

The GlobalChurch Project

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## Emmanuel Katongole

### 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: Emmanuel Katongole, 45 minutes. Themes explored in the video:

- **Mirror to the Church**
- **The Ephesian Moment**
- **The Sacrifice of Africa**
- **Lament and Hope**
- **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking**
- **The Mission of the Church**

2. Scripture reference: Luke 6:27–36.

3. Participants are encouraged to bring their own journals or writing materials.

## 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 Emmanuel Katongole's responses?
2. How does Emmanuel describe the relationship between Christian identity and our relationship to those who seem different to us?
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 Emmanuel's theology informed and shaped by his Rwandan experience? What approaches does he take in understanding God in the context of his day-to-day experiences and ministry?

## Going deeper

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

1. **Mirror to the Church:** How does *identity* affect us as Christians, and the way we relate to each other and the world?
2. **Mirror to the Church:** How does Emmanuel explain the role of *identity* leading up to (and during) the Rwandan genocide?
3. **Mirror to the Church:** "Identity is not a stable thing. Identities get formed." Do you agree? What is forming your *identity*?
4. **Mirror to the Church:** How can tribal, local, regional, national, and other *identities* distort and take over our *identity* in Jesus Christ? (e.g. Am I Hutu first, and Christian second? Am I American first, and Christian second?)
5. **Mirror to the Church:** What is the role of *Christian identity*? Is it just to map itself over other identities? Or is it about the formation of a *new identity* in the world? What are the implications of this for the *role and identity of the Christian church* in the world?
6. **Mirror to the Church:** According to Emmanuel Katongole, what was going on for Rwandan Christians, and their sense of identity, leading up to and during the Rwandan civil war?
7. **Mirror to the Church:** Emmanuel Katongole says that the church took Hutu and Tutsi identities for granted, and that this contributed to the civil war. How does your church take ethnic, national, and other identities for granted? What problems emerge for witness, race relations, gender relations, faith, church life, discipleship, and mission as a consequence?
8. **Mirror to the Church:** Emmanuel Katongole says that Rwanda is not unique. It reflects forms of Christianity all over the world. It holds up a mirror to the church. Christianity rarely questions tribal, ethnic, national, and other identities, and it rarely works toward a distinct and new Christian identity in the world. Do you agree? Why or why not? Give examples, if you are able.
9. **Mirror to the Church:** "The revolutionary element that is introduced by Christianity is precisely to call other identities into question... These identities might be a starting point, but they are not the terminuses. From these starting points we begin to form a new identity that reshapes our whole sense of identity: our sense of what it means to be God's people in the world." Discuss.
10. **The Ephesian Moment:** How does Emmanuel Katongole describe Andrew Wall's concept of the "Ephesian moment"? As Jews and Gentiles come together to form the church and to witness to the new humanity in Jesus Christ, how does this "Ephesian moment" challenge and confront ethnically and culturally divided churches today?
11. **The Ephesian Moment:** Andrew Wall describes the Early Church's "Ephesian Moment", and the fact that the worldwide church (and especially the church in the West) has arrived at an "Ephesian moment" again. Discuss the following, and the implications for your ministry and/or church:

The church in Jerusalem was Jewish. But persecution and large scale Gentile conversion created a new dynamic. Acts 10, 11 and 15 describe decisive moments. Do they have separate Jewish and Hellenistic churches? Paul challenges the church to embrace the "full stature of Christ", interacting with Christians from other cultures, and learning together to be the new humanity in Jesus Christ. "In him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22).

This breaking down of dividing walls, and coming together to be one church—one church that expresses the full stature of Jesus Christ—is the "Ephesian moment."

Andrew Walls challenges Western Christians to see and respond to our current "Ephesian moment."

"But in our own day the Ephesian moment has come again, and come in a richer mode than has ever happened since the first century. Developments over several centuries, reaching a climax in the twentieth, mean that we no longer have two, but innumerable, major cultures in the church.

Like the old Jerusalem Christians, Western Christians had long grown used to the idea that they were guardians of a "standard" Christianity; also like them, they find themselves in the presence of new expressions of Christianity, and new Christian lifestyles that have developed or are developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to display Christ under the conditions of African, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Latin American life. And most of the world's Christians are now Africans, Asians, or Latin Americans.

The majority of Christians now belong to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These regions will increasingly be the places where Christian decisions and Christian choices will have to be made, where creative theology will become a necessity and where the materials for constructing that theology will be such as have not been used for that purpose before. New questions will be asked about Christ that arise from the endeavors of Christian people to express him, to think in a Christian way, and make Christian choices in settings that have been shaped by the venerable traditions of Africa and Asia. And the materials for constructing theology will be African and Asian, as surely as earlier generations used the materials of Platonism and Roman and customary law. If past experience is anything to go by, the process can only enrich the church's understanding of Christ."

See the Andrew Walls article online here:

[http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/multicultural/documents/ephesian\\_moment.pdf](http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/multicultural/documents/ephesian_moment.pdf)

Also see Emmanuel Katongole's article online here: <http://emmanuelkatongole.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Mission-and-the-Ephesian-Moment-of-World-Christianity.pdf>

12. **The Ephesian Moment:** Rwanda provides a radical expression of exclusion, and the terrible consequences of such exclusion. Where do you see exclusion in your culture? In your church? In your college or university? How does the "Ephesian moment" (coming together as the new humanity in Jesus Christ, to express the full stature of Jesus Christ, and to embrace, love, and reshaped Christian identity) challenge such exclusion, and lead you to a different way of life in the world?
13. **The Sacrifice of Africa:** What issues are endemic on Africa, according to Emmanuel Katongole? What narratives shape Africa's sense of itself? Now, consider the issues in your culture. What issues are endemic in your culture? How does "social imagination" entrench these issues? What role does the church play in providing a new way of seeing life, relationships, and the world?
14. **The Sacrifice of Africa:** How does the Christian narrative and worldview provide an alternative to the narratives and worldviews that shape your society and culture? Discuss practical examples.
15. **The Sacrifice of Africa:** Emmanuel Katongole tells a story of a Burundian woman, and her suffering, and her extraordinary ministry in Rwanda. What do we learn from that story? Why is "new identity in Jesus" more important to her than external achievements like pastoral care, political advocacy, educational initiatives, swimming pools, etc.?
16. **Lament and Hope:** Emmanuel Katongole says that people working toward reconciliation and healing often *live within the intersection between lament and hope*. What does he mean by that?
17. **Lament and Hope:** How do lament and hope go hand-in-hand in the Christian tradition?
18. **Lament and Hope:** See stories of lament and hope here: <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/1185/08-2009> What do we learn about Christian faith, witness, and identity from these stories?
19. **Lament and Hope:** Do Christians in your culture provide space for lament and mourning (in church gatherings, for instance)? Do they express optimism, rather than hope? How can people embrace true lament and hope in your church and ministry today?
20. **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking:** What role does confession play in reconciliation and peacemaking? What role does confession play in the formation of a new Christian identity?

21. **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking:** When it comes to reconciliation and peacemaking, Emmanuel Katongole doesn't discount skills and techniques altogether. But he does say other things are more foundational. Things like the story of what God is doing in the world, and the implications of this story for our identity as "a new creation" and as "a new humanity." The implications reach into our community, theology, identity, witness, peacemaking, and service. *Discuss the relationship between theology and methodologies in reconciliation and peacemaking today.*
22. **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking:** Reconciliation is a work of God. It is from God. What does this mean for us as we step back and receive this gift? And then as we move forward as reconcilers in the world?
23. **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking:** Emmanuel Katongole says that reconciliation is a journey that involves five gifts (or five questions). Discuss each of these questions. Why are they important? See them fleshed out here:  
<https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cfr/ChristianLeadershipforReconciliation.pdf>
  - i. **Reconciliation toward what?** What is the individual and collective goal of reconciliation? The goal is the new creation in Jesus Christ. The gift is *new creation*.
  - ii. **What is going on?** What specific challenges face this culture and context? The gift is *lament*.
  - iii. **What does hope look like?** What hopeful models, stories, experiments, initiatives, vision, relationships, and practical skills embody hope, and shape a hope-filled future? The gift is *hope*.
  - iv. **What kind of leadership?** What specific gifts, skills, practices, and habits of leadership and patterns of life sustain hope for the long haul? The gifts are *service and leadership*.
  - v. **Why me and why bother?** What's your personal call to reconciliation in this context? How will you sustain this through practices, rhythms, and lifestyles, for the long haul? The gift is *spirituality*.
24. **The Mission of the Church:** How does Emmanuel Katongole understand the mission of the church, and how it engages in mission today?
25. **The Mission of the Church:** Why does mission begin with being a recipient of the gift of reconciliation?
26. **The Mission of the Church:** How do we move from being *recipients* of the gift of reconciliation (which is the first and primary thing), to being *agents* of the gift of reconciliation in the world?

## 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. **Mirror to the Church:** "Identity is not a stable thing. Identities get formed." What is shaping your *identity*? How can you allow Christ and his vision of a *new humanity* and *new creation* shape your sense of *identity*?
2. **Mirror to the Church:** In your church, how do local, regional, national, and other *identities* distort and take over people's *identity* in Jesus Christ? (e.g. Am I American first, and Christian second?) What can your church do about this?
3. **Mirror to the Church:** How does your church take ethnic, national, and other identities for granted? What problems emerge for witness, race relations, gender relations, faith, church life, discipleship, and mission as a consequence?
4. **The Ephesian Moment:** Have you had an "Ephesian moment"? Has your church, ministry, college, and and/or university had an "Ephesian moment"? Are different ethnicities and cultures coming together to form the church and to witness to the new humanity in Jesus Christ?

5. **The Ephesian Moment:** Rwanda provides a radical expression of exclusion, and the terrible consequences of such exclusion. Where do you see exclusion in your culture? In your church? In your college or university? How does the “Ephesian moment” (coming together as the new humanity in Jesus Christ, to express the full stature of Jesus Christ, and to embrace, love, and reshaped Christian identity) challenge such exclusion, and lead you to a different way of life in the world?
6. **The Sacrifice of Africa:** What “social imagination” and stories have shaped your culture? What role does your life play (and what role does your church and ministry play) in providing a new way of seeing life, relationships, and the world?
7. **Lament and Hope:** Emmanuel Katongole says that people working toward reconciliation and healing often *live within the intersection between lament and hope*. Where do you see examples of this in your culture and church? How can you get better at acknowledging and celebrating this?
8. **Lament and Hope:** Do Christians in your culture provide space for lament and mourning (in church gatherings, for instance)? Do they express optimism, rather than hope? How can people embrace true lament and hope in your church and ministry today?
9. **Confession, Reconciliation, and Peacemaking:** How are you engaged in reconciliation and peacemaking? Look again at Emmanuel Katongole’s five gifts (or five questions). Discuss ways that these might shape your efforts toward reconciliation and peacemaking.
10. **The Mission of the Church:** How conscious are you of being a *recipient* of the gift of reconciliation? How are you moving from a sense of this grace, to being an *agent* of the gift of reconciliation in the world?

## 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 reconciliation, conflict-resolution, and forgiveness? 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

**Website:** [www.theglobalchurchproject.com](http://www.theglobalchurchproject.com)

**Book:** Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (IVP Academic, 2015)