

reNEW

Bible principles and practical steps
towards church revitalisation

notes for session 1 Get Real!

This workbook may contain preparatory notes,
leaders notes, participant notes or discussion starters.
It can be downloaded as a pdf and printed as required.



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Session 1 Video

The session 1 video - Get real!

Running Time 10 minutes 30 seconds

Access via the Partnership website:

<https://partnershipuk.org/renew-session-1/>

or, for smart TV,

<https://vimeo.com/478987347/31e5388247>

reNew is a video-based learning resource to help us think through Bible principles and practical steps towards revitalisation. Simon Ladd has had over 35 years of experience in church leadership, serving in a variety of local churches in SE England. Drawing on both his own experience and that of those with whom he has served, reNew is a tool that can help you, as a leader, think through the regrowth possibilities in your local church.

LEADER'S NOTES

Session 1 – Get Real!

These notes were written pre-Covid. You will need to make adjustments according to your situation.

General Notes

- Think about where it is best to hold this meeting. Somewhere informal, such as somebody's home might be a nice venue. Can you move around to different houses during the course? This involves more people and builds community as people visit the homes of others. It allows people to 'practice hospitality'. (Romans 12:13).
- Encourage people to keep it simple – tea, coffee, cold drink and a few biscuits. Do not allow a hospitality 'arms race' to develop – where people try and 'out do' each other – and do not let the provision of food become an expensive time-consuming burden.
- Start on time – even if some people are not there yet. If you don't - start times just drift later and later. Some people will inevitably be a bit late – but it is amazing how often it is the same people!
- You will need to be able to show the video. Aim for a big television that everybody can see – a laptop is not really adequate. If you have a smart TV – you will be able to get the video from YouTube/ Vimeo. Make sure everybody can hear.
- These sessions are designed to last 60 to 75 minutes including the video at the beginning and prayer at the end. Don't let them go on longer. Some people need to know that things will end promptly or they will stop coming.
- Do not be tempted to tell everybody to watch the video for themselves – and then we will meet up and discuss it. It is not the same.
- Don't skip the first 'ice-breaker' question. Some people are terrified

of speaking out in a group. The ice-breaker is designed to give people confidence by getting them more used to speaking up when there is no danger of them being wrong.

- The best group size for discussion is 6 – 12. If there are more than 12 – split into multiple groups for discussion.
- Questions 2 – 6 are basically checking if people engaged with the video.
- Questions 7 – 10 need much more creative thinking. And more time.
- Try new people as chair. Give them the leaders notes in advance and let them have a go at leading one question. You might be surprised.
- A common reason why churches aren't growing is because present leaders are hogging their roles and responsibilities. Only insecure leaders hog their roles. Good leaders are always looking to involve and develop others.
- Your task as chair is to keep the noisy people quiet and get the quiet people to speak up. A useful technique is to say "For this question we will start with somebody who hasn't spoken so far".
- Welcome all contributions even if they seem off the point. If you don't think they are right – do not contradict the person (unless it is heresy!) and do not make the person feel small. Another useful technique "Mmmm I haven't about it that way before – what do other people think of that?"

Leaders Notes for specific questions

1. *Go around the group. Everybody say one ‘fact’ about yourself. It should be something outrageous and hard to believe. It can be true or a lie. Everybody decides with a show of hands, if they think it is ‘true’ or ‘false’.*

Make the ice-breaker light and fun. Don’t skip it. Maybe give a prize to the winner.

2. *Do you agree that Christians can be a bit unrealistic? Can you think of any examples?*

Give a bit of time on this. One person’s contribution will trigger another.

3. *Can you remember the 3 suggested reasons in the video. Can you think of any others?*

From the video Christians might be unrealistic because:

- i being realistic can be seen by others as lacking in faith
- ii they don’t ever stand back and think how things really are
- iii they think that being God’s people is enough to ensure success.

4. *How can a church close if Jesus says “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it”*

This is a classic example of misusing God’s word. Jesus promise that He is building His church and that it will be victorious is wonderfully true of the universal church – but it does not guarantee that every local church will thrive.

It may be the case that some Christians have a ‘head in the sand’ mentality – partly because they don’t want the work, hassle and anxiety of having to take responsibility. It is easier to pretend that it isn’t happening.

5. *List some of the potential benefits of measuring apart from the information you may gain*

It is an opportunity to involve everybody. This promotes a sense of unity, community and fellowship and allows people to use their gifts. It is also an opportunity to call people to prayer. Let's ask God to show us what we need to know and lead us where we need to go.

6. *Why is it important that people know that you are going for a 'big picture' 'broad brush' profile – not photo realism?*

It stops people putting too much time and energy into this phase. It gives you an easy 'out' if somebody quibbles about a specific element of the profile.

7. *In making your 'church profile' – what kind of information do you want to put in it and how are you going to collect it?*

This is a very important question. Give this some time. Don't feed people this list – let them think about and come up with things that we can measure that might be indicators of church health.

Responses might include:

how many people are attending your main service?

What is the gender balance?

What age are they?

What is the ethnic mix?

How does this reflect your area?

How long have they been coming?

How far do they travel?

Would they call themselves Christian? (see questionnaire 1)

How many people go through your building in a typical week? (add up toddler group, ladies meeting, flower arranging club and whatever else happens).

What other events are regularly in your programme?

How is the prayer life of the church?

What evangelistic effort is there – and how effective is it?

How many people have become Christians in the last (x amount of time)

How healthy are the church finances?

How suitable are the church facilities?

In view of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 what does Jesus assess when he looks at your church?

8. *How is your information going to be recorded and communicated to others?*

In question 7 and 8 - you are also asked to decide how to gather this information and how you are going to communicate it. The two go together. Don't just use one method. There are lots of options.

And try and involve as many people as possible. Somebody could organise a main service survey. Somebody else could tally up the results and make a graph. Somebody else could look at church records and glean data. Somebody could write the churches history in not more than 400 words. Somebody else could work out the total number of people who join in your activities in a typical week. Somebody else could go and interview the oldest member of your congregation to see how things used to be.

Reports can be written, graphs, oral report, Powerpoint presentations, there could be an exhibition of photographs.

9. *How are you going to share out the work involved? And what timescale are you setting?*

Make sure you get a proper list of who is doing what and how. And then agree when it will be done by. A sensible goal is probably around 2 months – with a meeting half way through to gee people up and see how things are progressing. Hold back a few reserves – you might need to send them in with a month to go when the gaps are appearing!

10. Share briefly and pray together.

Pray together. Don't let this get squeezed out. Encourage people to pray about what has been discussed and what is being planned – rather than wandering off into the usual praying for ill people and missionaries.

The prayer section in each session is a good chance to involve new people. Ask different people in advance to lead this section. They only have to start it off maybe with a verse of scripture or a thought that has struck them from the course – and end with a prayer after x minutes.

Thank people for coming and tell them where and when the next session is - and the topic!

PARTICIPANT NOTES

ReNew Session 1 - Get Real!

1. Go around the group. Everybody say one 'fact' about yourself. It should be something outrageous and hard to believe. It can be true or a lie. Everybody decides with a show of hands, if they think it is 'true' or 'false'.
2. Do you agree that Christians can be a bit unrealistic? Can you think of any examples?
3. Can you remember the 3 reasons suggested in the video. Can you think of any others?
4. How can a church close if Jesus says "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"
5. List some of the potential benefits of measuring apart from the information you may gain
6. Why is it important that people know that you are going for a 'big picture' 'broad brush' profile – not photo realism?
7. In making your 'church profile' – what kind of information do you want to put in it and how are you going to collect it?
8. How is your information going to be recorded and communicated to others?
9. How are you going to share out the work involved? And what timescale are you setting?
10. Share briefly and pray together.

AN IN-SERVICE SURVEY

Reliable information is a key to making good decisions. I have done a survey like this once a year, during the service, in the churches that I have pastored. If you do it during the service you get almost total representation. If you do it at any other time – you won't. To be done in the service it needs to be very short and simple.

Do this while the children are in with the whole congregation and involve them in the fun. They can give out the questionnaires and pencils – and they can fill it in themselves to (with maybe a bot of help from parents / teachers)

Emphasize that there are no names on this survey – and no information can be traced back to an individual – so there is no point in saying that you are younger than you are!

I lead it from the front “Right, has everybody got a questionnaire? Has everybody got something to write with? Have you got your glasses? – Have you got your teeth? Question one – and then read it out and direct them to the tick box

You can ask what question you think will be helpful – but keep it short and simple. Here are some suggestions.

<p>Q1</p> <p>Are you <input type="checkbox"/> female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) -----</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> prefer not to say</p>
<p>Q2</p> <p>How old are you?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> under 10 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 10 to 19</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 29</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 30 to 39</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 40 to 49</p>

Layout your questionnaire on one side of A4 paper (not A5) with simple easy to follow layout and LARGE PRINT

Six questions is enough. The answers need to be tick-box.

some suggested questions:-

- How long have you been coming to this church? (needs an option for 'visitor')
- To the nearest mile, how far did you travel to be here today? (again option for 'visitor' or else a visiting relative from New Zealand will skew your figures a tad)
- How do you normally travel to church walk / cycle / bus / drive / got a lift / minibus

