

The GlobalChurch Project

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Randy Woodley

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: Randy Woodley, 68 minutes.
- Scripture: Acts 17:26-27
- Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

- **Ministry to indigenous communities**
- **Indigenous Theology**
- **Culture and the church**
- **Power and superiority**
- **A living faith**
- **Narrative Theology**

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 Randy Woodley's responses?
2. Discuss the term: "indigenous theology". How does Randy use this term?
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 experiences and perspectives inform Randy's understanding of the mission of God? Describe his method of "doing theology". What informs his knowledge of God?

Going deeper

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

1. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** Describe Randy's ministry experiences among indigenous communities. How has ministry cost him, personally and politically? How does he regard his experiences? Describe what encourages him in his ministry.
2. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** What is "the constant pressure of colonization"? How does this create a culture of constantly proving oneself in dominant cultures, and how does Randy describe this as a challenge to indigenous ministry?
3. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** What is the importance of "decolonizing the Christian experience"? How does Randy's indigenous heritage inform his faith, theology and doctrine?
4. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** Describe the village project that Randy is a part of and discuss its opportunities and challenges. How does his village illustrate alternate living, and how does it represent the mission of God? Discuss Randy's passion for his village ministry.
5. **Indigenous Theology:** Describe the central values of indigenous communities, described by Randy as "indigenous theology". What do you understand of this term? How does Randy encourage communities to engage Christianity and cultural identities?
 6. Tangible spirituality: that spirituality is natural and spiritual, ceremonial and traditional, and not abstract based on something we create. How does tangible spirituality draw from symbolism?
 7. A life governed by harmony: spirituality that seeks balance in all of life, and recognizes its interconnectedness. How is this spirituality cooperative, rather than competitive?
 8. A natural connectedness to all creation: spirituality which involves the reciprocity between nature and humankind, owing each other back and forth, and expressing gratitude through ceremony. How is learning with nature a dynamic process that happens throughout our lives?
 9. Community is essential: spirituality that requires community. How are extended families in indigenous cultures an expression of this?
 10. Sacred and necessary humor: spirituality that involves humor in ceremony and impromptu. How is humor a catalyst for humility?
 11. A cooperative form of communality: spirituality that has individuals journeying together in diversity giving dignity to everyone. How does indigenous spirituality celebrate diversity?
 12. Orality is the primary mode of communication: spirituality that involves words that are powerful and primordial. How might treaties be an expression of this value?
 13. Present and past time orientation: resisting the future orientation that has you recreating yourself in every reality. Indigenous spirituality learns from what has been done before. What are the possibilities of past-orientation in the ministry of healing and reconciliation?
 14. An open work ethic: spirituality that encourages purposeful, meaningful work without the arbitrary structures of scheduled work hours. How does this resonant with a harmonious and integrated way of life?
 15. Hospitality and generosity: spirituality that welcomes. How does indigenous spirituality invite and welcome others?
16. **Indigenous Theology:** How is shalom the central concept of indigenous theology? How is the concept of shalom representative in a variety of indigenous concepts and frameworks? How is shalom "the original instructions for humanity"?
17. **Indigenous Theology:** How does Christ's own spirituality engage with indigenous cultural values? What scriptures do you refer to?

18. **Indigenous Theology:** How does indigenous theology encourage an integrated (rather than fragmented) understanding of personal identity?
19. **Culture and the church:** How does Randy describe that diversification is the purpose of God's mission: "a going out and becoming different"? How is Acts 17:26-27 a picture of this?
20. **Culture and the church:** "When humans get together, we celebrate difference." How does God celebrate culture and diversity? How does Randy suggest that Scripture determines this celebration? What scriptural examples does Randy use?
21. **Culture and the church:** "Homogeneity is often a euphemism for white supremacy." How do narrow perspectives of race and culture frustrate the mission of God? Describe Randy's criticisms.
22. **Culture and the church - a new humanity:** "The gospel happens when local people come together and are empowered. They create something new". What is Randy's understanding of the "new humanity"? What is the biblical and Christ-like vision of new humanity?
23. **Culture and the church - a new humanity:** How do people express their new humanity by overcoming prejudice? What does Randy describe as the signs of hope for the church?
24. **Culture and the church - a new humanity:** Discuss the biblical concept of restitution. How is this resisted when people justify and rationalize injustice?
25. **Power and superiority:** How does Christ radically subvert power? How does Randy describe power, positively or negatively?
26. **Power and superiority:** What does it mean to "give up power for another"? How can power be used to empower others: "creating channels of wealth to go to the right places"?
27. **Power and superiority:** "People who are connected to Jesus' gospel are finding ways to create that sort of transfer of power". How do Christians share their power with the marginalized?
28. **A living faith:** Describe the "harmony way", that Randy discusses. How has God instituted a "system of shalom"? Describe the "harmony way". What is Randy referring to? What is he describing?
29. **A living faith:** What does it mean to move away from an institutionally shaped and connected faith, to one that is about real discipleship? How does Randy describe this?
30. **A living faith:** "The West has become so disintegrated. They have forgotten how to integrate those things into a meaningful whole. Indians are gifted in integrating things, categorization is often the harder task". How do indigenous communities teach and minister in the task of integrating faith and culture /life? Why pursue an integrated faith, according to Randy?
31. **A living faith:** "This mess is exactly what it means to draw people to Christ: they become apart of that mess." How does Randy see God at work in the notion that: "the gospel does not add everyone to it, but rather comes out of everyone coming together"?
32. **Narrative Theology:** How does Randy describe the movements of Scripture as metaphors for the church?
33. **Narrative Theology:** What are some of the alternate metaphors Randy draws on from Scripture? How does the Kingdom of God specifically speak to the Roman context, and how does it translate in modern contexts?
34. **Narrative Theology:** How are indigenous cultures story-oriented and focused on narrative? How does this contrast to the "Western propositional view"?
35. **Narrative Theology:** Discuss the importance of a narrative framework for Scripture. How does story communicate the meaning of the gospel? How are "biblical truths" often arbitrary, according to Randy? Discuss the usefulness of story.
36. **Narrative Theology:** How does Randy encourage others to "broaden their perspectives" and consider "alternate perspectives and ways of living"?

37. **Theology:** Describe Randy's passion for reconciliation, mission and the environment. What informs and shapes his perspectives of God and the world? Describe the various ways in which Randy's studies and his experiences shape his theology.

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. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** How do you recognize God at work *outside* of the church?
2. **Ministry to indigenous communities:** How have you misunderstood indigenous cultures and theology? How does indigenous faith and theology teach and inspire you, and instruct you for ministry?
3. **Indigenous Theology:** Where do you recognize indigenous cultural values pertinent in your own small group and ministry contexts? How do indigenous cultural communities teach and instruct your local church? How can indigenous theology better instruct your small group and church's theology and doctrine?
4. **Indigenous Theology:** How does Christ embody indigenous theology? How is the person of Christ emblematic to indigenous theology? How is Jesus an indigenous person? Discuss the person of Christ, and his unique indigenous faith and theology.
5. **Indigenous Theology:** What do your churches and ministries critically need in light of indigenous theology? What indigenous values have you lost in your communities, and how can the church work to recover these?
6. **Culture and the church:** "God places his perspectives in the views and cultures around the world and says, "Come find me". We find him in each other; in the ways people describe things. No one culture or peoples perspectives can fully describe God." How do you know God in the various cultures in your communities?
7. **Culture and the church:** How can you celebrate the diversity of cultures and ethnicities in your small groups and local communities? How does your theology and practice reflect God's celebration of diversity and culture?
8. **Culture and the church:** The artist paints one colour and the musician plays in one note. They are not really producing much." How are narrow perspectives of race and culture, and white cultural captivity prevalent in your own communities? How do these attitudes frustrate God's purposes in your communities? What do you ask that God would redeem and overcome?
9. **Culture and the church:** Discuss some of the challenges of sharing the gospel. How are you encouraged to share Christ in your communities?
10. **Culture and the church:** What are the challenges associated with "contextualizing the gospel" for your time? How can you overcome these challenges in your own communities?
11. **Culture and the church - a new humanity:** How do your small groups and local churches celebrate the "new humanity" and live out of Christ's freedom? How does this celebration influence the way we welcome others into the church? What is the role of the church in celebrating the "new humanity"?
12. **Power and superiority:** How does the cross present an "equal power"? What are the associated challenges of equalizing "power" in your ministry contexts?
13. **Power and superiority:** How have you tripped over "our own theologies and world views"? How can you encourage broader perspectives in humility, and the laying down of one's power? What is the value of this in your small group communities?
14. **A living faith:** "Communities need to put their time and resources in places and aspects where shalom is broken". How can your churches and communities become more intentional and thoughtful about their resources? How does this reflect your love of Christ?
15. **A living faith:** "The organizing principle of the early church was this: "Don't lord your faith over others like the Gentiles do". The most hideous sing of the church is in creating hierarchies where we try to control others.

Jesus never created a hierarchical structure, but this became the model for the church. The gospel is not about controlling others” Discuss this. Do you agree? How is this pertinent in your own contexts?

16. **A living faith:** Describe the collective “reluctance to enter into relationship”. What are some of the reasons for this reluctance? How does “relationship” offer you a possibility to engage with your communities?
17. **A living faith:** “People who have been marginalized and poor: you have tremendous gifts to offer people who need help. They are searching. It is hard to admit and to be vulnerable, but when you find people who are, give them the gift of yourself and your perspectives. This is where reconciliation - the new humanity - takes place.” How does Randy encourage indigenous persons to live out their faith? How do you join in with this encouragement?
18. **Narrative Theology:** How does metaphor shape your imagination and your approach to God’s world? How can your communities teach and instruct in narrative?
19. **Narrative Theology:** “The Bible should not have been translated for us. The vehicle is orality and stories. Instead of telling stories, we are bound by all these intrinsic categories. We lose how we relate to these stories, and how we find ourselves in these stories”. How do you know the narrative of Scripture, and how does this shape your ministry?
20. **Narrative Theology:** “When we begin to listen to people who are marginalized, we see the world with different eyes”. How does “listening” to the stories of others broaden our perspectives? How do you incorporate storytelling into your ministry?
21. **Theology:** How can our theologies become more integrated with humanity, creation and God? How does Randy’s integrated theology inspire your own?

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? How can I better engage with indigenous communities, and be taught by indigenous theologies? What perspectives do I ask that God would change for a greater sense of His cultural perspectives?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community to more effectively minister in indigenous communities?
4. How can our communities welcome indigenous faith and persons in the life of our 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)