



From the Steeple to the Street

STUDY QUESTIONS

Reading a book that encourages us to consider new possibilities, gives us new frameworks with which to see the world, and teaches us/shapes us/molds us is a tremendously helpful practice to equip a leader for the task of ministry ahead. But to read the same book with a group of people and share in discussion, reflection, and dream-casting . . . well, that takes learning to an even deeper level. To that end, we offer these questions for what we hope to be some lively discussions around this resource. We pray that you will find inspiration, direction, and courage for the journey through your discussions together.

—The Fresh Expressions US Team

Foreword

Graham Cray suggests that “authentic church has to be contextual church” and “contextual church has to be authentic church.” What do you think this means?

Chapter 1

1. Do you believe it is true that “more and more of your neighbors think less and less about your church”? If so, why?
2. Why do you believe Jesus is more popular than the church?
3. How would your thinking change if you chose to think like a missionary?
4. Do you see this as a time of opportunity for the church in North America? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

1. The author suggests that some of the questions church leaders ask today arise from a paradigm that is rooted in an understanding of church that likely has more to do with European modernity than with global postmodernity. What examples can you identify that give evidence to this assertion? How might you describe your vision of a global postmodern expression of church?
2. How do we define “success” in church? What metrics would you suggest to evaluate and measure effectiveness in ministry?
3. The author claims that it is often too far a stretch for an existing church to completely reinvent and repurpose itself. He goes on to say that “the kind of changes required to become germane to people really far from God are often impractical.” Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Would the church you currently attend be able to reach truly unchurched people without a major disruption to its traditions and culture?”
4. What are the limitations of the worship-focused launch of traditional church plants in the cultural landscape in which we find ourselves in North America? Why might a fresh expression of church be a more viable option in many contexts?

Chapter 3

1. We know there are numerous challenges in being a pioneer. But in what ways could you imagine being the pastor of an established church might be as hard, or even harder, than being a pioneer of a fresh expression of church?
2. Share in your own words the difference between “Petrine apostleship” and “Pauline apostleship.”
3. At this point in the journey, how would you describe your sense of call? Would it be that of a “Petrine apostle” or a “Pauline apostle”?
4. Can you identify someone in your life or ministry network you would call a “missional pastor”? Why would you categorize that pastor in these terms? How could you offer encouragement to that courageous leader?

Chapter 4

1. Let's begin to imagine what a fresh expression of church might look like. Go back and read Reggie McNeal's description of the research scientists on pages 29–30. What might it look like, based on what you know so far, to start a new form of church which engages the research scientists? What might the worship look like? When and where would they gather? Who would lead? How might they be involved in mission together? (We'll dig more deeply into the forms of fresh expressions later; this is only a "warm up," so just have fun with this exercise.)
2. Does this idea of new forms (fresh expressions) of church seem liberating to you? In what way?
3. Put into your own words the difference between relevance and incarnation.
4. How can you imagine the role of new forms of church in a world in which the notion of "place" is changing so rapidly? (See pages 35–36.)

Chapter 5

1. How does a competition mind-set create barriers to the release of fresh expressions of church?
2. Why do you think Luke Edwards's words are important: "The traditional church has to get over its fear of new forms of church. And new forms of church have to get over their fear of the traditional church. We have to work together to make each other better. We bring different people into the Kingdom of God. And that's what matters." How does fear hold us back from being what God wants us to be?
3. Name a few of the advantages to the "mutually dependent, mutually supporting" relationship of an existing church and a fresh expression of church. Now name a few of the potential difficulties in that relationship.
4. Note the words of Steve Hartman on page 41: "It's hard to give ourselves away." In what ways is that statement meaningful to you? How could we more fully open ourselves and our churches to the self-giving patterns of Jesus?

Chapter 6

1. The author writes: “A new form of church that is not rooted in an understanding of, and passion for, our Creator will struggle both for direction and for inspiration.” Why do you think both theology and passion are important for a newly forming expression of church?
2. Is the study of theology something that you enjoy? How might a deeper study of theology be helpful to you and to your circle of Christian friends?
3. Consider a time you’ve been involved in mission. What are some things about who God is that were revealed to you as you joined in kingdom work? Why might it be important to think about God as we are engaged in mission, and to engage in mission as we think about God?
4. As we prepare to study such challenging topics as the incarnation, the Trinity, and so on, pause to pray that God will enable you by His Spirit to understand more and more of who God is.

Chapter 7

1. What was your response when you first read that “missiological thinking has largely moved beyond Christology to the Trinity”? How would you describe that shift?
2. How would your worship and devotional life change if you were to think more about God-in-Three-Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit?
3. “Perichoresis” is something that not many of us have thought much about. How would you describe that, in your own words?
4. How would you say this renewed emphasis in the Trinity deepens and expands our view of mission?
5. What if the stirrings you may be having to start a fresh expression come from the imagination of the Great Sender? What does it mean to be “sent” to join in the mission of God?

Chapter 8

1. This chapter suggests that incarnation is unsafe and risky. What does that mean to you?
2. Imagine yourself going to a completely unfamiliar international context—perhaps Ethiopia or Thailand or Nepal. What would you need to learn about that context to better incarnate the gospel? Now think of a subculture in your local context that is unfamiliar to you. What would you need to learn about that context to better incarnate the gospel so that it resonates with that particular culture?
3. What are the advantages to this “incarnational, contextualized” approach that might not be mentioned here? Can you imagine some potential pitfalls?
4. Reflect on the “four-self formula” (see pages 66–68). Why would this be important for a fresh expression? What would a pioneer leader need to be intentional about from the very beginning of the ministry to foster indigeneity?
5. Many believe that churches of the future will be much more individualized, and that common categories, i.e., “traditional” and “contemporary” will mean less and less. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Chapter 9

1. How would you describe the kingdom of God to someone whose understanding of the Christian faith is minimal?
2. What do you believe is the “heart”—the core, the most important element—of the kingdom of God?
3. David Bosch writes (see page 74): “Neither a secularized church (that is, a church which concerns itself only with this-worldly activities and interests) nor a separatist church (that is, a church which involves itself only in soul-saving and preparation of converts for the hereafter) can faithfully articulate the *Missio Dei*.” Re-phrase that, in your own words. Why is that such an important observation?
4. What might it look like in your context to start a new ministry that is intentional about being both deep in faith and broad in mission?

Chapter 10

1. Have you ever considered that “‘mission’ and ‘evangelism’ are not synonymous”? Do you have a personal definition of each?
2. How do you understand Hell? Does that shape your approach to mission and evangelism?
3. What does salvation mean to you? How would you articulate the heart of this good news with someone for whom it is a foreign concept? What might be the barriers to people experiencing it as good news?
4. The author writes: “Anything less than grace is an inadequate motivation for the planting of new forms of church.” How does dependence on grace shape a ministry? What is the importance of both truth and grace?

Chapter 11

1. Why would Lesslie Newbigin say the following: “The scandal of particularity is at the center of the question of missions”?
2. Do you believe explicit faith in Jesus is the absolute only way to God? On what do you base your position?
3. John Hick said, “If Jesus was literally God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, so that the Christian religion was founded by God-on-earth in person, it is then very hard to escape from the traditional view that all mankind must be converted to the Christian faith.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Why would the author write the following: “Any position less than exclusivism tends to dampen missionary passion”? What experiences lead you to agree or disagree with this statement?
5. What does it look like to affirm the particularity of Jesus within an increasingly secular culture that considers this claim exclusivist and narrow? How would you deal with someone who sincerely wants to know how you can say Jesus is the way to God? How would you deal with someone who sincerely believes that this claim is legalistic and judgmental?

Chapter 12

1. How does one “obey the Holy Spirit”? What does that look like in your own life? In the life of the congregation or fresh expression with which you are connected? How do you discern what is of the Holy Spirit and what is not?
2. Has anything happened in your life or ministry that you would describe as a “redemptive surprise” by the Holy Spirit?
3. Are there ways you might be getting “in the way of the Holy Spirit as He liberates the church from its confines”?
4. The Spirit is ahead of us. We don’t take God to the world, God is already there. How might this awareness shape the way we engage with our neighborhoods and communities?

Chapter 13

1. How would you define “church”?
2. Describe what you think Moynagh meant by saying, “the shallow end of a swimming pool is still the swimming pool; it’s just not the deep end”?
3. How would you distinguish between a “fresh initiative” and a “fresh expression”?
4. What if God designed the church to be a primary agent of God’s mission in the world? What kingdom values are meant to be lived out in and through the church? If these were lived out more intentionally, would the witness of the church to the world be more compelling? Why?

Chapter 14

1. What struck you anew in the story of the sending of the seventy-two in Luke 10? Would you describe your gut reaction to this passage as one in which you are challenged, inspired, frightened, or excited? Why?
2. Do you see parallels between the story of Jerusalem/Antioch and the Fresh Expressions movement?

3. Recall a time you have failed at something. How do you move forward in the face of failure? How might we help existing churches become more resilient in the midst of failure or more courageous when fear of failure threatens to thwart an initiative? How might we help fresh expressions be courageous in their risk taking?
4. How do you know when it's time to "shake the dust off" and when it's time to keep trying?
5. The author writes: "Perhaps He is going to use the upheaval in our culture to dismantle our structures, to deprogram our assumptions, and to deflate our egos so that church will, perhaps in our anguish, be open to letting the wind of the Holy Spirit blow in and through us in new ways." In what ways do you believe that might be true?

Chapter 15

1. Those who were paying attention in England began to notice new forms of church bubbling up, and noted: "Some things that looked like little groups on the edge of our life are actually vital to our future." How do we pay attention to the "edges" in the US context? Do you believe that fresh expressions of church are vital to the future of the church? Why or why not?
2. Which of the results of the study of fresh expressions in England (see pages 132-133) do you find most encouraging? Why?
3. Do you find the ecumenical nature of the Fresh Expressions movement encouraging or not? What excites you and what concerns you about missional ecumenism?
4. Based on this chapter, what impact do you believe this movement could have in North America?

Chapter 16

1. When you hear the phrase "pioneer of fresh expressions," describe the image that comes to your mind.
2. Do you know stories of people who have gone beyond the normal ways of doing ministry? People who have been really creative and courageous in their

approach to engaging and discipling people? What did you admire most about them?

3. What do you think might be the greatest struggles of a pioneer? The greatest joys?
4. If you were to be a bivocational pioneer of a fresh expression what do you think that would be like? Where, for example, would you work? How would you develop sustainable rhythms of life/work/ministry?

Chapter 17

1. If you were to begin a fresh expression of church, do you think you would be more likely to go out on your own or to partner with an existing congregation?
2. Does your church have a missional culture? If not, what steps could you take to help cultivate a missional culture?
3. If you were to sense a call to start a fresh expression, who are the people you would first approach about joining you in that venture?
4. Name three subcultures/affinity groups, who, if God were to call you to begin a fresh expression of church, might be the people among whom you would begin? To put it another way, what subcultures or affinity groups are you part of, and which would make the most natural group of people among whom you would begin a fresh expression of church?

Chapter 18

1. Is your personality such that you are comfortable with uncertainty, or do you prefer to have a clear plan for the way ahead? How might the way God wired you be an advantage in starting a fresh expression of church? How might the way God wired you be a challenge in starting a fresh expression of church?
2. Remember the three subcultures/affinity groups that you thought about in question number 4 from the previous chapter. How might you begin listening to them?

3. Given those three subcultures and affinity groups, how might you begin to intentionally love and serve them? How do you think listening deeply might reshape how you intentionally love and serve these people?
4. Do you know followers of Jesus who are “insiders” in those subcultures/affinity groups who might join you in this venture?

Chapter 19

1. What activities/programs have been most meaningful to you in your Christian discipleship? Are you comfortable thinking about discipling others in more informal ways that could be very different from what has been meaningful to you? Go back and read the section on discipleship (beginning on page 171). How do you feel about a more informal, social ways of discipling? How might you picture yourself discipling people more organically?
2. How would you define church? What are the absolute essentials and non-negotiables of church?
3. How would you answer the question posed by pioneer leader Lisa Smith, “What, of what we *call* church, are we willing to give up in order to *be* church?”
4. If you were to begin a fresh expression of church, how might you instill in the group, from the beginning, a vision for people that might result in the multiplication of this new church? In other words, how can you begin in such a way to make it more likely that people in this group will “do it again”?

Chapter 20

1. Why might it be a good idea not to begin a fresh expression of church with a worship service?
2. What would you say are the essentials of worship?
3. If you were to attend a worship gathering in a country and culture other than yours, you would not expect the form of their worship to be just like the one that you find most meaningful. What does that mean for worship in a fresh expression of church?
4. Name some of the aspects of your church’s worship service that would be unintelligible for someone with no church background.

5. How might you think about shaping a worship experience that resonates with gardeners? With video game players? With families and their special needs children?

Chapter 21

1. What are the strengths of the typical, monologue-style sermon? What are its weaknesses?
2. Do you remember the subcultures/affinity groups that you named first in the questions following chapter 17? How do you think preaching might best happen among those people?
3. How does your denomination view communion and its celebration? How does that make a difference as you envision the celebration of communion in a fresh expression of church? What about baptism and a fresh expression of church?
4. What was your initial reaction to Croft's words about WD-40 "to help loosen up traditional procedures to make possible more of these fresh expressions"? Do you believe "loosening up" threatens the depth and meaning of sacrament? Why or why not?
5. Going back to the discipleship conversation a couple of chapters ago, how does a more informal, organic discipleship style connect with a fresh expression and its participation in sacramental practices together?

Chapter 22

1. Do you agree that the connection between a new form of church and an existing church could prevent the new group from "going rogue"? Do you also see some dangers there? Potential for conflict? Potential for too much control? What kind of connection could you foster that would be healthy/helpful?
2. What was your first reaction when you read, "We should not judge the effectiveness of a fresh expression primarily by how long it is around"? How should we judge the effectiveness of fresh expressions?

3. We church leaders have seen lots of programs come and go. Is there anything about the Fresh Expressions movement that encourages you that this is not just another trendy program?
4. What value can you see in having children (and people of all ages) present in the worship experience?

Chapter 23

1. Do you sometimes resent the emphasis on “new” and “creative”? Why?
2. Do you have a concern that fresh expressions of church are inherently consumeristic in their development, catering to the whims and desires of a target group? Why or why not? What would it look like for a fresh expression to be “incarnational” in nature rather than consumer-driven?
3. Does the “homogenous” aspect of these fresh expressions make you uncomfortable? In what way?
4. Besides the questions addressed in these chapters, what additional questions might *you* have? What do *you* need to know in order to feel more comfortable with the idea of fresh expressions of church?

Chapter 24

1. Have you sometimes worried about the long-term viability of your congregation? Why is that a concern?
2. When you read, “Christendom is gone,” does that ring true to you? What are signs you see of that?
3. What do you think is the “ongoing role in the mission of God for churches as we know them?” What important role might existing churches play even in the post-Christendom landscape we find ourselves in?
4. Have you been tempted to give up on denominations? Upon further reflection, what valuable aspects of denominations can you see?

Chapter 25

1. Do you get just a bit nervous thinking about creating a missional culture in your own congregation? Why?
2. Define “organic change.” Why is that so important for your church?
3. Is yours one of the churches that can “make the shift”? Why or why not?
4. Read again the last section, titled “Too Little, Too Late.” Do you agree that the most prudent approach for existing churches is to reform them instead of dismantling them? Why?

Chapter 26

1. Are you the leader who gets impatient with people for not changing quickly enough? Or are you the one who gets frustrated with those who are trying to change things too quickly? How might an awareness of your tendencies be helpful as you seek to be effective in kingdom work?
2. Would you be willing to help start a fresh expression of church even if it doesn't grow your church?
3. What dangers lurk in the “deep waters” for you? What miracles might you witness?
4. How has God been speaking to you in the journey through this book? What are your biggest takeaways? What is God calling you to do? What is the first step you would need to take to live into that calling?