

Praise evangelism knowledge compassionate reconciliation
holy encouragement leadership teachers Church
freely minds Scripture forgiveness gospel
unity
work glory adoption redemption worship
ourselves faithful planting churches grace works
music promise longer self grows holiness discipline
blood brought near opposition love character Father
Prayer truth kind justification
hope living head knowledge body believed giving Trinity preach
Christ money learned equip the saints

16 Studies For Church Planting Teams



*Lessons
for
New Churches*

Lessons for New Churches

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Notes for Leaders

Lessons for New Churches is a collection of 16 Bible Studies, the aim of which is to help Christians prepare for planting new churches and new congregations.

It would seem foolish to attempt to make a definitive list of those issues of theology and practice which *must* be considered in the planning phase of a new church and those which can be ignored. Gathered here, however, are some of the key issues; those which should be considered before planting due to their foundational place in ministry and those which can easily distract Christians from ministry if they are over-looked. At any rate, this is one perspective on a helpful way forward.

These Bible studies will be most effective if each member of the group is able to look at the passage(s) prior to meeting together and to write down some thoughts or reflections in answer to each question.

Each of the sixteen studies in this collection is expected to take 30 - 45 minutes to complete. Obviously in this sort of time frame, each section is far from an exhaustive study of the topic. Rather, participants will have a chance to read and reflect on one, two or occasionally more Bible passages that address the topic and to consider the implications for the particular church planting ministry in which they find themselves.

For whatever way this small collection of Bible studies might prove useful for “equipping the saints for works of service,” we give thanks to God and ask his Son to continue building his church.

Looking at God

What is the work of God for which you most frequently give thanks?

Read Psalm 22

Make a list of all the statements David makes about God's character.

Make a list of all the statements David makes about God's activities.

Why do you think David repeatedly speaks of God's character amidst his own trials?

Jesus quotes the opening words of Psalm 22 just before his death (Mark 15:33 - 39).

How does Jesus' quoting of Psalm 22 help us understand the impact of the cross on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son?

How do Christians understand this Psalm differently to its original audience, looking at it as we do through the lens of the cross of Christ?

Read Ephesians 1:3 - 23

From this section, what would you say is God’s purpose in the world?

Identify in this passage as many spiritual blessings as you can.

What work or achievements are ascribed to the different persons of the Trinity?

Father -

Son -

Spirit -

What is God's purpose in blessing us?

Dr Jim Packer from Regent College in Vancouver says we should pray to the three persons of the Trinity regarding the particular work that each of them does.

How might this approach shape your prayer life?

What do you think it will look like for Jesus to be "head over everything" (v2) and with all things "under Christ" (v 10)?

Looking at Grace

If humanity were to devise a plan to rescue itself from sin and its effects, what do you think that scheme might look like?

Read Ephesians 2:1 - 10

In how many different ways does Paul describe our situation before God's gracious intervention?

What do the different descriptions tell us?

Summarise the meaning of all these different descriptions and word pictures.

What are stated as God's reasons for reversing our situation?

2:4

2:5

2:7

2:8

Make a list of everything that is done *by* God *to* us and *for* us.

Based on this passage, come up with another word or phrase for “grace.”

How is it that we are already raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms (v 6)?

Paul speaks of salvation “by grace” and “through faith” (v 8). What is the relationship between grace and faith?

In what ways is the life of a Christian different from that of a person who hasn’t experienced God’s grace?

How does our understanding of grace shape our evangelism?

How does our understanding of grace shape our Sunday gatherings?

Looking at Justification

What are some of the ways that people think they can get into a right relationship with God?

Read Psalm 14:1 - 3

How do you think the average Australian would react to the message of these verses?

Read Romans 3:19 - 31

What does it mean to be “justified” before God?

How does Psalm 14, which is quoted earlier in Romans 3, shape your understanding of justification?

What does Paul say about the purposes, effects and achievements of the Old Testament law?

How is it that Jesus Christ obtains justification for us?

How do “the law and the prophets testify” (v 21) to the righteousness that God provides through Jesus?

In what ways are we tempted to try and win God’s approval?

How does being “justified freely by his grace” (v 24) shape your:
Ministry decisions?

Prayers?

Day-to-day life?

Someone quotes verse 21 to you, “no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law” and concludes, “So we don’t need to read or obey the Old Testament.” How do you respond?

What do your conversations with your non-Christian friends reflect about your standing before God?

Looking at Ourselves

Are you more likely to feel over-confident in your ministry or under-confident?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18

Paul says in verse 5 “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.”

What does it mean to preach “Jesus Christ as Lord”?

What does the alternative, to preach ourselves, look like?

Paul says that his ministry was marked by the fact that he and his fellow-workers “have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God” (v 2).

In what ways might we struggle to follow this example, particularly in gospel conversations with our non-Christian friends?

What is the picture that Paul is presenting in verses 7 - 12?

What would be a modern equivalent of the “jars of clay” metaphor?

How similar to Paul’s life is our experience as Christian leaders today?

What reasons are we given in this section for not giving up when ministry is hard?

What does this section tell us about God?

What does it tell us about ourselves?

How do our struggles and hardships in ministry show God’s power?

Why is it so often easier to fix our eyes on the things we can see, rather than the things we can't?

If this passage was everything we knew about the Apostle Paul, what would you say was the goal of his ministry?

When ministry gets hard, what do you need to be reminded of the most?

Looking at Church

Write a one sentence definition of “church.” Share your definition with someone sitting near you.

Imagine you receive a phone call from the pastor of a church you used to attend who says the church is “dying.” He asks you to sit in on several meetings and attend Sunday gatherings over a number of weeks in order to help the church correct its problems.

What would be the signs of health that you would look for in the life of the church?

Read Ephesians 4:1 - 16

What does a mature healthy church look like? (v 14 -16)

How do the leaders identified in verse 11 contribute to a healthy church?

What do you think are the greatest threats to maturity for a new church like ours?

How does a new church maintain “the unity of the Spirit” (v 3)?

How do truth and love help a community of God’s people grow to maturity?

In the light of Ephesians 4:1 - 16, how should we pray for our church and other churches?

If you had to summarise the message of Ephesians 4:1 - 16 in one sentence, what would you say?

Complete the statement below as a goal for our church.

Our church should be a church that ...

For Reflection:

What are some of the opportunities to serve in our new church?

When and how do I pray for and support the other leaders of my church?

Bob Roberts from Northwood Church in Texas said at the beginning of 2009 that, “The church is alive, healthy, explosive, and transformative like never before in the history of Christianity - *just not in the West.*”

How do you respond to this statement?

Looking at Evangelism

What is the most exciting news you have ever heard?

How did you feel when you first heard it?

What are some of the motivations we might have for sharing the good news of Jesus with others?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11 - 6:2

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

How does it *feel* to be reconciled to God?

How is it that Paul can say in Christ, “all died” (v 14)?

What might regarding someone “from a worldly point of view” (v 16) look like?

Read Romans 10:9 - 15

What things get in the way of us proclaiming the message of verse 9?

How do these verses speak of *God's* work in evangelism?

How do these verses speak of *our* work in evangelism?

What encouragement is there in these verses for someone who finds it difficult to share their faith with others?

How would you respond to someone who says (in the words attributed to Francis of Assisi), “Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words”?

What are some of the ways that our church could have “beautiful feet” in our local community?

Looking at Discipline

What are some of the explanations people offer as answers to the problem of pain and suffering?

Why do you think the idea of discipline is unpopular today?

Read Hebrews 12:4 - 13

In what ways might we experience God's discipline?

What lessons should we learn from God's discipline?

How is "the struggle against sin" (v 4) related to "the Lord's discipline" (v 5)?

Is all hardship God's discipline?

What is discipline's result in the lives of God's children?

How does God's fatherly discipline differ from the discipline of our earthly fathers?

What is the relationship between discipline and holiness?

What would our lives be like if God never disciplined us?

Can you recall a time when you endured God's discipline?

What do you think God was teaching you through that experience?

Looking at Scripture

Have you ever heard someone deliberately teach something contrary to Scripture?

What were the implications of their message?

Read 2 Timothy 3:10 - 4:5

Since “All Scripture is God-breathed” (3:16), what are the implications for our:

Preaching & teaching -

Daily conversations -

Personal Bible reading -

Children’s & youth programs -

How do we use Scripture to train ourselves and others in righteousness?

What does it mean to “be prepared in season and out of season” (4:2)

How is Timothy to guard against those who would distort the truth of the Scriptures?

What does it mean for Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (v 5) in the context in which he is ministering?

Make a list of all the imperatives in this passage.

What would obedience to each of these instructions look like today?

Read Luke 24:25 - 27

Since “all the Scriptures” speak of Jesus, what should be our approach to understanding the Old Testament?

What would be lacking in our understanding of God if we only had the New Testament?

Looking at Leadership

Spend a minute or two thinking about Christian leaders who have encouraged you in the past. What are the qualities or practices that have made them good leaders?

Think about the models of leadership we are most likely to observe in our society. What are the characteristics of successful leadership in the secular world?

Read 1 Peter 5:1 - 11

What characteristics does the shepherd picture imply for someone in pastoral leadership?

What happens when these characteristics are left out of leadership?

Why do you think Peter refers to Christ's sufferings and the fact that he was a witness to them?

In verses 2 - 3, Peter contrasts different motivations for leadership.
What are they?

What is the “crown of glory” that Peter speaks of?

How is the leadership style of the elders meant to imitate that of Christ?

What does it mean for leaders to be humble?

“All of you” in verse 5 expands the instructions beyond the elders.
What does humility look like for those who do not oversee communities of God’s people?

Imagine you get an email saying that the pastor has just died in a skydiving accident (his parachute didn't open!). The leadership of the church (after an appropriate period of mourning) ask you to submit your

thoughts on the sort of pastor we should be seeking to lead the congregation. Make a list of the essential qualities and skills you would seek.

The Christian leaders to whom Peter wrote were obviously under pressure to compromise their faith and leadership in the face of persecution. In what ways might we as leaders of a church be pressured to compromise in the coming months/years?

Looking at Worship

Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher and theologian, described Christian worship as a drama; The congregation are the actors. The preachers, musicians and leaders are the prompters and God is the audience.

What do you think of this assessment?

Do you think Kierkegaard's picture of worship adequately covers the breadth of meaning of the word "worship"?

Read Revelation 5:6 - 14

Describe what is happening in this "drama" of worship?

What reason is explicitly given in this section for worshipping the Lamb?

What are the similarities between our corporate worship "in church" and the worship pictured here?

Read Romans 12:1 - 2

How is God's mercy a motivation for "true worship"?

What does this act of worship, offering our bodies as living sacrifices, look like?

Why do you think the definition of worship in Romans 12:1 - 2 is vastly different to what you'd find in the many books on worship in a Christian book store?

How should the teaching on worship in Romans 12:1 - 2 shape corporate worship in our Sunday gatherings?

Share your thoughts on whether you think the following activities should be considered Christian worship:

Providing for the physical needs of others -

Evangelistic conversations -

Giving money to gospel ministry -

Reading the Bible with other Christians -

Listening to Christian music -

Consider the statement: *“Under the Old Covenant, the tabernacle/temple was the centre of worship. In the New Covenant, Jesus is the centre of worship.”*

How does this parallel between Jesus and the tabernacle/temple help shape our understanding of worship?

Write your own definition of worship.

Looking at Money

Why do we often desire earthly treasures more than heavenly ones?

What is the least satisfying way you have ever spent money?

Why was that expense so disappointing?

Read Matthew 6:19 - 34

What is the warning and the assurance given in these verses?

What themes tie together Jesus teaching in verses 19 - 24?

What are the characteristics of the life of someone who is serving money?

Why do we often think we *can* serve both God and money?

What does it mean to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness (v 33)?

What are the treasures we can store up in heaven?

In what ways can we diagnose where our heart (and therefore our treasure) is?

What might be some of the early warning signs that we are trying to "serve two masters" (v 24)?

In Luke 18:24 Jesus says, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Why is it so hard and who do you think are "the rich" to whom Jesus is referring?

How drastically would a radical implementation of these words of Jesus change your life?

What gets in the way of you starting that radical implementation?

Looking at Prayer

What might your prayers sound like if God was:

A super-strict school headmaster -

A laid-back, friendly grandfather type who loved to spoil children -

Like a credit card company who constantly offered you more credit -

What aspects of God's character make you pray the way you do?

Read Matthew 6:5 - 13

What patterns for prayer are established in these verses?

Which of the phrases in the prayer do you find the most difficult to pray?

Why?

Write the Lord's Prayer in your own words.

How else can we use Jesus' prayer to shape our own private and corporate prayers?

In what ways are children of the Father to be different from hypocrites or pagans?

Why do you think Jesus sums up this section as he does in verses 14 & 15?

What are some other Bible passages that shape our understanding of prayer?

See also Luke 18:1 - 7, Romans 8:26 - 27, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6

For each of the following passages: What is the writer asking? What does the writer demonstrate they know about God? How would you express the ideas of the prayer in your own words?

Acts 4:23 - 31

Ephesians 3:14 - 21

Philippians 1:9 - 11

Colossians 1:1 - 12

1 Thessalonians 3:9 - 13

What are some patterns, habits, models or ideas that you have found helpful or unhelpful in the prayers of others?

Looking at Music

Make a list of all the effects you think music can have on a person?

Read Psalm 33:1 - 11

What is the purpose of music in the gathering of God's people pictured in this Psalm?

Imagine you were able to ask the harpist in the Psalm what his or her role in the gathering was? Beyond "I play the harp!" what do you think the answer might be?

Read Ephesians 5:15 - 20 & Colossians 3:15 - 17

What are the roles of "psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit" in the community of God's people?

In both Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, how do the instructions about singing relate to the sections of teaching which they conclude?

Both these passages emphasise the “horizontal” benefit of music in the gathering; it’s impact on fellow-Christians. What aspects of modern church music share this goal?

What does Paul *not* say about music in his instructions to the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae?

Do you think we should music in any ways that aren’t explicitly spoken of in the Bible?

In what ways does music help us:

Speak to others of God’s character and actions -

Respond to the message of Scripture -

Reflect on God’s goodness to us in Jesus -

How much should the musical tastes of those we're seeking to reach with the gospel shape the music in the Sunday gatherings?

What do you think are the traps that a new church is most likely to fall into when it comes to deciding the music for the Sunday gatherings?

Looking at Opposition

How do Christians in Australia experience opposition to the message of the gospel?

What does this opposition look like for Christians in other parts of the world?

Read Acts 4:1 - 22

What seems to be the true reason for the opposition that Peter and John face?

What are the implications of “the resurrection of the dead” (v 2) that some people find offensive?

Do you think that Peter’s response in verses 18 - 20 is appropriate for a Christian facing opposition from government today?

Why or why not?

Read Matthew 10:16 - 33

In what ways is the opposition that the disciples face the same as Jesus' own experience?

What is the response to opposition that Jesus expects of his disciples?

What should be the response to opposition for those who proclaim the good news of Jesus today?

How can Jesus' words to his disciples be an encouragement for us in the times when we face opposition for gospel work?

What sorts of things should we be praying for our Christian brothers and sisters who face severe opposition in other parts of the world?

Looking at Discipleship

When you were younger, was there someone you really wanted to be like?
What was it about them that was so compelling?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1 - 13

Describe the character of Paul's pastoral ministry.

Can you recall some ways in which other Christians have shared with you
“not only the gospel of God” but their lives as well?

What are the advantages of a ministry that shares life as well as the good
news of Jesus?

If this section was a protocol for evangelism and discipleship, what
would be the key characteristics that Christian ministers must display?

Read 2 Timothy 1:8 - 14

What is at the centre of discipleship in this section?

What is the relationship between the instructions to “guard the good deposit” of the gospel and keep “the pattern of sound teaching”?

What are the things of which Paul is clearly confident in verse 12?

Are Paul’s words to Timothy reflected in your conversations with young Christians you know?

How are you encouraged in your ministry to other people by this example of Paul’s ministry?

Looking at Encouragement

Have you ever been the recipient of someone else's deliberate and intentional encouragement?

What made their words so encouraging?

Why do you think words of encouragement are such a powerful tool for building others up?

How would you define "Christian encouragement" and its goal?

Read Ephesians 4:15

How does the instruction in this verse sharpen your definition of encouragement?

In practical terms, how does "speaking the truth in love" differ from just "speaking the truth"?

Read Hebrews 10:19 - 25

How does the author of the letter to the Hebrews say we should be encouraging each other?

What motivations are given for encouraging Christian brothers and sisters?

In what ways are these verses an encouragement in themselves?

Where in the Bible would you turn to find words with which to encourage another Christian?

Who are the people you can encourage in the coming days and weeks?

Lessons for new Churches

It would seem foolish to attempt to make a definitive list of those issues of theology and practice which must be considered in the planning phase of a new church and those which can be ignored. Gathered here, however, are some of the key issues; those which should be considered before planting due to their foundational place in ministry and those which can easily distract Christians from ministry if they are over-looked.

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