

The GlobalChurch Project

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C. René Padilla

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: C. René Padilla, 29 minutes.
- Scripture: Matthew 18:18-20
- Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

- The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**.
- **The church family**.
- **Lessons from the Latin American church**.
- **The church's mission**, and **alternative culture**.

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 René's responses?
2. Discuss: "integral mission". What does René mean by this term, and how does he use it to understand the mission of the church?
3. Discuss the difficulties of the content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
4. How does René's experiences in the Latin American church inform his perspectives and theology? What approaches does he take as he shapes his integrated theology and missiology?

Going deeper

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

1. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: How have the study and the perspective of integral mission developed in the past few decades?
2. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: How does René pursue and teach integral mission? How is "integral mission" helpful for understanding the mission of the church?
3. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: Describe the various ways that the church can engage in integral mission, discussed by René. How is integral mission different in different contexts and what determines this?
4. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: How does integral mission show and communicate Jesus' concern for the whole person?
5. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: What inspires René about the younger generation of integral missionaries? How are they exploring new themes and ideas?
6. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission**: How has the study of integral mission been opposed? What has been most misunderstood? How does he respond to the criticisms of integral mission?
7. **The church family**: Describe how the church can be a family, household and place where people feel accepted? What is the responsibility of leaders in facilitating this space? How does René suggest that the attitude of leaders influences the life of the church?
8. **The church family**: "My family was a place where all people from the strata of society met. They learnt to love and accept one another." How does René's open home illustrate kingdom living?
9. **The church family**: How does René's pastoral understanding of integral mission highlight that integral mission is not just the task of a few chosen people, but also the task of the whole church?
10. **The church family**: "I would rather have a small church where people really take the gospel seriously. I would rather a small church that doesn't leave the gospel out." How does Matthew 18:18-20 encourage the gathering of the church?
11. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: Describe the growth of Latin American churches, as discussed by René. How does he measure growth? Why does he suggest that the understanding and practice of the gospel comes before numerical growth? What has happened as a result?
12. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: Why does René suggest that churches "make no difference in society" when they have no "spiritual power"? What does he mean by this?
13. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: "As we focus on growing the church and promising prosperity, we forget about focusing on the values of God." How is the prosperity gospel prevalent in Latin American churches, according to René? What are the implications of this?
14. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: Does René see more indigenous or western aspects in the Latin American and Argentinian church and church structures? How does he reflect on the way churches are finding their own way: "figuring out how culture plays in and how to preach and relate to society?" What are the strengths of this?
15. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: How does René suggest that churches should be involved with political issues in society? What is the social power of the church?
16. **Lessons from the Latin American church**: In societies where wealth is unequal, how does the church serve? In what ways should the church become more concerned and influential in social policies? How does René understand the role of the government?
17. **The church's mission**: How is integral mission the mission of the global church and how does integral mission "seamlessly integrate the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel"?

18. **The church's mission:** What is the mission of the church, according to René? How does he call the church to prolong the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, to love God and one's neighbour and to make sure one's life reflects the mission of Jesus Christ?
19. **The church's mission:** "Biblically, you cannot separate one's lifestyle from action." Why does René encourage the church away from the traditional position to proclaim the gospel with little address to one's own actions, and move towards addressing how your actions demonstrate God's love expressed in your love towards your neighbour?
20. **The church's mission:** How does integral mission help people to "organize themselves" for Kingdom purposes? How is the church to be integrally missional?
21. **The church's mission; alternative culture:** How can the church be an alternative culture? How can the church resist, oppose and be countercultural to racial, social and sexual violence in expressing the freedom of Christ?
22. **The church's mission; alternative culture:** How is the question of greed always pressing in society? How is greed translated into oppression, prevailing in the abuse of power? Why is this a reason for the church to become an alternate society? What does society require?
23. **The church's mission; alternative culture:** How can the church best express freedom and take seriously the center of the gospel: the commandment to love God and loving one's neighbour? How does the church learn to love?
24. **Theology:** Describe the personal difficulties René experiences in his ministry. What has challenged and encouraged him in his faith? What values shape his ministry?

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 interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** How is integral mission relevant to your small group's communities? How is the term helpful for the way you practice and engage in mission?
2. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** How is integral mission different in different contexts? How are your small groups and communities engaging with integral mission in contextually specific ways? How does this detail many possibilities for sharing the gospel?
3. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** "Shalom means harmony with God and one's neighbour and his creation. God wants that for everyone." How does integral mission motivate and encourage your ministry?
4. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** How do René's teachings on integral mission inspire your theological method? How do René's theological disciplines exemplify his teachings on integral mission? How is your own ministry one which is of an integrated theology?
5. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** How does Jesus' ministry of integral mission inspire you? How is Jesus' integral ministry expounded in the gospels and how does this shape your ministry and perspective?
6. The interpretive discipline of **Integral mission:** How are you encouraged by the creativity, passion and enthusiasm of this younger generation of missionaries? "They are enthusiastic about the idea that they are called to be engaged about the kingdom of God working for justice."
7. **The church family:** "In my family, we had an open home. received people from all kinds." How does René's open home inspire you to open yours? What does this look like in the context of your small groups and churches?

8. **The church family:** How does your whole church community engage with integral mission? How is your whole church community self-consciously a household of God? In what ways do you show hospitality to others in the context of the household?
9. **The church family:** How do leaders in your small group, church and ministry communities facilitate spaces where people feel loved and accepted in the context of the household? How might you encourage these leaders, and engage in this valuable work?
10. **The church family:** Discuss the words of Matthew 18:18-20. How does this encourage small group gatherings, and participation in the mission of the church? How is the household inextricably connected to the imagery of the church?
11. **Lessons from the Latin American church:** How does the witness of the Latin American church personally encourage you?
12. **Lessons from the Latin American church:** How does René encourage the church to grow in understanding “the promises of God and the responsibilities on the part of the church”? How is this a calling for the church and an encouragement from the Latin American church?
13. **Lessons from the Latin American church:** How influential do you deem the church in society in your own contexts? In what areas should your communities become more involved? How socially powerful and influential should the church be in your small group’s context?
14. **Lessons from the Latin American church:** Where has the church been more successful in “finding their own way”, and having culturally specific churches? What excites you about these examples?
15. **Lessons from the Latin American church:** “Sometimes I wonder where the world is going with so much injustice and violence. there is still abuse of power all over. I believe that God is still in charge. in his purpose, he will show the truth, peace and shalom. This will be the last word.” How does the Latin American church share in a sense of expectation of Christ, and experience his suffering? How does this encourage your small group?
16. **The church’s mission:** “In every situation you have to find a way to help people become fully satisfied with their needs met.” What possibilities does this present for the church and the community? How are churches that pursue integral mission impacting society?
17. **The church’s mission:** “Scripture is full of references of justice. God is a just God and he loves justice.” How is justice a theme of Scripture? How have you experienced the severing of justice and evangelism, and how is this a result biblical translation? In what ways do you envision the church and your small group communities conjoining justice and evangelism?
18. **The church’s mission:** How are “westerners blind to the fact that so much of the bible is about God’s concern for the poor”? How are teachings of justice missing in the western church, and in what ways does the majority-world church encourage western churches in this?
19. **The church’s mission:** Describe René’s hope for the church: “that we may be faithful to Jesus Christ who is at the center of our faith. This is what gives meaning to our life, to serve Him and worship him. To be ready to do what he has for us.” How do you participate in this calling?
20. **The church’s mission:** “I long to see more and more people who are faithful representatives of Jesus Christ in the world so that people may say that in him I met Jesus Christ.” What is the strength and power of this?
21. **The church’s mission; alternative culture:** How have western cultures absolutized their values at the expense of the gospel? How does individualism and materialism permeate through the life of the church?
22. **The church’s mission; alternative culture:** In what ways can your small groups and ministries pursue an alternative culture? What might this look like?
23. **Theology:** How does God’s concern about the well-being of everyone in society motivate René’s personal sense of mission, and inform his practice? How does this encourage you?

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 that God would correct about my perspectives and theologies? What aspects of God's mission do I feel I have misunderstood?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community to better engage with the integral, Kingdom, mission of God?
4. How can our communities become better representing household of God, as the project of 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)