

# reNEW

Bible principles and practical steps  
towards church revitalisation

## notes for session 5 Vision, Strategy and Mission

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 5 Video

The session 5 video - Vision, Strategy and Mission  
Running Time 14 minutes 38 seconds

Access via the Partnership website:

<https://partnershipuk.org/renew-session-5/>

or, for smart TV,

<https://vimeo.com/479056679/83669bccc0>

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 5 – Vision, Strategy and Mission

*This is not a workbook!*

*Session 5 is a bit different. I give my answers onscreen after you have discussed the questions in your group.*

*You will find the script of session 5 – so that leaders can see what is coming.*

*Also. There are several pages of 'below the line' notes – including invitations to feedback your thoughts on the series and suggest topics for Season 2 – which will get made if there is enough interest.*

#### 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.
- 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.

## Video Script

In this video questions are posed and then possible responses are considered by Simon. There are clearly marked points in the video where you should stop to discuss the questions. The script and timeline are given here to assist you.

**00:00**

Bible principles and practical steps towards church revitalisation. Session five. This is the fifth and final session of series one. Today we are tackling the subjects of vision, mission and strategy.

**00:23** Q1:

*It is very much the fashion now to have a mission statement. Can you guess which of these famous companies have these mission statements?*

**00:48**

- 1. to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful*
- 2. to refresh the world: to inspire moments of optimism and happiness...*
- 3. to provide a global online marketplace where practically anyone can trade practically anything, enabling economic opportunity around the world.*
- 4. to save the world from mediocre coffee*

**01:08**

**STOP VIDEO TO DISCUSS**

**01:13**

Discussion of responses

The first one - 'organising the world's information', is Google. The second - 'to refresh the world', is Coca-Cola. The 'global markets' one is Ebay, and the last one - about 'saving the world through coffee', is Costa Coffee.

**01:32 Q2:**

*Does your church have a mission statement? Can you remember what it is? What practical difference does it make in the life of the church?*

**01:45 STOP VIDEO TO DISCUSS**

**01:48** Discussion of responses

I can't answer this one for you, and don't let this become a 'knocking the leaders' session.

But it is worth discussion. For a start, it highlights issues such as communication. Because probably some people will know if your church has a mission statement and some people won't. Some people will know what it is, and others won't. So does your church have a plan for making information available? Or do you just let it filter out on its own – which rarely works well?

**02:23** In my experience, a lot of effort goes into making the mission statement in the first place – and then it often gets 'parked' and mostly forgotten. If it is a really good mission statement, it should be referred to constantly – you should ask 'how does this activity of our church align with our mission statement? And this new idea – does it really fit with what we are about?

**02:50** What do you think of mission statements? There has been some push back against the whole idea. Some say: "It's just the church copying the world of business. And I'm not in favour of it." I have some sympathy with that point of view – so in this study we are making sure that we are carefully following the terms and ideas of the Bible.

**03:15** This is a small wood to the north of Bury St Edmunds called Benjamin's Hurst. It is mostly Scott's pine – which commonly used on this flat, light land, to provide windbreaks. Here it is from the west. This is it from the north. This is it from the south. You can look at it from every side but it's, very hard to get the true picture – until you go up. With a map, or a few hundred feet of height it is very clear

that this wood was planned, it was designed, it was planted – in the shape of a cross.

When we talk about vision and mission we are looking to see our situation from another point of view. God's point of view. At ground level it's sometimes hard to see the wood for the trees, but when we return to God's plan, His design, His purpose for the church, things become clearer.

**04:14**

**Q3:**

*This is what we call 'The Great Commission.' Most would agree that it is Jesus' foundational mission statement for His church. If we want to be doing God's work His way – if we are looking for mission and strategy - this is the place to start.*

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

*Discuss verse 18 and the first two words of verse 19 in your group. Share any insights, thoughts or questions.*

**05:14**

**STOP VIDEO TO DISCUSS**

**05:16**

Discussion of responses

I'm starting with all authority – it's not the beginning but it is where I am starting

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me", says Jesus. This means that wherever we go in Jesus name we cannot be outranked. Whatever the situation, – we will not meet superior power or authority. This should give us courage and boldness.

We should not be diffident or apologetic – this is the only message in the world that can change lives for time and eternity.

Therefore go into all the world

- 06:02** This is probably the occasion when Jesus appeared to around 500 people at one time, after His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 6 mentions it. But look at the globe-sized vision. There's maybe only 500 people, probably 99% of them Jewish, and Jesus says 'right let's get going – let's get this message out to the whole world'. Our churches must always have this bold mission perspective, this global point of view, we must spend more time looking up and out than we do looking in.

Therefore 'go'

- 06:44** It is easy to think of 'missionaries' as 'other people' – but all Christians are called to be missionaries. We don't have to cross continents to obey the command to go – we just need to cross the room, to our workmates, or cross the street to begin a meaningful conversation with our neighbours.

In Season 2 there will be a whole session on sharing our faith without losing our friends.

- 07:20** Going is not just physical distance covered, it is a state of mind. To keep on doing things the way we have always done them is to 'stay'. To 'go' is to constantly ask "is this *still* working? How can we reach our community more effectively *now*? Are our words communicating *today*? How do we bring and show this greatest of news to this generation?"

**Q4:**

- 07:56** *The very clearest practical part of this commission is "make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded."*

*Does your church have an intentional plan and strategy to fulfil this instruction? What are you doing best? What's not so good?*



**08:20 STOP VIDEO TO DISCUSS**

**08:22** Discussion of responses

Again, do not let this become a ‘bashing the leaders’ session, but if a church calls itself a church, and is concerned to obey Jesus’ clearest instructions, we need to know where we are going, how we are meeting people, how we are sharing the gospel.

And when they come to faith, what is our plan for nurturing people, from that initial commitment on to becoming disciples with a good foundation and a passion to follow Jesus and see their lives more and more shaped by Him.

**08:59 Q5.**

*Paul’s general commission was to be an ‘apostle to the Gentiles’. 1 Timothy 2:7 is one of the places he speaks about this. But in Acts 18:10, God speaks to Paul with specific detail about the city of Corinth.*

*<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.*

**09:39** *Apart from the general commission, should we expect, do we have any experience of God speaking to us with more specific detail?*

**09:53 STOP VIDEO TO DISCUSS**

**09:55** Discussion of responses

The question’s a bit woolly, but the answer’s “yes”.

This is one of many instances where, where within the general commission, God specifically shapes the focus of the

ministry of the early church. See Acts 16:7 for one of scores of examples.

**10:16** It is the same for us. Within God's general plan, there may be mission requirements specific to our situation which only become clear when we make the effort to be open to God's Spirit and to listen to Him.

If you have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying (not has said, it's present continuous ), is saying, to the churches. (Revelation 2:7

And, in case we aren't hearing it, this challenge to listen is repeated seven times in two chapters.

**10:50** God is always speaking to His church. Does your church feel it has a particular calling to minister to the poor, or the marginalised, or retired people, or those coming out of prison? This is exactly what we are talking about – and if God has given your church a specific call, on top of the general commission, I doubt that you will prosper if you stray from it.

**11:20** I want to round off this first series by noting how personal the Great Commission is.

Do you see it's bracketed by very intimate statements? This is more than mission. It is co-mission. It is mission that we do in intimate collaboration with Jesus. The Great Commission begins : **"Jesus came to them"** ..... and it ends **"I am with you always."**

**11:47** This is such an important statement that I wouldn't have been surprised if the trumpets of heaven had sounded to gather attention, and it had been delivered to the world by the chief of the herald angels dressed in full regalia – but no, Jesus comes to them and says . . . . and He doesn't announce it from far away on a platform– He is right there among them.

**12:14** The way a message is delivered is part of the message –

and the message here is I'm right with you. I'm right here with you as I give you this commission and I'm right here with you as together we do it.

**12:33**

At school, when we picked up teams for football at breaktime, I was always pleased if I finished up in the same team as Martin Kirk, or Si Palser, or Dave Roberts, or with Paige in goal – it gave me a boundless confidence, because they were the best. With them, we were going to win. Just look who we are teamed up with!

If the opening words of The Great Commision are words of intimacy – even more so, the closing words

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**13:11**

The presence of Jesus is always the decisive factor. If the Holy Spirit of Jesus, see Acts 16:6-7, was withdrawn from our church how much difference would it make? How long would we take to notice?

**13.30**

Part of the great tragedy of the story of Samson is that he did not even know that the Spirit of God had departed from him. He thought he could rouse himself and keep on doing what he had done. But God was no longer with him.

If God's Sprit was not with us, how long would we take to notice? For how long would the church programme continue to run and the machinery of church grind on?

The presence of Jesus is everything . They toiled all night and caught nothing. Yet,with Jesus in the boat, with one cast the net was so full that they had to get other boats to come and help.

This personal, intimate presence of Jesus is the decisive factor.

If you have ears to hear, then hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

**14:38**

**End of Video**

# Below The Line

**Here you'll find some additional thoughts and notes left over from this session. You might find some of it useful.**

Implied in the word 'go' is the responsibility that is placed on us to speak in words they understand, to draw them in rather than push them away, to live lives that match our talk and make the faith of Jesus attractive. People are 'won' not bullied into the kingdom.

Proverbs 11:20 talks about winning people. You cannot brow-beat people into the Kingdom.

The disciples played their part by being where Jesus told them to be. Then Jesus came to them. "Come near to God and he will come near to you." (James 4:8)

## **Jesus came to them**

We become increasingly ineffective unless we keep this deliberately in mind; Jesus presence is paramount.

## **And said**

Jesus continued to speak to his people after the time of his earthly ministry. He still does.

## **And make disciples.**

This is very clear instruction and a very practical one. Does your church have a plan of how it is aiming to 'make disciples'? What is it?

## **go**

what is our church's plan for meeting and interacting with our community. It's no good to just keep preaching to the converted.

## **What is the message?**

It's not just the preacher's job. Every Christian should be able to explain

the Gospel in ordinary words and in just a couple of minutes. Can the Christians in your church do that?

People are saved. We should expect it. It's marvellous. But we are told to make disciples not just converts. Every church needs a clear plan of how it is going to help converts become disciples.

Declining churches often develop a 'circle the wagons' view of the world. They see themselves as under attack. They see themselves as the last refuge of the faithful. The last stand of the truth. They see themselves as victims of the increasing darkness of a world that is getting ever more hostile to the God.

The truth is, - this is hard to hear, - but it's usually true of us as individuals as well as churches, we have mostly caused our own problems. It is the decisions we have taken (and failed to take) over the last 20 years that have brought us to where we are now.

I hear it often, "We are praying for families to come in and somebody who can play the piano." And I'm thinking of a nice way to say – you had all that. You had families and good musicians. But they left.

## **Then the eleven**

It's the eleven – not the twelve. The twelve disciples had been with Jesus for three years. They had heard his teaching, seen His miracles and observed Jesus' total authenticity and integrity - but still Judas betrayed Jesus and then took his own life. It is a fact that people who used to be strong in the faith sometimes hit the rocks; sometimes leaders crash and burn. All leaders make mistakes and show lapses of judgement and integrity if you look closely enough.

Make sure that your faith is ultimately anchored to Jesus and not to human leaders, Christian friends.

## ***to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.***

They went where Jesus told them to go and there they saw Him. If we want new revelation we need to be obedient. If we are where Jesus has called us to be – we can expect his presence.

## **When they saw him they worshipped**

Worship is always appropriate. I think I would have rushed towards Jesus with 100 questions. But, whatever our feelings, whatever our confusion, whatever of grief – worship is a good place to begin.

## **But some doubted**

I find it hard to believe that some doubted! Jesus was there before their very eyes. What was there to doubt? Well, I suppose, some were unsure if the person before them was really Jesus. But if this isn't Jesus then it's an imposter, the whole thing is a deception a trick. But who would do that? And for what possible reason? It soon becomes preposterous – and a thousand times less likely than the obvious truth.

But the lesson here is that some people will always doubt. We mustn't let our faith be unsettled by their doubt. Doubt is rarely based in reason, logic or lack of evidence – it usually is based in an unbelieving mindset. Jesus warned us about this: He said 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Luke 16:31.

And here before them is Jesus risen from the dead – and they still don't believe.

## **Why are 6 churches a week closing in the UK? (and 4 new ones opening)**

In my view, churches start to decline from the moment they become more a like club concerned about the comfort and preferences of the people already there.

They thrive when they remember they are a mission-station and the real work is mostly outside.

Not circling the wagons to protect what we have – but to 'go' (maybe feeling very exposed and vulnerable,) but nakedly relying on the power of the Gospel and the presence of Christ.

**Matthew 28:18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**ReNew is free.** We don't want anybody to miss out because of finance. But obviously there are costs involved. We invite churches to send a contribution to Partnership (see <https://www.partnershipuk.org> for emails)– based on what they can afford and what they think it has been worth to them

## **FEEDBACK**

We really would appreciate feedback on ReNew. Feel free to comment on its strengths and weaknesses. Our major concern is that ReNew scratches where people are itching – stimulates discussion of the crucial questions and offers ideas, support, encouragement and explores possible ways forward.

And if it gets requested enough – we will be making a season 2.

Turbo-charge your church's prayer

What does the Bible say about Leadership and Decision making?

How to share your faith without losing your friends

12 habits of thriving churches

Is social action a distraction from our real task?

Is the Bible green?

(feel free to send in your ideas for topics you would like tackled)

