



LOVE
YOUR
CHURCH



welcome

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions in conjunction with the videos and worksheets
in the small group kit for *Welcome* by Jen Oshman.

J E N O S H M A N

SESSION 1

1. Can you remember walking into your church (or a church) for the first time? How did it feel? What were your fears and first impressions?
2. Read Philippians 2:5-11. Trace out the different “steps” Jesus took to welcome us into God’s family. Which verse or phrase are you particularly struck by? *Refer to the session 1 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
3. What might it look like for us, in our relationships with one another, to “forsake our status”, “become a servant” and “humble ourselves” like Jesus did?
4. In contrast, what might it look like to hold onto our status, serve ourselves, and walk proudly?
5. What comfort is there in these verses, and in this chapter, for when we’re feeling convicted about the ways in which we’ve fallen short in welcoming others?

SESSION 2

1. Imagine that this Sunday, 3,000 new believers are added to your church. What would you do and where would you start?! What problems would you foresee?
2. On the day of Pentecost, about 3,000 people accepted the apostles' message and were baptised (Acts 2:41); previously, there were around 120 believers (1:15). Read Acts 2:42-47. What actions and attitudes marked this new Christian community? How did they relate to God, and to one another?
3. Why is this all the more remarkable, given what we're told in verses 5-11? Where did the power to live in this way come from?
4. What was the effect of this distinctive gospel community (v 47)?
5. The growth of the church didn't stop there. This chapter explored how the early church welcomed people of all ethnicities, all classes, and of both sexes into God's community through the gospel. How do you think your church is doing on each of those fronts? Where is there room to grow? *Refer to the session 2 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
6. What about on a personal level? Are there ways in which you tend to gravitate towards "people like you" at church? *Refer to the session 2 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
7. What could you do differently to shine brighter as a "porchlight in a dark night"?

SESSION 3

1. Think about some of the non-church-goers you know. What impression do you think they have of Christians and of the church in general?
2. Read Mark 2:13-17. What had the Pharisees got wrong about Jesus, and about themselves? What had the tax collectors and sinners perceived rightly?
3. Why is it sometimes easy to forget that we too are sick people in need of a doctor?
4. If we think of ourselves as sinners in Jesus' hospital, how will that shape our attitude to the needy people we encounter? *Refer to the session 3 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
5. Imagine someone coming to your church for the first time. What signals would they get that your church is "a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints" (p 48)?
6. "If you have eyes to see it, there are likely many people in your church who are extending [a] welcome to the broken and needy" (p 53). Who in your church family is doing this already? Praise God for them!

SESSION 4

1. Think back to when you joined your church. How long did it take before you really felt part of the family? How easy do you think it is for a believer joining your church to feel at home? Refer to the session 4 worksheet to flesh this out further.
2. Read Mark 10:25-30. What's remarkable about Jesus' promise here?
3. "Jesus gives us a new definition of 'family'. ... The temporary families that we are born into and marry into are superseded by the eternal family we have in Christ" (p 62). Are there any ways in which you're in danger of prioritizing your earthly family at the expense of your spiritual family? Why is that, do you think?
4. Pages 65-66 talk about two groups of people in a church: those who get too cozy in the "in-crowd", and those who are looking for a sense of intimacy, but feel on the edge. Which of those best describes you?
5. This chapter encourages us to commit to a local church, submit to its leaders, and minister to one another (p 66-68). How will doing each of those things help church to feel like family?
6. What's one thing that you could do this month to help newcomers feel part of your church family?

SESSION 5

1. “If you’re a Christian, you’re a missionary” (p 77). Do you agree that many of us are held back from that by fear (p 78)? What are your particular fears in this area?

2. Read Matthew 5:14-16. How do Jesus’ words encourage and excite you in the face of that fear?

3. This chapter talked about three tasks before us as missionaries to our community. Work through each of them in turn. Refer to the session 2 worksheet to flesh this out further.
 - a. Know your community. Get a big piece of paper and map out your answers to the questions on pages 79-80, along with anything else that seems relevant to understanding the needs of those around you. Identify the gaps in your knowledge too—is there more information that you require in order to truly understand the needs of particular groups?

 - b. Pray. With your mind map in front of you, spend time in prayer for the people, groups and needs you’ve discussed. You could start by reading 2 Corinthians 4:4-6 together.

 - c. Go. As a group, plan to do one thing together that will help you to engage with and serve members of your community.

SESSION 6

1. When did you last speak to a new person on a Sunday? Describe the encounter, and how it made you feel.
2. Read Colossians 1:25-29. What do these verses reveal about how Paul viewed gospel ministry?
3. What implications are there for us as we think about welcoming others to hear the gospel at our church?
4. Remember, “while creating a church culture of welcome is Spirit-driven, it does not negate the need for systems. We need systems in place so that we can intentionally and even methodically welcome newcomers in the front door and—through the gospel—into deep, authentic community” (p 93). “Multiple barriers make it difficult for visitors to walk into a church for the first time” (p 94). What are some of the barriers getting in the way for people in your local community, do you think? How could you help make it easier? *Refer to the session 6 worksheet to flesh this out further.*
5. What do you think of the idea that “an alone person in our gatherings is an emergency” (p 98)? How would your Sunday mornings change if you took that seriously?

SESSION 7

1. What causes churches to become inward looking, do you think?
2. Look at the list of questions on pages 112-113. Where do you see warning signs that you yourself might be tending towards self-focus?
3. Read Mark 8:31-35. In what sense did Jesus eschew the temptation towards self-preservation (v 21-33)? What does following after him as his disciple involve (v 34-35)?
4. Read Acts 11:19-30. In what different ways were the believers in Antioch and in Jerusalem outward looking? What fruit did this result in?
5. “The church is plan A, and there is no plan B!” How does that excite you or challenge you?
6. Look at the action steps on pages 116-117. How might you and your church invest in growing the “big-K Kingdom”, not just your “little-k kingdom”? *Refer to the session 7 worksheet to flesh this out further.*