

The GlobalChurch Project

www.theglobalchurchproject.com



Soong-Chan Rah

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: Soong-Chan Rah, 51 minutes.
- Scripture: Revelation 7:9-12
- Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

- **Global Christianity:** the global Christian population
- **Cultural captivity, relevance, and church expression**
- The **emerging church** and **church representation:** and the issues of **superiority** and **racism as sin**
- **Celebrating ethnicity** as the image 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 Soong-Chan's responses?
2. How does Soong-Chan describe global Christianity?
3. Discuss the difficulties of the content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
4. Theological method: What informs Soong-Chan's responses? Discuss his cultural context. What approaches does he take and what does he consider as he shapes his theology?

Going deeper

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

1. **Global Christianity:** What is Soong-Chan referring to when he describes the "mismatch" between the global Christian population shift and the existing power structures? How have the demographics of Christianity and the concrete experiences become "mismatched"? Discuss the challenges that arise out of this change.
2. **Global Christianity:** Discuss some of the challenges and possibilities of Soong-Chan's own church context related to 1. the decline of white evangelical mainstream churches, and 2. the rise of immigrant-run churches. How are these trends of the global Christian population shift?
3. **Cultural captivity:** Soong-Chan says: we are captive to an expression of Christianity that is highly westernized. Sometimes unsuitably, we follow normative paradigms even though demographics have changed. Explain the concept of cultural captivity. How is this evidenced in global Christianity?
4. **Cultural captivity:** Discuss the phrase: "relevance has become captivity". How are churches captive to being relevant?
5. **Cultural captivity:** How is the church influenced by a culture of individualism? What does Soong-Chan recognize as the positive aspects of individualism? Discuss: is it possible for Western churches to have a collective, corporate, and social understanding of the gospel in a culture of individualism?
6. **Church representation:** What are the implications of the scripture: Revelation 7:9-12? Discuss the notion of "unity in diversity" for churches. What should the church look like in terms of communities and congregations?
7. **Church representation:** Is Soong Chan positive about the mega-church development? How does he recognize that cultural captivity is expressed in church growth? How does he describe the development of mega-churches?
8. **Church representation:** What aspects of society and culture affect the ways that churches measure their success? Generally, what aspects of society and culture contrast to Scripture and are present in our churches? Draw on biblical examples.
9. **The emerging church:** How does Soong-Chan describe the emerging church? What are the difficulties in using this term?
10. **The emerging church:** How do African American and Native American communities and their experience of 1. *suffering* and 2. *celebration* teach dominant culture churches?
11. **The emerging church:** How does the phenomenon of church homogenization draw on majority church influences? At what point does homogenization differ and become incompatible with the Western setting?
12. **Church representation - the issue of superiority:** How is triumphalism evident in dominant culture churches? How does Soong-Chan discuss "breaking free" from this superiority?
13. **Church representation - the issue of racism as sin:** How does Soong-Chan explain racism in terms of sin? Is sin more than a sociological reality? Discuss some of the implications of Soong-Chan's definition of racism.
14. **Celebrating ethnicity:** Discuss Soong-Chan's 3-fold action plan of confession, submission, and diversification. What are the elements of each? How does Soong-Chan draw on his cultural context to explain the significance of these three practices?
15. **Celebrating ethnicity:** How do African American and Native American communities encourage churches to "bring back themes that were previously avoided", such as restoring the discipline and practice of lament.
16. **Celebrating ethnicity:** How do African American and Native American communities critique American exceptionalism?

17. **Celebrating ethnicity:** What, according to Soong-Chan, does the immigrant church teach about holistic evangelism?
18. **Celebrating ethnicity:** How can dominant culture churches become more diversified in their experiences? How can stories of suffering and living through multiple-cultures be shared in the church?
19. **Celebrating ethnicity, and the image of God:** What are some of the challenges of carrying a hyphenated identity? How can the image of God be understood in ethnic and cultural terms?

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. **Global Christianity:** How does the global Christian population shift affect the make-up, theology, and mission of our churches? How does this phenomenon influence your small group and personal contexts?
2. **Cultural captivity:** How is cultural captivity evident in your small group and ministry contexts? What are some of the challenges of this?
3. **Cultural captivity:** How might your missiology be wedded to the concept of Westernized individualism? How has individualism become central to the gospel, and how is this problematic? Can the gospel be explained without drawing on the concept of individualism? How might this be challenging in your own cultural context?
4. **Cultural captivity:** “We can’t imagine practicing outside of our consumerism.” How can you explain the gospel without using the terms of consumerism? How has church become a commodity, and how is this problematic? Is it possible, and is it necessary to explain the gospel apart from consumerism for your small group?
5. **Cultural captivity:** How is the “superiority of cultures” expressed in churches? Is this a reflection of your own experiences?
6. **Church representation:** What are some of the implications of choosing church structures and models based on methodology rather than missiology? How is this exemplified in your own contexts?
7. **Church representation:** Does considering the trends and the variations in demographics of your own ministries affect your understanding of the mission of the church?
8. **Cultural captivity and church growth:** What ways do you measure the success of your own church and ministry contexts? How are some of these measures culturally captive? What might be a biblical standard of measuring success?
9. **The emerging church:** How does your church experiences reflect on the phenomenon of church-homogenization?
10. **The emerging church:** How can single-ethnic churches be a haven for particular cultural groups? Do you recognize this in your small groups’ experiences? In what instances are single-ethnic churches unhelpful?
11. **The emerging church:** What are ways that immigrant churches and dominant-culture churches can draw on the resources of one another? How can you and your small groups engage?
12. **Celebrating ethnicity:** How does Christ’s concern for the ‘least of these’ influence the ministries and practices of the church? How is this attitude reflected in your own church contexts and your ministries?
13. **Celebrating ethnicity:** How can churches encourage and celebrate ethnicity and cultural identities? Describe instances where church communities have been remedial for immigrants.
14. **Celebrating ethnicity:** This is the way God has made me, why would I leave that behind”. How does God celebrate ethnicity?
15. **Theology:** How does global Christianity encourage the practice of doing theology in community. How can you integrate this into your own theology?

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 and to alter my theology in?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community, for us to better engage with our cultural contexts with biblical integrity?

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)