

SESSION FOUR

RENEWING THE CHURCH

BONUS CONTENT

NOTES

People need to gospel. It is so important that we have healthy, spirit filled and missional congregations. It is time to think about renewal differently. It is not just something we ask the Holy Spirit to do when a congregation is near death. It is something we ask the Holy Spirit to do in us and in our congregations constantly that we might stay in step with what the Spirit is doing. Leading a church plant and leading a church through renewal are both challenging and difficult but do require different skills and passions. It is important to discern which one God is calling and equipping you to undertake. Whether you are planting or renewing you must love your people. This is a fantastic time for renewal- everything has already been altered. Don't simply go back to what was but ask yourself and your team what is worth holding on to... and letting go of.

QUESTIONS FROM VIEWERS

If we want renewal don't we have to address what is holding back Christianity, which is the Australian cultural perception that 'the Church is irrelevant'. So isn't it necessary to emphasize everything in the OT that validates who Jesus is, and then talk about how Jesus WAS relevant to everyone.

You make a good point. Meeting people where they are 'at' with all that we are and have in Christ is so important. The whole story of the bible is so important and especially its primary focus - Jesus Christ. Renewal isn't going to happen without that!

While Christianity may be viewed by many as irrelevant many in our Australian culture are open to the person of Jesus. As we saw in our week on Evangelism when we stop making it about a 'religion' and make it personal, relational and show how Jesus has been relevant to our own lives we will be able share the good news far more effectively.

Polity and Mission- Polity often wins- what needs to shift in our culture and thinking to make sure that polity supports mission not squashes it?

Polity or structures and process matter. But I think what is behind this question is what happens when the rule book seems bigger than the bible we are holding? And I think it can come down to discipleship. In what place do we really place our trust? Why are we insecure to hold so tightly to rules and polity at the expense of the smile of God the Father? What's really motivating our heart and mind in all this? I think those sorts of things are important to deal with personally and in a ministry team culture. Brian Houston said "There's 3 vital ingredients in people who minister really well. 1. A good heart 2. A good heart 3. A good heart"

One of the traps we fall into is forgetting that structure should serve mission. Our polity and structures should help us do mission well, ensure we have good accountability and provide safeguards without being inflexible and stifling mission and ministry. Sadly, this balance is often lost. It is the role of leadership to find the right balance by drawing people, systems and councils back to the core business of the mission at hand.

How do we create a culture in our churches and in presbyteries or networks where planting isn't exceptional it is normal?

I think it is congregations/local churches that can truly plant churches. Presbyteries or networks can cheer them on and offer resources but church planting is very much a local thing. In reality, it's a personal thing in the heart of the person or couple who are planting. Developing a culture of mentoring, good discernment and formation processes for church planters is a way that presbyteries and networks can help.

Celebrate it, talk about it, update on it. Encourage it as a viable option for our young emerging leaders and give them the resources, training and tools to be able to take it on.

How do you shift a congregation to not just consider its own life but to have planting and revitalising as part of it's DNA?

I'm not sure every congregation is a planting / revitalising congregation for various reasons. Historically it does seem to be particular individuals or congregations that, for a season at least, seem to be planting or revitalising. We all have our redemptive potential and I don't think a congregation or pastor or individual needs to get hung up about it if they are not planting or revitalising other congregations. There's lots of permutations to serve the wider mission and we need to be prayerful and realistic about what each of us bring to that.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS

What does God need to shift in you, so that you are renewed?

What does God need to shift in your church in order to see renewal?

For renewal to take place it means laying down preferences and the way we have always done things to focus again on the mission at hand. Do you really want renewal or simply a different outcome for the same endeavours?

How often are you seeking God for His Spirit to renew your church?

What would it look like to shift your culture to become a church that expects to plant other churches?

RESOURCES

Here's 10 helpful comments from Ps Brian Houston about church planting and revitalisation. I've paraphrased and added to some of the comments but you can look at the full article in the link to have the original quotes from Ps Brian.

https://hillson.com/collected/blog/2013/01/10-principles-of-church-planting-and-expanding/#.XutA4_dlaaM

1. YOU MUST RECOGNIZE YOUR GRACE ZONE:

Church planting is a GRACE and if you stay "within the sphere of the grace God has given you," His favor and blessing will be on your endeavors. Just because you CAN do it doesn't mean you should.

2. CHERISH THE BABY STEPS:

Church planting is PIONEERING and that means you have to recognize the old adage that "you can't run before you can walk". It takes time, even with an enthusiastic start, to develop leaders. To see who is really leaning in.

3. DETERMINE TO BE ETHICAL AND TRUE TO YOURSELF:

Church planting must be INTEGRIOUS and though we might all have varying ethics and values, it is important to be true to God, true to ourselves and considerate of others in our approach to church planting. It really is a case of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

4. EXPAND FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH:

Church planting is CHALLENGING, in fact sometimes starting something new is the easy part. The best advice from

mentors is, don't deplete the home base. Make sure there is a sustainability in resources and leadership depth.

5. BE SURE YOU HAVE COUNTED THE COST:

Church planting is COSTLY and can be very difficult if you are unable to invest sacrificially into the work you are starting....many years of pain and heartache can be avoided if you have counted the cost and sacrificially invested into the new ground you are claiming.

6. PRAY FOR THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, AT THE RIGHT TIME:

Church planting involves LEADERSHIP and it will be more successful when you sow some of your best people. If you are solving a problem by repositioning someone who is causing frustration, you are only transferring the problem. It is when you give your best that you can expect the best outcome – which is again why planting or expanding should be done from a position of strength and not vulnerability.

7. NOT JUST EASY PLACES OR NICE PLACES, BUT RIGHT PLACES:

Church planting is STRATEGIC and for Hillsong that has rarely meant going to the 'easy' places. It is Spirit led and we need to be attentive to the Lords leading into an area. For the Journey UC, Mallala is a smaller urban fringe community but there was no doubt the Holy Spirit was pointing us to restart there. Ps Jordan and Steph are really gifted and have had offers to minister in other places but have been faithful to a clear call and affirmation by the Spirit and the Church. There's blessing and assurance in that even when it's tough.

8. AVOID THE PERILS OF SHORTCUTS, OR INDIVIDUALS WHO PROMISE THE WORLD:

Church planting is TEAMWORK... Great churches are built with people who are faithful in the little things. I'd take a group of ordinary people devoted to an extraordinary God, over a charismatic someone that talks a big game, but hasn't proven faithful in the 'day of small beginnings' I think we are seeing some denominations giving significant resources to church planting - for all sorts of reasons- just because it's on offer may not be enough of a reason. If there are a lot of strings attached or mixed values and vision, even if resources are on offer, I would be very cautious.

9. VALUE CONNECTION AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Church planting is LONELY, and many a church planter has perished through isolation. Proverbs 18:1 says, "The man who isolates himself is not wise" and if you disregard your friendships and relationships when planting churches, your world can get small very quickly. Graham Humphris shared a stat that said the chances of church planting enduring increased exponentially with weekly mentoring rather than monthly mentoring. I give a LOT of time to pioneering leaders who are proving commitment because we need it.

10. CHURCH PLANTING CAN BE PART OF THE ANSWER OR PART OF THE PROBLEM:

Church planting is TRENDY and in the twenty first century, technology and opportunity enable us to expand in ways that were unthinkable to generations past. Does the world need more churches? The short answer is yes, but the world doesn't need more mediocre churches. The world needs healthy and vibrant churches that are genuinely fulfilling the Great Commission in their cities, towns, villages and nations. Churches that are filled with life, worship, biblical teaching and healthy, accepting community – churches that point people to JESUS. I pray that together, we can 'champion the cause of local churches everywhere,' and stay committed to the building of what Jesus Christ said He would build – His Church!