



The Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

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:

1. Video: The Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 14 minutes.
2. Scripture reference: Acts 10 and 11, and Revelation 7:9–17.
3. Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

Themes explored in the video:

1. **Shifts, trends, identity, diversity, and dialogue in Global Christianity**
2. **Learning from the Global South and from the rest of the Majority World**

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 discussed in this video?
2. How do the team at The Center for the Study of Global Christianity (hereafter called "TCSGC") describe shifts and trends in Global Christianity? (Note that some prefer the term "World Christianity" over "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: How is TCSGC's theology informed and shaped by their research into Global Christianity? What approaches do they take in understanding God in the context of Global Christianity?

Going deeper

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

1. Define "Global North", "Global South", and "Global Christianity."
2. Do you prefer the term "Global Christianity" or "World Christianity" (or a different term), and why?
3. How has globalization affected your life? How has it affected your church, and Christianity and culture in your city or town?
4. What struck you about the shifts occurring in Global Christianity?
5. What are the key emerging trends in Global Christianity today?
6. What do you notice about the 20th and 21st Century shift from the Global North to the Global South? How is it reshaping Global Christianity?
7. What does the growth of the Majority World churches mean for the mission and theology and worship and communities of the church worldwide?
8. What does this shift in Global Christianity mean for Western churches (and their mission, theology, and sense of identity)?
9. Why do we embrace a Eurocentric and Americentric view of the world? How do we change this?
10. How do we embrace diversity and dialogue, without compromising our core beliefs and values?
11. What do the team at TCSGC believe are the key things we can learn from the churches of the Global South?
12. Can you think of other things we can learn from the churches of the Global South?
13. What can we learn from the churches and spirituality of Native American and First Nations Christians?
14. What are some ways that the churches of the Global North and the churches of the Global South can make major and unique contributions to the worldwide body of Christ?
15. What are some practical ways that we can express solidarity with Christians from other cultures? What are practical ways that we can begin to learn from them?

Application

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. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to help you find ways to listen to (and join in) a global conversation that reshapes your theology, renews your mission, and revitalizes your church.
2. *The GlobalChurch Project* video series films hundreds of inspiring Christians from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and more, on mission, love, church, faith, and theology. The films are hosted at www.theglobalchurchproject.com. Watch one or more of the videos. Do this individually and with others (e.g. in a college class or ministry team). After each video, discuss what you can learn from this Majority World Christian leader.
3. By a copy of Graham Hill's book *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches*. read the book, and work through the questions in the Study Guide (individually or in a group).
4. Which ethnic or other minorities are downtrodden and silenced in your church, ministry, or local community? How are they treated as invisible non-entities? How will you confront, expose, and challenge this situation?
5. John Macionis defines prejudice as "a rigid and irrational generalization about an entire category of people." Stereotypes, which are a form of prejudice, are "an exaggerated description applied to every person in some category."¹ Which races, ethnicities, socio-economic groups, or cultures stimulate your prejudices or stereotypes? What are you going to do to address and change this?
6. Find practical and tangible ways to collaborate with Christians from a variety of backgrounds. Do this in your local community. Serve with Christians from different ethnicities, denominations, theological traditions, ages, approaches to mission and witness, etc. Now expand this out to collaboration with non-Christian groups that are trying to make a difference in your community. Such groups include social, welfare, religious, government, etc. Make sure the collaboration is practical and rooted in your local community. Then get your group to ask questions about their discoveries. What have they learnt about mission, partnership, social action, grace, and embrace in these tangible acts of collaboration?
7. Once every four to six weeks visit a worship service, bible study, discipleship-training event, prayer meeting, or mission program conducted by Christians from a different ethnicity than your own. Mix it up over a two or three year period. This way you've experienced these things in as many ethnic contexts as possible—African-American, Arabic, Caucasian, Chinese, Greek, Hispanic, Indigenous Australian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Serbian, South Korean, and so on. Or, commit to spending twelve months immersed in a neighborhood and church of any ethnicity other than your own. Ask questions about what you can learn from these ethnicities and cultures other than your own.
8. Start *Listen and Learn* nights at your church or in your organization. During these nights, invite someone from a different faith, ethnicity, theological perspective, etc. to come and share. Invite them to share their story and their views in an attentive, non-threatening environment. Your aim is not to criticize or debate them. It is to listen and learn. It is to reflect together on your learning as a group. Your group may never share all the perspectives or theologies of your visitor—especially if they contradict your biblical convictions. But you will grow together as you listen. And especially as you listen with respect, humility, prayer, grace, and attention to the Spirit.
9. Get to know the videos, resources, publications, and downloadable material at <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/Resources-and-Downloads.cfm>. You'll

¹ John J. Macionis, *Sociology*, 13th ed. (Boston, MA: Prentice Hall, 2012). 357 and 359.

The GlobalChurch Project – The Center for the Study of Global Christianity
find a lot of material there to learn about trends and shifts in Global Christianity, and to explore the implications for your life and church.

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 response to the issues raised in the video, what are areas I want to ask God for forgiveness in? How do I need to change? What does God want me to stand up for?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community, for us to better engage with the contextual issues of our community?
4. How can I gain a better understanding of Global Christianity? What do we ask that God would do in our hearts?

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

Websites:

<https://theglobalchurchproject.com/> and <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/index.cfm>

Books:

Hill, Graham. *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.

Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Johnson, Todd M. and Cindy M. Wu. *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015.

Johnstone, Patrick. *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011.

Noll, Mark A. *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Ott, Craig, and Harold A. Netland, eds. *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006.