with the "enfleshed" human experience?
2. **De-fleshed and enfleshed human experiences:** How does enfleshed Christianity affect neighbourhoods and inspire fresh, present, and proximate ways of relating?
3. **Incarnational Theology:** How does Mike centralize the doctrine of the incarnation in Christian faith and witness? How does the doctrine of the incarnation shape Mike's theology?
4. **Postmodernism:** Contrast liturgical expressions of Christianity and the context of individualism. Mike argues: embodied and enfleshed worship was the order of the day and how the Christian encountered God. How do the expressions of the early church contrast to that of postmodernist Christianity?
5. **Postmodernism:** How has the way we acquire knowledge changed? How is this evidenced in a variety of contexts? How has discipleship been reduced to the appropriation of knowledge and ideas? What are some of the challenges of these changes?
6. **The Reign of God:** Describe the Mission /Reign of God. What does it mean to be called to alert everyone to the fact that God reigns through Christ? Draw on the categories of justice, reconciliation, beauty, and wholeness, as discussed by Mike.
7. **The Reign of God:** What does it mean to appropriate the Reign of God in various contexts? How does the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 16-20 characterize the mission of God?
8. **The Reign of God:** What is the relationship between words and deeds, explained by Mike, in helping people to see the Reign of God?
9. **The Reign of God:** How can leadership be understood as "plural", with respect to the gifts in the church, as discussed by Mike?
10. **The Reign of God:** What is "slow evangelism"? What are some of the associated possibilities and challenges of having "multiple conversations" with neighbours? Discuss the challenges of "slow evangelism".
10. **The Reign of God:** "Christians should be the most loving people in the neighbourhood, the most trustworthy, the most hospitable and the most generous". How do Christian community, your small group, and the church represent the image of Christ?
10. **The Reign of God:** Explain Mike's sentiment of Christians "breathing shalom", bringing reconciliation, justice and beauty into a broken world. How, does Mike suggest, that God is setting the world in order? How is the Reign of God a central concept to this?

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. **De-fleshed and enfleshed human experiences:** Mike argues that enfleshed Christianity presents the nature and character of God: "This is an enfleshed, embodied, engaged form of Christ-likeness under the noses of those who have not yet been set free." What does it mean to live "enfleshed"?
2. **De-fleshed and enfleshed human experiences:** Discuss how faith can be an embodied experience. How can your small group encourage one another for the task of living an "enfleshed" Christianity?
3. **Incarnational Theology:** How does enfleshed Christianity present the opportunity to emulate the work of Christ in the world? What are some of the possibilities for your small group to live in incarnational ministry?

4. **Incarnational Theology:** What does it mean to model incarnational living in excarnate neighbourhoods? Do you recognize the “yearning for something different” in your own neighbourhoods?
4. **Incarnational Theology:** How does the metaphor of the Cross reflect on power? How does it order your priorities relating to mission and the reign of God?
5. **Postmodernism:** On the topic of individualism: “If this is the only place we encounter God, we lose touch with what it looks like to see God, to know God, to encounter God and to represent God, physically, in relationship with others, in place, in the context of the world”. Explore the implications of confining our relationship with God to our own imagination. How are we “de-fleshed” as a product of postmodernism?
6. **Postmodernism:** What is the value of liturgical practice to enfleshed Christianity? What liturgical practices do you want to employ in your small-groups that contrast to the expression of postmodernist Christianity?
7. **Postmodernism:** How do churches struggle with the language of the “Reign of God”? What are the sources of this struggle, and what are ways this can be overcome?
8. **The Reign of God:** “Evangelism is explaining what the Mission of God looks like and calling them to bend their knee to Christ”. Share instances of this from your communities and from your own experiences?
9. **The Reign of God:** How is your small group engaged with the issues of your neighbourhood? What are the challenges associated with this? Draw on the biblical precedents for this engagement.
10. **The Reign of God:** How can apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic gifts be recognized, acknowledged and practiced in your small groups and church communities?
11. **The Reign of God:** How does the concept of “slow evangelism” encourage you? Pray for one another and for those you are witnessing to in this way.
12. **The Reign of God:** Discuss Mike’s cruciform view on mission and holiness. “We ought not to shirk sacrifice or suffering. To be shaped by the Cross is being willing to empty myself in the service of others”. How is this evidenced for you and your group? What are the associated challenges of this kind of vulnerability?

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? How can I, and we, herald His Reign?
2. In responses to the issues raised in the video, what are areas I want to ask for God’s forgiveness in?
3. What are ways your small group can become more enfleshed: more engaged, communal and present for your communities?
4. How do I need God to minister to me and my community, for us to better engage with His mission?

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)