

MIKE SLAUGHTER

with Karen Perry Smith



**THE
PASSIONATE
CHURCH**

**Ignite Your Church and
Change the World**

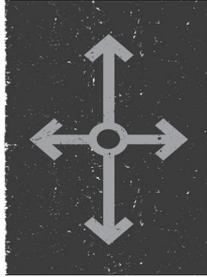
Facilitator's Guide by Jacob Armstrong

Abingdon Press / Nashville

**THE PASSIONATE CHURCH:
IGNITE YOUR CHURCH AND CHANGE THE WORLD
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE**

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Introduction

When I read Mike Slaughter's manuscript for *The Passionate Church*, I was inspired. As a local church pastor, I was moved by his fire and conviction, and I felt a fire and conviction grow in me.

The call to raise up new leaders made me think how self-focused I have been and how I have ignored potential leaders in my church. The reminder of Christ's good news to the poor inspired me to look at my own life and ministry in light of how I am serving those around me. The chapter on starting new and renewed congregations caused me to question why our congregation hasn't started anything lately. The staggering global and local health data made me pause and remember how Jesus came and healed people not only spiritually but also physically.

When I read *The Passionate Church*, I was inspired. Then I set the book down and went to lunch.

How many books, I wonder, have I read that inspired me but did not move me to action? How many times have I felt convicted by the Holy Spirit, only to move on quickly to the busyness of life and in so doing ignore the Holy Spirit?

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I assure you, the purpose of *The Passionate Church* is not just to inspire you, make you think, lead you to have conversations, and then go to lunch. The hope for this book is that you will be moved by the same fire and conviction that filled the early church disciples and the pioneers of the Methodist movement and that this inspiration will cause you to act. The hope is that you will gather with those who aren't ready to give up on the church and do the hard work of considering what the next steps might be for you and your congregation.

This Facilitator's Guide is intended to help you with that follow-up. It is designed to help small groups of pastors and church leaders—perhaps eight to ten people in one church or across several churches—gather together, review the ideas about the Four Areas of Focus, and then move step by step through a process of putting those ideas into action in your church and community. Make a commitment to meet four times, one meeting for each of the four book chapters.

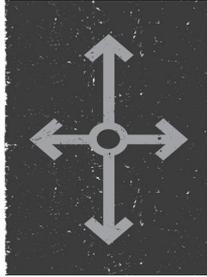
Each week begins with **Getting Started**. This section primes the pump for the conversation to follow and, through prayer, sets the stage for the gathering. The assumption is that everyone in the group has come prepared to share around the assigned chapter for that week.

Where Are We Now? allows an honest assessment of the current reality. There is no need for sugarcoating in this section. Questions are provided that allow for a deeper dive into the subject matter and how it relates to your present situation.

Where Do We Need to Go? asks each group member to consider carefully and prayerfully: What is a good first step that my church could take to improve in this area (a) this week, (b) this month, (c) this year?

How Can We Help Each Other? asks the group to offer support and encouragement to each other in taking the next action steps. This section will allow for mutual accountability in each of the four areas. At the conclusion of each session is a final thought or thoughts that will allow for further conversation if time permits.

The group time described in these pages has the potential for you and your church to take important steps toward life and vitality. As Mike Slaughter says, let's get started!



1

Developing Principled Christian Leaders

GETTING STARTED

In the Introduction, Mike Slaughter presents data that is often used to indicate the impending and even imminent death of the mainline church. For many of us who serve and lead in the church, this research makes our hearts ache as we see its reality on a daily basis. And yet our hearts come alive when we begin to affirm together that it is Friday, but Sunday's coming!

Before we jump into the first area of focus, spend a few moments as a group talking about our perceptions of the church's current reality and our hopes for its future.

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- How do we feel when faced with the stark data marking the decline of the church not only numerically but also in mission and ministry?
- What leads us to read this book, engage in this conversation, and still hold out hope for the church?
- As we consider our current ministry context, in what ways can we proclaim “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s coming!” to those who may be close to giving up?

We wouldn't be reading this book and participating in this group if we weren't deeply committed to the beauty of the church and its certain glorious future. All of us still hear the whispers of our first call to be a part of this messy, beautiful church, and we are not ready to give up hope. Let's pray together as we begin to go deeper in the first vital area.

God, we know that the church is dependent on your Holy Spirit's power, not our own. And yet you invite us to participate, serve, and even lead in it. As we acknowledge that you never give up on us, we commit ourselves again to you and our calling within the Body of Christ. Open our hearts to the same spirit that gave birth to and empowered your people long ago. Amen.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Mike writes, “Clearly, equipping the saints by empowering the priesthood of all believers is essential for accomplishing the mission of Jesus.” The early church movement and the early Methodist movement were clearly tied to the ability of the community of faith to develop principled Christian leaders. Thriving movements, such as the one we need today, always start with transformed leaders giving attention to growing more transformed leaders. With the scope of all that needs to be done, it is tempting for the called and empowered church leaders to seek to do everything themselves. This temptation is as old as the calling. Instead, what is needed is more attention

given to developing other leaders. This is difficult because it means we must stop doing some of the work that is so important to us and start entrusting it to others.

Consider:

- How is my church doing in the area of Developing Principled Christian Leaders?
- What are we doing well? What are we doing poorly?
- How are leaders currently developed? Is there any intentional process for this?

WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO?

What is a good first step that my church could take to improve in this area (a) this week, (b) this month, (c) this year? Some questions to consider:

- How could the process of identifying leaders look different for us? (Consider Paul's list in 1 Timothy 3, Samuel's selection of David, and Mike's use of the three W's—wisdom, work, and wealth.)
- Keeping in mind that there is no cookie cutter for making church leaders, what does a "principled" Christian leader look like in our context? What is our end goal?
- What do I need to stop doing? What needs to be entrusted to someone else?

HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER?

We have acknowledged that raising up new and principled leaders is essential for the task of church revitalization. But it's not a solo sport, and we are doomed to burn out if we take it on alone. In Jethro, Moses had someone who came alongside him, saw things he couldn't see, and gave counsel that was life-giving and perhaps even lifesaving. Each week we will

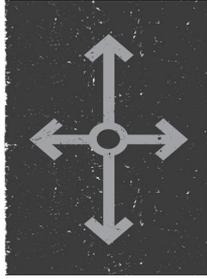
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consider how we can mutually support each other and how we can hold each other accountable to that which we ask to be held accountable.

- What did we hear in this time that gave us new perspective on our ministry situation or setting?
- What one or two things does each of us want to do this week that we can ask each other about next week? (Perhaps this could be the first step we named above.)
- How can we stay connected this week for mutual support and encouragement?

FINAL THOUGHT

We know that we cannot develop principled Christian leaders if we ourselves are not growing as principled Christian leaders. What intentional ways are you growing as a leader so that you can help others grow?



2

Engaging in Ministry with the Poor

Begin by having each person share how things went with the one or two steps they had planned to do this past week in the area of Developing Principled Christian Leaders. What went well? What didn't? What still needs to be done in this important area?

GETTING STARTED

As a twenty-seven-year-old pastor, I was invited to be part of a one-year mentoring program with Mike Slaughter. Thankfully, after the year ended Mike continued to make time for me. We have shared many phone calls, late-night conversations, and early-morning cups of coffee.

From those times, I can tell you that Mike has one "broken record" message that you will hear again and again. The first time I heard it was

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when I met Mike; he was standing in the old, original Ginghamburg Church sanctuary that is now used for a variety of ministries of the church. The last time I heard it was the last time I talked to him. The message: *If it isn't good news to the poor, it isn't good news!*

In Luke 4, a passage known as Jesus Announces His Ministry, Jesus turns to a Scripture from Isaiah where we hear clearly the gospel priority, what Mike refers to as Jesus' mission statement:

- Good news to the poor
- Healing of the brokenhearted
- Liberty for captives
- Sight to the blind

When Jesus proclaims his priority, it naturally follows that this becomes the priority for the church, a message we must remind each other of again and again.

As our group begins its time together, let's allow some time for all members to describe a moment when they felt called into sharing Jesus' good news to the poor.

- What emotions did we feel?
- What were we led to do?

We have experienced the power of connecting with Jesus' mission for the world. Let us begin by offering together a prayer of openness to a deeper understanding of and commitment to Jesus' good news to the poor.

God, break our hearts for what breaks yours. Forgive us for the ways we have ignored the cry of your people and the call to serve. Open our minds and hearts now to consider how your church must be in ministry with the poor in our communities and our world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Many of our churches are committed to ministries that serve those in need. Mike makes a distinction, though, between ministries for the poor

and with the poor. Something different happens when ministry becomes cooperative, not a more privileged group giving and a less privileged group receiving. Another way of putting it is that we should move from being a church that has a missions budget for the poor to becoming a church that is on a mission with the poor—with the clear understanding that all of us are poor. Ministry with the poor is our second vital indicator of churches that are thriving, and it is a requirement for those of us who seek to stay connected to Christ's mission.

Mike talks about converting a consumer "serve us" mind-set to one focused on producing God's blessing within the lives of others. To put it mildly, this is a difficult task. The Luke 4 passage we looked at above, besides being called Jesus Announcing His Ministry, is also sometimes referred to as Jesus Rejected at Nazareth. When we begin the challenging work of turning an inward church into an outward church, we should be prepared for critique and even opposition. And we must understand that change does not happen overnight.

- What is the current state of my church as it relates to ministry with the poor?
- What are we doing well? What are we doing poorly?

Some questions to consider:

- Is there a scarcity mentality?
- Currently, where are we using most of our resources (people and finances)?
- Are people looking for permission to do risky ministry?

WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO?

What is a good first step that my church could take to move toward ministry with the poor (a) this week, (b) this month, (c) this year? Some questions to consider:

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- What first conversations do we need to begin (or continue) in our church?
- Is there anything we will have to stop doing to begin this kind of work?
- Where will we face opposition?

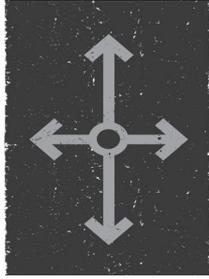
HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER?

Take a moment to consider the link between chapter 1, Developing Principled Christian Leaders, and chapter 2, Engaging in Ministry with the Poor.

- How can we develop and deploy people for the critical ministry needed with the poor?
- Can we identify people who need us to pour kerosene on their burning bushes?
- What did we hear in this time that gave us new perspective on our ministry situation or setting?
- What one or two things can each of us do this week that we can ask each other about next week? (Perhaps it could be the first step from the previous activity.)
- How do we need to stay connected this week for support and encouragement?

FINAL THOUGHT

When John Wesley engaged in his risk-taking mission with the poor, it did not always fit the existing structures and norms of the established church. What potential barriers do you see in the structure or norms of church that you will have to break down?



3

Creating New and Renewed Congregations

Begin by having each person share how things went with the one or two steps they had planned to do this past week in the area of Engaging in Ministry With the Poor. What went well? What didn't? What still needs to be done in this important area?

GETTING STARTED

In chapter 3, Mike tells about some of the people who were part of Ginghamburg Church's early years. It is inspiring to hear the heritage of this now strong and vital church. Sometimes it's easy to forget that every church was once a new church. Each church we serve, whether seven or seventy years old, began as a dream on the heart of one or two individuals to reach new people for Christ. We may not know their names, but every

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church began with the investment of planters who sowed their prayers, their finances, and their lives to see something new grow.

- Do we know the story of how our church was started? If we do, share the story briefly and ponder together how that past might inform the future. What needs to be recaptured?
- When have we been part of starting something new in the church? Share how this experience was different from serving in established ministries.

Pray together this prayer to begin the time of sharing on the topic of Creating New and Renewed Congregations.

God, renew our hearts as we begin to dream about how you are calling us to multiply and expand our ministries to reach new people. We know that it is only by your Holy Spirit that our churches will be renewed and new ones will be birthed. Let us be the vessels through which your Spirit works for the renewal of your church. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

While the church growth movement focused on expansion, the early church model for growth was multiplication. Rather than growing past a certain attendance barrier, the called-out people of God multiplied by starting new, smaller congregations. The future of church growth seems to include the creation of smaller, missional faith communities that look like the communities they are in.

We may not all feel called to church “planting,” but we are all being asked to reach out to our communities in new and creative ways. Every church can and should create new ministries that reach new people.

In nature, healthy living organisms reproduce. In the same way, most successful new church starts or restarts come from healthy local churches. The church, ever striving to reach and serve more people, must meet people

where they are and tailor each new community and new ministry to the people it seeks to serve.

- What is the current state of my church as it relates to creating new opportunities to reach new people?
- Are we open to new things? If not, what are the barriers?

Some questions to consider:

- Regardless of the church's size, how might our congregation be part of planting a new church?
- What natural opportunities for multiplication do we see? What opportunities for expansion?
- How have our past experiences prepared us for the new things to which God is calling us?

WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO?

What is a good first step that my church could take to move toward creating a new congregation or renewing an existing one (a) this week, (b) this month, (c) this year? Some questions to consider:

- Who are the unreached people in our area? How can we learn more from and about them?
- Who needs to be a part of the conversations to start something new at our church?

HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER?

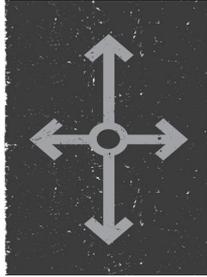
Mike talks about three R's that can apply to church planting and renewal: relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution. Which one of these does each of us feel the most connection to as God calls us to start something new? Also consider these questions:

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- What did we hear in this time that gave us new perspective on our ministry situation or setting?
- Are there ways in which the people in this group can partner together to be a part of starting a new church or renewing an existing one?
- What one or two things does each of us want to do this week that we can ask each other about next week? (Perhaps it will include the first step named previously.)
- How does this group need to stay connected this week for support and encouragement?

FINAL THOUGHT

Creating new spaces for new people will include leadership development and ministry with the poor. Discuss the intersections and interrelationships among these three vital areas that we have examined thus far.



4

Improving Global Health

Begin by having each person share how things went with the one or two steps they had planned to do this past week in the area of Creating New and Renewed Congregations. What went well? What didn't? What still needs to be done in this important area?

GETTING STARTED

I will never forget the first time I visited a community where there was no clean, safe drinking water. It was in rural Nicaragua. This one simple fact affected every facet of life for the people who lived there. Women spent the majority of their day traveling to a good water source to get water for cleaning, bathing, and drinking. For thirty years I had taken for granted that all I had to do was turn a faucet when I needed to brush my teeth, wash my hands, or get a drink.

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Issues such as improving a village's drinking water may seem too big, too global, too much for us to take on. But the church has a role to play. Jesus gave us the mandate to heal the sick, so we must search for ways to improve the health of all people. The church I served, which was young and small at the time, began a partnership with a clean-water organization that has led to hundreds of people in Nicaragua having safe water wells in their communities.

- As we begin our time together, briefly share when we have seen the power of the local church as it aligned its resources to help with global or local health issues. How did that involvement affect our life and worldview?
- What role should the church play in the physical health of others?

In light of the staggering statistics presented in chapter 4 regarding global and local health, let us begin in prayer.

God, our hearts ache as we consider how many suffer around the world. As we consider our role in health and healing for all people, we turn our hearts to you. We know that you alone are the healer and restorer. Use us as part of your great work in the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Mike describes a number of areas in which the church holds responsibility for helping to heal others, such as world health issues, local health issues, and personal health issues including addiction and mental health. Certainly no church would be equipped to take on all these areas at one time. However, we cannot let the enormity of the challenge paralyze us and prevent us from taking action.

In our time together we will consider ways in which our churches can begin or continue to engage in the holistic health of the people in our communities and the world.

- What is my church's current level of engagement in global or local health ministries?
- What are we doing well? What are we doing poorly?

Some questions to consider:

- If we are not focused on the health and wholeness of all people, what are we focused on?
- As we identify what we are focused on, how could those ministries relate to ministries of healing?

WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO?

What is a good first step that my church could take to move toward more engaged ministries related to global and local health (a) this week, (b) this month, (c) this year? Some questions to consider:

- What present issues in our community could lead to natural opportunities for ministry?
- Keeping in mind that we can't tackle all the world's issues at once, what one or two places globally could our congregation have an impact?

HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER?

As we seek to lead others to better health, we are reminded that we must not only talk the talk but walk the walk. Each of us has areas in our own life and in the lives of our congregation where changes in personal habits would make us healthier and more effective. Take some time to discuss where we and our congregation are now and where we need to go, as it relates to personal health.

- What did we hear in this time that gave us new perspective on our ministry situation or setting?

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- How can those of us in this room partner together to have a bigger impact on global health?
- What one or two things can we hold each other accountable for regarding our personal health and the health of our congregation?
- What are some ways in which this group could stay connected as we finish our scheduled time together?

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Four Areas of Focus offer important ways to keep the church connected to our mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. Let's look at the four areas again:

- Developing Principled Christian Leaders
- Engaging in Ministry with the Poor
- Creating New and Renewed Congregations
- Improving Global Health

In which of the four areas is our church currently doing well? Which one has the best opportunities for growth? What will we take away from this book and the time this group has spent together? What are we going to do differently?