

B I B L E S O C I E T Y

K E Y N O T E A D D R E S S

Are We Ready?

*Co-creating a response to the Quiet Revival with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)
Youth Ministry Roundtable*

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“You cannot lead people into a depth you yourself are not inhabiting.”

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A NOTE ON THIS DOCUMENT

This document was prepared as a post-conference resource following the Are We Ready Conference 2026, held on 11th March 2026 for Ecumenical Youth and Young Adult Church Leaders. The address was delivered by Benjamin Hoyte, Church Engagement Manager for London and the South East, on behalf of Bible Society, the organisation behind the Quiet Revival research that sits at the heart of this address.

What follows is not a verbatim transcript but a carefully prepared distillation of the address and its principal arguments, offered for the purpose of ongoing reflection, team discussion, and practical application. The questions, recommendations, and personal challenge that close the document are extended in the same spirit as the address itself: not as institutional directives but as genuine invitations to honest self-examination and renewed commitment to the formational work to which every leader present has been called.

It is sent with gratitude for the privilege of sharing that morning with you, and with the sincere hope that what was begun in the room continues long after it.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This address was delivered at a moment of genuine, if contested, spiritual movement in Britain. Drawing on Bible Society's Quiet Revival research, a series of pastoral encounters, and sustained theological reflection, the argument it makes is a single and deliberate one: the Church is not facing primarily a numerical opportunity. It is facing a formational challenge.

People, particularly young adults and young men, are arriving at church doors having already been encountered by God in private, before any institutional contact. The urgent question is therefore not whether more people are coming. It is whether the Church, and its leaders personally, are ready to receive, walk alongside, and genuinely form the people arriving in this season.

The address moves through three framing words, Welcome, Engage, Disciple, understood not as separate programmes but as a single arc of intentional, rooted, relational formation. A sustained argument runs beneath all three: discipleship is not a one-way transaction but a mutual and generative journey, and leaders must themselves remain continuously open to being formed by those they are forming. The mission of the Church has not changed. The ways in which that mission must be embodied and communicated must be responsive to the people and the moment it is addressing.

The document closes with a direct personal charge to every leader who received it.

KEY POINTS

1. The data is contested. The openness is not.

Bible Society's surveys are genuinely encouraging. They suggest that monthly churchgoing among adults rose from around eight percent in 2018 to twelve percent in 2024, and that among 18 to 24-year-olds the movement is more dramatic still, with young men in that bracket reaching 21 percent. One third of adult churchgoers are now aged 18 to 34, compared with 14 percent in 2018. These figures deserve to be received with gratitude.

They also deserve to be received with honesty. Other surveys, using different methodologies, tell a more cautious story. Official denominational data describes recovery from the pandemic rather than the reversal of longer-term trends. Serious scholars have raised serious questions about the methodology, and those questions are legitimate. The precise figures are contested, and leaders at every level deserve to know that.

Where I land is here. The numbers may be debated, but the openness is not. Churches are reporting significantly more first-time commitments to Christ than five years ago. The stories coming in from across the country are too consistent to be dismissed as anecdote. What they describe is a pattern. This moment therefore calls for honesty without cynicism and hope without hype, holding both the genuine encouragement and the genuine fragility many churches are carrying, because both are real and both are present in the same landscape.

2. God is reaching people before we do.

A church leader in the south of England described something she could not quite account for. People had been turning up who nobody had invited. Not friends of members, not people who had found the website. One young man said he had been having what he could only describe as conversations with God in his flat. He had no church background, no Christian friends, and no ready language for what was happening to him. He had simply walked past the church one Sunday morning and gone in.

A colleague of mine encountered something similar in south London. Over several months, young men in their twenties and thirties began coming through the door. What struck him was not their presence but the state they were in when they arrived. They had already been exploring, alone. Reading the Bible on their phones, watching sermons late at night, praying in their rooms without knowing quite who they were praying to. They had not come to find out whether Christianity was true. They had come because they already suspected it was, and they needed somewhere to take that.

I have my own version of this encounter. I was sitting in a restaurant talking about work with a colleague when a young man on the table nearby leaned over and asked me directly whether I was a

Bible teacher. Before I answered, something shifted in me. Not embarrassment, but a question that has not left me since: am I prepared for this? If this person is searching, do I have something real to offer, or have I been so busy working for the Church that I have forgotten what it is to be the Church in an ordinary room with an ordinary person who is quietly looking for something?

The theological claim worth sitting with is this. God is reaching people in private spaces, on commutes, in restaurants and flats, before any institutional contact whatsoever. The Church's calling in this season is not to initiate what God has already begun, but to receive it, name it, and walk faithfully alongside the people in whom it is already at work.

3. The Church is healing people, not just filling seats.

The Quiet Revival research surfaces something that deserves to be received as more than a statistical finding. 58 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds in the survey report frequently feeling anxious or depressed. This is not a minority. It is a majority. This generation is less likely to socialise in person than any previous generation at the same age, and more likely to feel profoundly and persistently isolated. Into that precise reality, the Church appears to be doing something that nothing else quite replicates.

Churchgoers report significantly higher levels of meaning, hope, and connection to their local community than their non-churchgoing peers. Among young women who attend church, the rate of frequent anxiety and depression is 21 percentage points lower than among those who do not. These are not people retreating into private comfort. They are more likely to volunteer, to give, and to pursue active social engagement. The Church, at its best, is not merely filling seats. It is healing people. And healed people heal people. They return to the world and they change it. That is what genuine discipleship, formation in the love of Christ, actually produces.

This reality carries with it a serious responsibility. If the Church is capable of offering something genuinely healing to a generation in genuine pain, then the worst possible outcome of this moment is a revolving door: people walking in, finding nothing that holds them, and walking back out. We cannot, in good conscience, offer people a door and no home. The Church must ask itself with some urgency whether it is ready to be not simply a place people visit, but a community in which they are genuinely formed and genuinely held.

4. The spiritual marketplace is real and competing.

The spiritual openness we are seeing is not occurring in a vacuum. People are exploring faith in a marketplace that is crowded, sophisticated, and, in several directions, actively hostile to Christian commitment. Crystals and manifestation, wellness culture dressed in spiritual language, online communities offering identity and belonging at a fraction of the cost the gospel demands: these are not peripheral phenomena. They are the water in which this generation swims, and they shape the frameworks people bring with them when they begin to explore Christianity.

Some of these alternatives borrow loosely from Christian vocabulary. Others move in quite different directions. What they share is the capacity to satisfy spiritual hunger temporarily, or to redirect it toward sources that cannot ultimately sustain it. The Church must reckon honestly with the fact that spiritual openness does not automatically lead anyone toward Christ. It means people are thirsty. Thirsty people will drink whatever water is nearest to hand, and not every source of water is healthy. The Church has a responsibility, and indeed a privilege, to offer living water clearly, confidently, and without apology.

One further dimension deserves naming. Many of those arriving in our churches are simultaneously exploring other things. Some will require considerable time and careful formation before they come to understand faith as something to be practised exclusively, with the full weight of commitment the New Testament describes. A warming spiritual climate is not a cue for complacency. It is a call to patient, attentive, theologically grounded engagement.

5. This moment will reveal the state of our hearts, not just our systems.

When people walk through our doors in this season, they will not be particularly moved by inherited authority, denominational tradition, or institutional reputation. They will simply be present, asking real questions and noticing real things. And what they notice will, in many respects, function as a mirror. It will reflect not only the quality of our systems but the condition of our hearts, revealing where we have genuinely placed our focus and what we have, in practice, been building toward.

The question this moment puts to every leader is therefore not only whether their church is structurally ready to receive an increase. It is whether they are personally ready to be challenged by what arrives. Whether they are prepared to lay down the privilege that comes with position and sit with someone who knows nothing about the institution they represent but may know something about the God they both serve. Whether they are ready to hear truth from someone who has not yet learned the language of the Church, and who, precisely because of that, may say something the Church has needed to hear for a very long time.

Three things must be named with particular honesty before the framework that follows can do its proper work. The first concerns language. Our gathered worship has developed a dialect over centuries, carrying assumptions embedded in how we pray aloud, how we read Scripture, how we move through a service. For someone arriving with no Christian background whatsoever, this is not a welcoming environment but a foreign country. The challenge is not to strip the Church of its theological depth, but to ask with genuine seriousness whether we are translating, or simply hoping people will catch up.

The second concerns pace. When someone arrives with obvious gifts and evident spiritual hunger, the temptation is to move them quickly into serving, leading, and visible ministry. It is encouraging to see, and it can appear to vindicate the investment being made. But the pace of genuine formation is slower,

considerably slower, than the pace of attendance growth. Roots take time. The Church must resist the temptation to use new believers as evidence of the revival rather than invest in them as the point of it.

The third is the most personal, and the one least likely to be named in a room of senior leaders. Responsibility carried over many years has a way of subtly shifting the centre of gravity from formation to function, from being a disciple to managing discipleship, from praying to overseeing prayer. The question this moment presses upon every leader is not only how they will resource discipleship in their churches, but whether they themselves are still being formed. Whether they still have someone who tells them the truth. You cannot lead people into a depth you yourself are not inhabiting.

There is a principle worth naming directly here, because it is both uncomfortable and clarifying. Where a church's focus truly lies, its most sophisticated systems will be found. This is not a criticism. It is simply an observation about how organisations work. A church with trained ushers on every door, a footfall counter above the entrance, and a carefully considered traffic flow through the foyer has made a series of deliberate decisions about the importance of arrival. It has invested institutional energy, time, and money into ensuring that the moment someone walks through the door is handled well. The question worth pressing is where the equivalent infrastructure exists for what happens six weeks later, or six months. The presence of a well-resourced welcome system and the absence of an equally intentional discipleship pathway is not a neutral fact. It is a statement about what the church has decided matters most. Discipleship means you intend for people to stay. Not to visit, not to return occasionally, but to stay, to be formed, and to become. The systems a church builds are the most honest account it has of its actual priorities. If the most developed infrastructure in your community exists at the point of arrival and thins to almost nothing thereafter, that is not a resource problem. It is a priority problem, and it deserves to be named as such.

All of this leads to a question that is both the most personal and the most foundational in this entire address. On your own discipleship journey as a leader, who is closest to you? Not in terms of proximity or position, but in terms of genuine access. Who is the person in your life who can look you in the eye and ask: how is it with you and Jesus? Not how is the ministry going, not how is the church performing, but how is it with you and Jesus? And who is close enough to you, and consistently enough present, to notice the answer before you have decided what to say? That quality of relationship, a trusted friend or companion who sees you regularly and cares enough to ask the real question, is not a luxury for leaders. It is a precondition. Because before we can ask whether we are ready to disciple others, we must ask whether we are in a position to do so safely. A leader who is not themselves being walked with, questioned, and held accountable is a leader operating beyond their spiritual means. Formation cannot be given from an empty vessel. If no one is asking how it is with you and Jesus, that is not merely a personal gap. It is a pastoral risk. And it begins to be addressed not with a programme but with a decision: to let someone near enough, trusted enough, to tell you the truth.

6. Welcome and Engage: incarnation and truth in relationship.

Welcome, at its theological heart, is not a matter of hospitality management. It is an expression of the incarnation. God did not send a message. He came. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, which is to say that divine welcome is costly, proximate, and permanent. It makes room not merely in the room but in the life of the community itself. A church can be easy to visit and genuinely hard to enter, warm on the surface and closed relationally, efficient at receiving people onto the premises without ever truly making room for them in the body.

For someone arriving with no Christian background and no ready language for what they are experiencing, surface warmth will not hold them. What they need is the kind of welcome that reflects the character of Christ, which called people first and formed them after. That sequence is not incidental. It is the sequence of grace, and the Church must guard vigilantly against the Pharisaical instinct that positions itself at the door as a gatekeeper of perfection rather than as a welcomer into the transforming presence of the living God. We must also be willing to examine, honestly and without defensiveness, which of our inherited cultural assumptions belong to the gospel and which belong to habit, and to ask whether we are prepared to adapt the latter even when it is uncomfortable to do so.

The model for engagement is given to us in John 4. Jesus asked the woman at the well for something before he offered her anything. He engaged her reality before he revealed his identity and was genuinely present with her before he was instructive. What research consistently identifies as the distinguishing mark of churches effective at reaching younger generations is not the quality of their programming but the depth of their relationships: older believers making a deliberate decision to know younger people by name, to eat with them, to hear their questions without flinching, and to remain present when those questions become uncomfortable.

A significant number of young churchgoers report that their faith is regularly shaken by what they encounter in the broader culture. They do not need the Church to perform confidence it does not possess, nor to pretend that difficult questions do not exist. They need the Church to sit with them in the difficulty and demonstrate, through presence rather than argument, that Scripture is robust enough to hold them.

When new people arrive with energy, gifts, and ideas, there is a quiet and often unacknowledged negotiation around influence and belonging. Whether those gifts are welcomed or managed, whether those questions are received or deflected, whether people are invited into genuine participation or maintained at a grateful distance: the Church's answers to these questions will determine whether the people God is sending in this season stay and grow, or eventually leave for somewhere that will actually receive what they carry. This is particularly true for those from backgrounds that have historically been marginalised by the institution. This moment requires us to examine, with considerable seriousness, whether we are prepared to receive from those we have not traditionally received from or invited in.

On the rise of young men, one thing must be said carefully. The increase is real and it is genuinely encouraging. But not all of what is bringing young men to church in this season is the gospel. Some of it is grievance, some of it is loneliness, and some of it is a deep sense of purposelessness seeking a framework. The vital question is not whether young men are arriving. It is whether the Church is producing men made genuinely new by an encounter with the living God, or men who have found, in the language of faith, a form of theological permission for who they already were.

7. Cultural and generational intelligence: a two-way street.

The mission of the Church has not changed. It has never changed. We are called to make disciples of all nations, to proclaim the gospel, to form people in the love of Christ and release them to do the same. But the ways in which that mission is embodied, the language it employs, the cultural forms it inhabits, must be genuinely responsive to the people it is trying to reach. These are not the same thing, and confusing them, treating cultural form as theological non-negotiable, has cost the Church more than it has yet fully reckoned with.

Cultural and generational intelligence is not a concession to contemporary relevance. It is an expression of missionary faithfulness. Paul's commitment to becoming all things to all people so that by all means he might save some, was not theological compromise. It was the disciplined, costly work of a servant who understood that the form the gospel takes must be intelligible to the people it is addressing. That same wisdom is demanded of every leader in this generation.

The generation arriving in our churches has been shaped by experiences of institutional failure, by the erosion of deference as a cultural norm, and by a deep instinct that trust is earned through genuine presence rather than conferred through office. They have grown up in a world of radical transparency, horizontal community, and instant access to information. They do not need us to perform authority. They need us to demonstrate it through the quality of our presence, the honesty of our engagement, and a willingness to be genuinely known.

What is not said frequently enough in conversations among church leaders is this: discipleship is not a one-way transaction. We do not simply pour into people and receive nothing in return. The people arriving in this season carry questions that will sharpen our theology, perspectives that will press upon our assumptions, and testimonies already being written in their homes and on commutes before they have ever heard the word discipleship spoken. If we approach them solely as recipients of our formation, we will miss what God is saying through them, and we will impoverish ourselves in the process. I have been formed by people I was appointed to form. That is not a failure of the model. It is the model operating precisely as it should.

This requires that we extend grace with both hands, and that we extend it first to ourselves. Every leader in this room came to faith with questions, assumptions, and frameworks that required patient correction. Someone sat with us. Someone made room for our wrestling. Someone treated our half-

formed faith as something worth investing in rather than something to be managed. That experience, whatever form it took, is not merely a memory. It is a resource of the first order. The most powerful thing any leader carries into a discipleship relationship is not their command of Scripture or the weight of their years in ministry. It is their own story, honestly held and generously offered.

People do not primarily need us to have every answer securely in hand. They need to see what it looks like to keep following Christ when the questions have not yet been resolved, when the cost becomes visible, when the path narrows. The story of doubt, of genuine struggle, of the season when faith required everything and offered nothing visible in return: that story is not a liability in the formation of another person. It is, often, the very thing that gives them permission to keep going.

This means that the communities we build must be communities in which genuine wrestling with truth is not merely tolerated but understood as part of the formation process itself. When Jacob wrestled with God, he walked away both limping and blessed. We should not be afraid of communities that carry both. A young person who brings a question that disturbs a settled view should not be made to feel they have broken something. They should encounter a presence that says, with conviction and without anxiety: I am glad you asked that, and I am not going anywhere whilst we work through it. That quality of presence is not weakness. It is among the most demanding forms of pastoral strength. And this must be said plainly, because it is rarely said at all. Do not be afraid to ask the people you are discipling how they are experiencing being disciplined by you. Ask what is landing and what is not. Ask whether the pace feels right whether there is something they need that they have not yet found a way to ask for. Invite their honest account of the relationship as a regular and unremarkable feature of it, rather than as a crisis measure when something appears to have gone wrong. The leader who asks those questions is the leader who can be genuinely trusted. And trust, formed slowly and sustained over time, is the only soil in which genuine discipleship grows.

8. Disciple: formation, not education.

Acts 2:42 offers the early Church's own account of what it devoted itself to: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. This was not a programme with sessions and learning objectives on a Wednesday evening at 7pm. It was a rhythm, a shared life ordered around Word, table, community, and God, and the mark of that life was not theological precision or impressive attendance but love. By this, Jesus had said, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. The research is consistent: close, relational, accountable contexts are what form people. And yet most churches continue to rely primarily on the Sunday sermon as their principal discipling instrument. We know what works. We have not built for what we know, and that gap deserves to be named as a serious failure of institutional nerve.

Discipleship, properly understood, is not merely an educational enterprise. It is a formational one. Teaching performs an essential and irreplaceable function, establishing doctrinal foundation, shaping

worldview, and anchoring the believer in truth. But it was never designed to be the terminus of spiritual development. In the ancient rabbinic tradition from which Jesus drew, a student was known as a talmid, a word that carries far greater weight than the English word disciple tends to suggest. A talmid did not attend a teacher's lectures from a respectful distance or demonstrate sufficient knowledge before being admitted to closer proximity. They left what they had known, followed at close quarters, and gave themselves to the slow work of becoming. The goal was never primarily the transfer of information. It was the transfer of a way of being. There was a saying in that tradition: may you be covered in the dust of your rabbi. It meant: follow so closely that the dust his feet kick up settles on you. Proximity was the point. A talmid absorbed not only content but character, not only knowledge but instinct, not only what the teacher said but who the teacher was in the unguarded moments of ordinary life. You could not become like someone you were not near.

Jesus operated within this tradition and then radicalised it in one crucial respect. Most rabbis waited for disciples who had already proven themselves. Jesus went and found people himself, choosing them before they had demonstrated anything. He invited them into a curriculum that was lived rather than merely recited, and the commission he gave them at the end was not simply to go and teach what they had learned, but to make talmidim of all nations, disciples formed in the same way they themselves had been formed. The expectation was reproduction, not simply retention. What had been received was meant to be passed on, in the same manner, at the same cost, and at the same depth.

It is helpful here to name the three dimensions along which genuine formation must operate, because the Church has a consistent tendency to privilege one at the expense of the others. The first is the head: the intellectual and doctrinal grounding that teaching provides, establishing the believer in what they believe, why they believe it, and how the whole of Scripture holds together as a coherent and authoritative account of reality. This is foundational and irreplaceable. The second is the heart: the affective and volitional transformation that moves a person not merely to know truth but to love it, to desire God above competing desires, and to be genuinely changed in the interior life from which all sustained action flows. The third is the hands: the practical, embodied, habitual formation that equipping demands, the translation of knowledge and desire into the texture of an ordinary week, ordinary relationships, and ordinary decisions. A discipleship that addresses only the head produces people who are theologically furnished but spiritually thin. A discipleship that addresses only the heart produces people who are emotionally warm but doctrinally unmoored. A discipleship that addresses only the hands produces people who are busy but not necessarily transformed. Genuine formation holds all three in intentional and sustained tension, and the leader's responsibility is to build communities in which none of the three is consistently neglected.

Ephesians 4:12 positions the gifts of ministry not as ends in themselves but as instruments for preparing the whole people of God for active participation in the work of the kingdom. Equipping

therefore occupies the critical space between knowing and doing, between the establishment that teaching provides and the activation that discipleship demands. A community strong in teaching but weak in equipping risks producing people who are theologically articulate and practically inert, well-furnished with understanding yet unconfident in application, knowing what they believe but uncertain how to embody it in the texture of an ordinary week. Authentic discipleship refuses to allow knowledge to remain theoretical. It creates the conditions for action, reflection, and renewed understanding, a cycle in which doing deepens learning and learning sharpens doing. Formation of this kind cannot be reduced to a course or a syllabus. It requires proximity, vulnerability, and the sustained commitment of one person investing deliberately in another, until what was once observed becomes owned, and what was once borrowed becomes embodied.

Luke 9:23 has not been softened by the passage of time or the pressures of cultural accommodation. If anyone would come after me, Jesus said, let them deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. A discipleship that does not name the cross is not, properly speaking, discipleship at all. It is self-improvement dressed in religious language which can be described as a therapeutic community with a Christian aesthetic. The spiritual marketplace that surrounds our churches already offers transformation without surrender, belonging without cost, and identity without the death of the old self. The Church's most distinctive contribution to a generation drowning in those alternatives is to offer the one thing they cannot find anywhere else: the way of the cross, which is to say the way of genuine life.

9. Discipleship from scratch and the work of establishment.

I was told recently of a young woman in France, new to faith, reading the Bible with a church leader. She looked up from the page and asked: what are those numbers on the side? She had never seen a Bible before. That question should stop us, not because it is surprising but because it may be far more common than we have yet allowed ourselves to admit. Somewhere in every diocese and deanery, there is a person sitting in a church service carrying the same question. They may simply not yet have found anyone safe enough to ask it.

Discipleship from scratch means returning to the very foundations: what the Bible is, what prayer is, who the Holy Spirit is, what it means to belong to the body of Christ. These are not remedial questions. They are the questions that every person who comes to faith deserves to have answered by someone who will sit with them, give them their full attention, and assume nothing. When the disciples had walked with Jesus daily, hearing his teaching, witnessing his miracles, and sharing his table, they still turned to him and said: Lord, teach us to pray. If the men who walked most closely with him still needed to begin there, the Church should not be remotely surprised by the depth of the foundations it may be required to lay.

The goal of all of this is establishment. Not attendance figures, and not even commitment, as important as that is. We are in the business of helping people become so rooted in Christ that they

can withstand what is coming, when the culture pushes back, when life becomes difficult, when the initial warmth of spiritual curiosity gives way to the longer, harder, quieter work of becoming. Paul frames this with remarkable clarity in 2 Timothy 2:2: what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also. Four generations of transmission in a single verse. What has been received must be entrusted. What has been entrusted must be passed on. Those who are established become the ones who establish others, and the chain, when it holds, is how the Church has always grown in depth as well as in breadth.

At the centre of all of this stand's prayer, not as a spiritual discipline appended to a programme, but as the foundational acknowledgement that we cannot form anyone. Only God can do that. We create conditions. We build relationships. We open Scripture and break bread and show up with faithfulness over time. But the transforming work belongs entirely to the Spirit of God, and the first question any church should ask about its discipleship culture is not what course it is currently running. It is whether it is praying.

There is one further thing that must be said about discipleship, and it concerns who is responsible for it. There is a persistent tendency in church culture to concentrate the work of formation in the hands of those who hold formal responsibility for it, a pastoral team, a discipleship department, a designated leader. When discipleship is reduced to a function managed by a department, two things happen. The department becomes overloaded, and the rest of the congregation is quietly absolved of responsibility. Neither outcome serves the people God is sending. Discipleship is not a departmental function. It is body ministry. It belongs to the whole people of God, and the New Testament gives us no warrant for concentrating it in the hands of the few while the many observe. Every member of the body carries something that another member needs. Every person who has been walking with Christ for any length of time has a testimony, a story of formation, and a capacity to sit with another person and ask the real questions. Church members consistently underestimate what they carry and what they can do. One of the most important things a leader can do in this season is to resist the gravitational pull toward centralisation and instead build a culture in which every believer understands themselves to be, in some measure, a disciple-maker. Not a professional. Not a programme leader. Simply a person who is following Jesus and is willing to walk alongside someone else who is learning to do the same.

10. Vision, prayer, and action.

When Jesus saw the crowds in Matthew 9, the text does not say he was impressed by the numbers, or strategic about the opportunity. It says he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. And it was from that compassion, not from a growth strategy, that the great commission of prayer emerged: the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. The young adults

arriving at church doors across this country are part of that harvest. The question is not whether we celebrate that. The question is whether we are ready, personally and institutionally, to be the workers. Vision must come first, because without it the Church will mistake activity for faithfulness. The vision this moment requires is not of larger congregations but of deeper lives, communities where the fruit of the Spirit is visible not only on Sunday but throughout the week, where people who were once reaching for anything that promised to fill the gap have found the living water and are now, in turn, helping others find it.

Prayer must be named as the non-negotiable foundation rather than the opening formality. Every genuine movement of renewal in the Church's history, from the Moravians to the early Methodists to the Welsh Revival, began in sustained, costly, expectant prayer. When something is genuinely moving in the Spirit, the first response is not a working group. It is to get on our knees and ask God to do what only God can do.

Action must follow, because vision without structure is sentiment and prayer without obedience is presumption. This means equipping the congregation and not only the clergy, building systems that actually reflect the expectations we claim to hold, and refusing to allow the gap between Sunday and the rest of the week to swallow the people God is sending to our doors. Numbers will tell us how many came through the door. They will not tell us who was known, who was prayed with, who was taught what a verse was, and who in ten years is sitting with someone else, opening a Bible, and beginning at the beginning. That is the measure this moment demands. And this, for the Church in Britain, is the moment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Every recommendation that follows is grounded in the conviction that structural readiness begins with personal readiness. No system, however well designed, will substitute for the formed and forming leader at its centre. Before asking what your church needs to build, it is worth asking, with genuine seriousness, who you are becoming.

Begin there. Examine honestly whether your own discipleship is still active, relational, and subject to honest accountability. The most powerful resource any leader brings to this moment is not their institutional knowledge or their years of experience. It is the quality of their own walk with God, their willingness to be still known and still formed. Find someone who will tell you the truth rather than affirm your ministry and give them permission to do it.

Invest personally, and not merely institutionally, in cultural and generational intelligence. Do not delegate the task of understanding the world the people you are serving inhabit. Read what they are reading. Ask questions about their experience without an agenda. Sit with their perspectives long enough to understand them before you respond to them. The mission of the Church has not changed, but the ways in which it must be embodied are always responsive to the people and the moment it is addressing. Confusing those two things, treating the form as though it were the substance, has cost the Church considerably.

Approach every discipleship relationship as a mutual one. Remain genuinely open to being formed by those you are forming and build community cultures in which the exchange of insight flows in both directions. Make it a regular and unremarkable practice to ask the people you are walking with how they are experiencing the journey. Ask what is landing and what is not. Ask whether there is something they need that they have not yet found a way to ask for. The leader willing to be held accountable to those they serve is the leader who can genuinely be trusted.

Audit your discipleship culture honestly against the three dimensions of genuine formation. Ask whether the communities you are building are attending to the whole person, the head, the heart, and the hands, or whether one dimension is being consistently privileged at the expense of the others. Teaching without equipping produces knowledge that does not become action. Equipping without the interior transformation of the heart produces activity that does not sustain. Heart formation without doctrinal grounding produces fervor without roots. All three belong together, and the structures you build should reflect that conviction.

Close the gap between teaching and equipping with structural seriousness. If an audit of your community reveals that formation happens primarily through the Sunday sermon, treat that as an institutional problem requiring an institutional response. Build small, relational, accountable contexts

as the spine of your discipleship culture, design them deliberately for people beginning from scratch, and resist the assumption that foundations have already been laid. Equipping people to move from knowing to doing, and from being formed to forming others, is not an advanced programme for mature believers. It belongs at the beginning of how every person is brought into the life of the body. Build spaces where honest wrestling is not merely tolerated but actively cultivated as part of the formation process. Model this from the front. Be willing to name your own unresolved questions, your own seasons of struggle, and the cost that genuine faith has, at various points, required of you. A community in which the leader's vulnerability gives others permission to be honest is a community in which real formation can occur.

Initiate conversations with other churches in your area about shared responsibility for the people God is sending. The generation arriving in our churches does not know our denominational boundaries and will not feel bound by them. They will go where they encounter God and where they feel genuinely held. If churches in the same geography are competing rather than collaborating on discipleship, the people who most need formation will fall through the gaps between them. Shared responsibility is not institutional merger. It is faithfulness to the people you are both called to serve.

Finally, before any of the above, pray. Not as an opening formality before the real work begins, but as the ground on which everything else must stand. Ask God, with expectation and with persistence, to send out workers into his harvest field, and then be willing to discover that you yourself are the answer to that prayer.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

These questions are not designed to be answered quickly. Sit with them. Bring them to a trusted colleague. Bring them to God. The ones that make you uncomfortable are probably the ones that matter most.

- ▶ *Are you offering those coming through your doors what was once offered to you? And if not, what has displaced it?*
- ▶ *Is there someone in your life who is permitted to tell you the truth about who you are becoming? If not, what is the cost of that absence?*
- ▶ *When did you last be genuinely changed by an encounter with someone newer or younger in faith than yourself? Not informed. Changed.*
- ▶ *Are the spaces you build ones in which people can genuinely wrestle with the truth, or ones where questions are welcome only until they become inconvenient?*
- ▶ *What would a young person coming to your church interrupt in your ecosystem, and what does that reveal about what you have actually been building?*
- ▶ *Where your systems are tightest is where your focus truly lies. What does the infrastructure of your community say about what you have decided matters most?*
- ▶ *If twenty spiritually curious young adults began attending your church next month, what would break first?*
- ▶ *You know what works in discipleship. Have you built for it? If not, what has stopped you?*
- ▶ *Are you producing people made genuinely new by an encounter with the living God, or people who have found a community that confirms what they already believed?*
- ▶ *Who in your life is close enough to you, and trusted enough by you, to ask: how is it with you and Jesus? Not how is the ministry, not how is the church, but how is it with you and Jesus? If no one has that access, what does that cost you, and the people you are leading?*
- ▶ *Does your congregation understand themselves to be disciple-makers? Or have you, by concentrating formation in the hands of the few, quietly told them that it is not their work to do?*
- ▶ *In ten years, what will you point to as evidence not of how many came through the door, but of who was known, formed, and is now themselves forming others?*

A CHALLENGE TO TAKE AWAY

Before you put this document down, I want to place something before you directly. Not as a conference takeaway or a strategy document action point, but as a personal charge from one minister of the gospel to another.

Go back and find how you were discipled. Locate the person, the season, the community of faith that established you and gave you foundations deep enough to build on. Hold that clearly in mind. And then ask yourself, with complete honesty: are you offering that to someone right now? Not a course, not a programme, not a referral to the appropriate small group. A person. Your time, your presence, your story generously given.

Name one assumption embedded in your church culture that you have been defending without ever truly examining whether it belongs to the gospel or to inherited habit. Be willing to lay it down if the honest answer is that it belongs to habit, even if it is familiar, even if some people will be unsettled by its absence.

Identify one person you are currently discipling, or one person you know you should be, and this week ask them plainly: is there something you need from this relationship that you have not yet found a way to ask for? Then receive the answer without managing it.

Create one space in your community where the only requirement is that the questions are real. Not a meeting with an agenda. A table. A walk. A standing arrangement. Somewhere trust can form slowly and wrestling is not only permitted but expected.

And pray. Not over your agenda, but under it. Before the leadership meeting, before the welcome team briefing, before the strategy conversation. Let prayer be the ground on which everything else stands, rather than the opening courtesy before the serious work begins.

The people arriving at church doors across this country are not a demographic trend or a growth metric. They are people in whom God has already begun something. They are walking in carrying half-formed prayers, questions they have not yet found the language for, and testimonies still being written. They are looking, whether they know it or not, for someone who will sit with them and not go anywhere.

You are that person. Your story, your formation, your willingness to remain present, to keep learning, and to keep following even when the path is not clear: that is the resource this moment most requires of the Church. It always has been. The harvest is plentiful. And you are the worker.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

If anything in this document has prompted a question, surfaced a challenge, or opened a conversation you would like to continue, I would welcome the opportunity to speak further with you or your leadership team.

I am available to present this material to your church leadership, to work through the questions it raises with your senior team, or simply to talk through what the Quiet Revival data and the formational challenges it presents might mean for your specific context across London and the South East. Bible Society is committed to walking alongside churches in this season, and I would count it a genuine privilege to do that work alongside you.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch.

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