

Grace Shared (I Believe in the Church) – Discussion Guide & Questions

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Watch the video online www.lifelonglearning.nz/grace-shared (39 minutes)

Bill Hybel's famously said, "The local church is the hope of the world." It's a reminder that the church is God's plan, his instrument for the sharing of his grace. The church was designed and established to be the means by which believers share with each other and the wider world, the grace and love of God in Christ.

So, how well are we doing? It's a sad reality that our churches are in decline; we are no longer the light in the darkness we once were. A reformation is needed; a recapturing of that which God has called us to be: "You are the light of the world - like a city on the hill that cannot be hidden." Matthew 5:14

Which begs the question – what has happened? Do we need a refreshed vision for the sharing of God's grace? A vision that encompasses the least, the lost and the vulnerable; a vision that is based on who we are, as Baptist Churches, what we believe as evangelicals, and the culture and context in which God has placed us. A vision that sees our taonga, our children, welcomed, valued and nurtured.

Mission with children was once at the centre of Baptist church life. It was an effective church growth strategy. In the past 50 years this emphasis has shifted and we have far less children in our churches than we had in the past. As a result, the future of many of our churches is in question. In light of this, what might God be calling us to change and how might he be asking our priorities to shift?

For the sake of the gospel and the generations to come is God calling us to be missional churches with children at the centre? Churches that truly value intergenerational relationships. Churches that are prepared to challenge the status quo and rethink how we are called to 'be' the church in 21st Century New Zealand.

Some questions to ponder from the video:

1. Why do you think the church is in decline? Why are our statistics around children so worrying?
2. What do you think of the suggestion that God is calling us to be missional churches with children at the centre? Read Matthew 18:1-10, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17.
3. If you were to adopt this suggestion as part of your theological vision what would need to change? How would your church's priorities need to shift?
4. Keller believes that theological vision should precede and determine ministry practices. How well do your church's current ministry practices with children reflect your vision?
5. In what ways are intergenerational relationships important for the growth and nurture of faith in people of all ages? Read Deut. 6, Acts 2, Joshua 8:34-35, Psalm 148:12-14, Luke 2: 41-52
6. How has this presentation challenged your thinking and actions?