

SAMPLE

**SMALL
GROUP
SESSIONS**



**What kind
of church?**

SESSION 1

Everything has changed

This study starts by giving the group an opportunity to acknowledge and address the changes that the church continues to face. It is important before this study begins that we're on the same page, to acknowledge together the role of the church today. From here we can begin to address our next steps regarding what kind of church we ought to be.

SAMPLE

1. WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO CHANGE?

Reflect together on times when you have personally experienced change in some area of your life.

Describe your reactions and emotions, e.g. excitement and enthusiasm or anxiety and fear.



2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Everything has changed:
eauk.org/wkoc

“Christendom is over and we need to get over it.”

Mike Frost, Exiles



3. DISCUSS

- A. In what ways has the landscape been changing in our society since the turn of the millennium? Consider changes in areas such as health, education, community, morals, technology.
- B. In what ways is wider society influencing the church's thinking and actions?
- C. On page 20 of 'What kind of church?' we read "The landscape has changed. The strong historical links between state and church are rapidly declining. Christendom is dead in some places and terminally ill in others. Our place of influence with the state, for good or bad, has gone or is going."

'What kind of church?' goes on to state that "We are being moved from the centre to the margins. We live in a rapidly secularising culture where the ideas of one complete story that shapes life, a clear moral code that applies to all people and sin, and the need for forgiveness are all treated with huge scepticism. At best, people will acknowledge the good churches do in their communities in terms of alleviating need. However, that is held almost in contradiction to any sense of a radical group of people who are talking about and living the Jesus lifestyle. So the state can still put up with the church, and occasionally wheel out its representatives, but does not like the idea of the church claiming the exclusivity of Jesus, the call to repentance, or the making of new believers. Essentially, the state can just about accept a domesticated, non-subversive church. A group of nice, mostly older people who will do its bidding at the opening of buildings or state funerals. I think it is going to be in for a shock. Alongside our change of position within society there is also the rapid declining numbers within the church. Several surveys both in England and Scotland have recently shown what we all know." (p21)

What evidence is there for the truth of these statements? If you have a variety of age ranges in your group, ask the older generation what the role of the church used to be in society.



5. DISCUSS

- A. Here are two statements about this time of transition:
- 'We are in a transitional and liminal time. This is making everything feel unsettled and awkward, and many of us are experiencing tremendous unrest and fear.'
 - 'We are in a transitional and liminal time. This is so exciting. The old rules have gone and we are free to dream new dreams and to become whatever we want to become.'
 - Which group do you relate to more comfortably?
 - How can we encourage one another to cross over the threshold into the new?
- B. We heard in the video that we are called to be carriers of the culture of the knowledge of God for this generation, to be kingdom carriers for today.
- What does it mean to be someone who carries the kingdom of God for this generation?
 - Consider the exhortation to be 'relevant', 'powerful' and 'transformational'. What ministries within or outwith your local church demonstrate these qualities?
- C. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
- "Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the good news and share in its blessings."*
(v22-23)
- What might Paul's example look like in our lives and church?
- D. *'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.'* (Colossians 3:12)
- Discuss the circles in which you find yourselves e.g. at work, at the school playground, at home, at university, etc. How can you be a person who carries the kingdom of God into that environment?
 - What practical ways can we as a church be faithful, full of grace and transformational? How can we be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience?

"As church we were, and perhaps still are, on a threshold of a new era and we were paralysed by grief and fear. As church we have lived so long in our position we got stuck and lacked either the will or flexibility to move to a new place."

What kind of church?, p21



4. WATCH VIDEO CLIP

Liminal: eauk.org/wkoc



SESSION 2

Encounter and engagement



1. STARTER QUESTION



When we are introduced to new people the question invariably arises, “What do you do?” So much of our identity is wrapped up in our job, in our activities, in our talents. In what ways can this also be true of our ‘church identity’?

2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Encountering the presence, engaging in the mission: eauk.org/wkoc

3. DISCUSS



A. The dictionary definition of an encounter is ‘an unexpected or casual meeting’ or to ‘unexpectedly be faced with or experience’ Consider some Bible characters who had an encounter with Jesus. Jot down some notes to build up a picture of how the encounter changed them.

Scripture reference	Name	Before (What do we know about them?)	Encounter (Where? When? What happened?)	After (How did the encounter change them?)
Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus			
John 4:1-42	Samaritan woman			
John 20:24-29	Thomas			
Acts 9:1-31	Paul			

B. Have you had an encounter with God? Share personal testimony in the group. In what ways can we encounter God as we go about our daily lives?

“The engagement of the disciples was based solely on their encounter with Jesus. They became agents of transformation out of their time in His presence and through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

C. Take a few minutes to do some self-assessment

- How many hours have I spent serving God through church activities/programmes this week?
- How many hours have I spent in encountering God through prayer, in His word, by abiding in His presence this week?
- Am I living in the power of the Holy Spirit or do I fall into the habit of operating in my own strength?
- Share what you have learned from this exercise.

D. Read John 15:1-8

“Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing”. (v5)

- What do you learn about the Christian life from Jesus’ picture of the vine and the branches? How does this help and challenge you?

E. We need to realise that everything we have rests on how we encounter the presence of God

- What is the outcome of ‘encounter with no engagement’?
- What is the outcome of ‘engagement without consistent Jesus encounters’?
- How can we help each other to avoid these pitfalls?
- Have you any suggestions about how we become more confident as we engage with others?

4. PRAY



“We need to have a holistic vision that sees everything in the context of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who calls us. He is the one who has lifted us and given us a hope. We are the people of Jesus. It is all about Jesus. He is both Lord and chief desire of the church and it is at His command, and in His name that we serve. We don’t get closer to Jesus because we want more power; we spend time with Him because we love Him and want to be in His presence. However, being in His presence begins to radically transform our lives and places them more fully at the disposal of the radical Saviour.”

What kind of church?, p7