

THIS IS CHURCH ●

Facilitators Guide

This Is Church

God's Blueprint for Healthy Church

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Why The Church

Questions:

1. Do you believe that local church is integral to God’s plan to save the world? Why / why not?
2. Does it matter what church you attend, or is the one just like the other?

Note for facilitator: *The conclusion you want people to arrive at, is that not all churches are equally healthy / are built according to God’s design for church.*

3. How important are our own comforts, likes/dislikes, priorities, preferences, etc in choosing which church we want to be part of?

Note for facilitator: *Church is built for God’s ‘preference’ and delight, not ours. However, Andrew is obviously not saying there is no place for cultural differences, for example: worship in rural Zambia will look different to worship in urban Cape Town, but the same heart to worship God wholeheartedly etc. may be the same.*

Other potential questions / objections that might emerge:

Q: Andrew says we don’t find a senior pastor in the bible, which is true. What about us having a lead elder then?

A: We see the church lead by a team of elders. The lead elder is the first among equals, he is not over the team of elders as seen in the traditional senior pastor model.

His Answer is Church

Questions:

1. How does the Bible define “church”, and how is this different to (or: how does this shape) your own background / understanding of what church is?
2. Why is it important to belong to a local church, and what are the dangers of not belonging (i.e. individualistic Christianity)?
3. What does devotion to the local church look like for you, and in which area (if any) is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to even greater / deeper devotion?

Note to facilitator: *The Acts 2:42 devotion is so radical because they were filled with the Spirit and rooted in Christ. Devotion is a fruit of a spirit-filled life. We can't force devotion but can make it attractive and should aim for it, as those in Christ.*

Apostolic

Questions:

1. Some people would argue that the last (and only) apostles were The Twelve and the Apostle Paul, and that there are no “modern day” apostles. What does the Bible say about this?

Note to facilitator: *Key scripture is Ephesians 4:13—we need apostles and all the other gifts until the church is completely unified and mature. In other words, until Jesus returns.*

2. Why does the church still need apostolic grace today?

Note to facilitator: *We need them to help build healthy churches that reflect Jesus.*

Regarding Andrew’s “1 degree out” illustration: Andrew is not saying we always get it right, but that without partnership with apostolic grace, we can go off track.

3. As saints, what is the value / how do we benefit from being part of a church that is part of an apostolic partnership of churches?

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Church Leadership

Questions:

- 1. What is the Biblical model for church leadership, and how is this different to (or how does this shape) your own background / understanding of church leadership? E.g. churches governed by Boards, etc.

Note to facilitator: *Biblical model is plurality of leaders, not a one-man-show. Touch on qualifications for leadership (not academic, but character), the role of leaders (as shepherds who are in and amongst the people, rather than “boardroom advisers”), etc.*

- 2. How does God want us to posture ourselves towards our leaders? Is there anything in adopting that posture that we find challenging or even offensive, and why?
- 3. Some people would argue that the language of obedience and submission, sound “cult-like”. How would you respond from a Biblical point of view?

Note to facilitator: *See Hebrews 13:17—on obeying and submitting—in light of 1 Peter 5:3. We can never force or manipulate people into obedience. Submission is always voluntary and given freely. Elders should never lord it over others but are called to serve others and give godly perspective and leadership through their delegated authority.*

Accountability

Questions:

1. What is accountability from a Biblical point of view, and how do we live accountably?

Note to facilitator: *1 John 1:7 speaks of walking in the light. Darkness hides, light reveals. Accountability is voluntarily presenting our lives transparently to another.*

2. Whose job is it to make sure that we are accountable – ours, or our leaders – and why is it essential to our Christian walk?

Note to facilitator: *It is a leader's responsibility to present us perfect (Colossians 1:28), it is the saint's responsibility to let them do this with joy and not with groaning (Hebrews 13:17), this leads to authentic fellowship, and our sins being cleansed (1 John 1:7).*

3. What are the things that keep us from being accountable, and how does God want us to rectify that?

Note to facilitator: *Blind spots, blinkered thinking, and self-preservation often hold us back from living accountably. However, part of working out our salvation is submitting to the processes the Lord ordains, including living accountably by walking in the light.*

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Worship

Questions:

1. How has this session shaped your thinking about how and why we praise and worship the Lord?

Note to facilitator: *Romans 12:1 teaches us what we do physically with our body is a spiritual act. So, when we dance (Psalm 149:3) or clap (Psalm 47:1), jump (Acts 3:8), bow or kneel (Psalm 95:6), or lay on our faces (Leviticus 9:24), however undignified (2 Samuel 6:22), it is a spiritual act.*

2. What is the role of our feelings in worship?

Note to facilitator: *As well as worshipping with our body (strength) and our mind, we are told to worship with our heart and soul (Luke 10:27). It is fitting for our emotions to find an expression in worship.*

3. What are some things, inside us or around us, that stop us from praising and worshipping God as He wants and deserves to be worshipped? How should we deal with those things?

Note to facilitator: *God wants us to worship when we feel like it, when we don't feel like it, and until we feel like it (Psalm 57:8).*

Finance

Questions:

1. How has this session challenged your understanding or thinking of, or attitude towards, money (whether for personal use or in the church)?
2. Some people would argue that “we are under grace, not law,” and therefore need not tithe any longer. How would you respond from a Biblical point of view?
3. Some people do not tithe regularly but instead give money to organisations that help the poor or support missionary work in the nations. How would you respond from a Biblical point of view?

Church Discipline

Questions:

1. Hebrews 12:4-13 tells us that we should expect God to discipline us. Why does God discipline us, and how (what methods) does He use to discipline us?

Note to facilitator: *The Word, inner conviction of the Holy Spirit, our leaders, our brothers and sisters in the Lord, etc.*

2. How does God want us to deal with a brother or sister who is in sin - if he/she is a saint, and if he/she is a leader?
3. Some people think it very unloving (and therefore unlike Jesus) to put someone who is in unrepentant sin, out of church. What do you say?

Marriage

Please be aware that this message contains content aimed at an adult audience. Caution is advised to parents and facilitators regarding the presence of children.

Questions:

1. Why is marriage sacred to God, and why does He hate divorce?
2. According to the Scriptures, in which specific circumstances would a divorced person (possibly) be able to re-marry? Explain your answer. (see a. to e. below).
 - a. If his/her spouse has died – a clear yes, as long as the surviving spouse marries a believer. God may however call the surviving spouse to remain single. The bond of marriage is broken at death.
 - b. If his/her spouse has married someone else – a clear yes, as long as the remaining spouse marries a believer. God may however call the person to remain single. The person is now married to someone else, so there is no hope any longer for that marriage to be restored.
 - c. If his/her spouse has been unfaithful – yes, Scripture does make a clear exception for this instance (Matt 19:9), but as Christians we should try to forgive and reconcile. If the unfaithful spouse chooses to leave, God may call the remaining spouse to remain single however.
 - d. If his/her spouse is an unbeliever, but wants to remain married – stay in the marriage.
 - e. If his/her spouse is an unbeliever who divorces the believing spouse – the believing spouse could possibly remarry if they can find an elder who will marry them. Otherwise, they have to remain single.

Note to facilitator: *this is the contentious one, which people may struggle with. Rather defer to an elder if unsure.*

3. How does God view singleness?
