

## Discussion topics for groups:

### ***Rebel Church – a challenge and an encouragement to the Believer***

To accompany the book: ***Rebel Church – a challenge and an encouragement to the Believer*** by Peter Sammons

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#### Leader Notes:

To get the most from this study and the associated debate, it is advisable to read “Rebel Church”. The appendices are largely supporting scriptural material. As 2020 Vision is the author’s key recommendation to help individual Believers to reorient towards the future, so it would be helpful for the leader to prayerfully consider this and ideally the associated scriptures.

A basic understanding of the technical terms ‘hermeneutic’, ‘exegesis’ and ‘eisegesis’ is necessary, as these issues affect (and in principle resolve) the whole debate. See pages 62-63 in particular.

#### AUTHOR’S INTRODUCTION

As “Rebel Church” is inevitably a controversial book – and in some respects uncomfortable to the average Christian reader – the first question readers must address is “is there a case to answer?” The response to this question, naturally, will colour the entire response to the specific issues raised in the book.

2 Timothy 3: 10 to 4:8 is a useful background to the discussion. 2 Timothy 4:3 is the key text. What does this mean today?

The questions here are designed to help the reader/group leader open out the discussion.

#### BASIC QUESTIONS

In the Foreword to the Book, specific examples of what the author cites as rebellious behavior within the church are identified. Do we consider these examples to be ‘fair’? Do we recognize them as issues?

- How do we read our Bibles? To what extent do we allow the Bible to govern the way we conduct our lives?
- Are there circumstances where we should ignore the Bible in making our decisions?

- Matthew 5:13 (see page 25). What do we understand by Jesus' uncompromising statement about salt and saltiness?

### **CHAPTER 1 – THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH**

- How do you define “church”? (pages 29 – 33)
- How do you define “Kingdom”? (pages 33 – 39)
- What can we learn from the different titles the early church used in order to self-designate? (pages 41 – 45). Should these titles in any way colour our thinking today as we self-designate to the world at large?
- Do you see yourself as a member of the church or as a citizen of the Kingdom?

### **CHAPTER 2 - READY OR NOT, HE IS COMING**

- Do we agree that the Lord Jesus will return to this world to be its future ruler? How do we respond to the Bible passages outlined on page 52?
- The Bible identifies certain things as occurring at or before the return of Jesus, the Messiah. (See pages 52 – 57). How do we understand these passages? Are they promises to hold us secure, or are they to be read “spiritually”?
- Does the prospect of the return of Jesus help to focus our lives in the here and now? If so how?

### **CHAPTER 3 – THE WAY**

- What do we think about Miss Marple? (page 59 – 61). Are you a Miss Marple?
- How do we understand 2 Timothy 2:15? How do you rate yourself as a ‘workman’?
- How do we respond to the idea of being the people of *The Way*? (pages 65 – 68)
- Have you answered *the Peter question*? (page 68 – 71). If so, what is your answer? How do you share this question with others?

### **CHAPTER 4 – ITCHING EARS**

- 2 Timothy 4:3 is the key text for the whole book. How do you understand this warning? How should we adjust our praxis in the light of this warning? (pages 74 – 76)
- How are we to understand Jesus' specific warning in Matthew 7:1? Are the issues raised in the Foreword to “Rebel Church” to be considered as ‘specks of dust’ (Matthew 7:3) or are they something significant that must be opposed – and in that sense, judged?
- James 4:4 – how should we understand this warning from James the apostle? How does it affect the way *you* lead *your* life?

- How should we read Jesus' uncomfortable declaration in Matthew 7:6 referencing dogs and pigs? (page 83)
- How do we evaluate Jesus' instructions about judging ? (page 83)
- The author highlights seven passages from the gospel of Matthew relating to the rebel church (pages 86 – 88)? What do we understand in these passages? Do they make us feel uncomfortable? Should they?

**Leader note: the challenge in 2 Timothy 3:5 is relevant here. See comment on page 111 of "Rebel Church".**

#### **CHAPTER 5 – HOW THE CHURCH LOST THE WAY**

- How should we think about and characterize the Greek mindset and its division between sacred and secular? (pages 103 - 107). Do you divide your life neatly into sacred and secular?
- How does your church match up to the Berean challenge? (page 107 – 108).
- Looking at the seven typical churches in the book of Revelation – where would you place your own church amongst these types? [ n.b. this question is not raised in "Rebel Church" but is relevant to the discussion]

#### **CHAPTER 6 – OF ROOTS AND BRANCHES**

- How do you respond to the idea that the church needs consciously to "detox" from its total dependence on Greek thinking?
- Has God finished with the Jews and Israel? **Leader note: some people will have strong views on this subject. A measure of maturity is to be required from Christians as they discuss and explore this matter. It is to be expected that opinions should be correlated to Scripture. Pages 114 to 118 provide the biblical background to this discussion. The summary on page 118-19 might be read as part of the introduction to this discussion, to explain how this subject meshes with the broader subject of the rebel church.**
- How do you respond to the invitation to consciously acquire a more 'Hebraic' mindset? (pages 120 – 127. **Leader note: this is a sufficiently big subject that you may want to allocate a whole session to this matter.**

#### **CHAPTER 7 – 2020 VISION**

**Leader note: leaders should ideally understand the 2 opposing ideas of "replacement theology" and "two covenant theology" in order to draw out the precise lessons in the first few questions below. NB you do not have to be an expert, but as this is the essential *topography* of the debate, it is as well to understand how others think about Israel. In this regard "enlargement theology" is the modern term that charts a biblical course between replacement and two-covenant theologies.**

- How do you react to the charge in the book that generally speaking the church *dislikes* the Jews? (page 129).
- Allowing that in the future many Jews will place their trust in Jesus, what should be the precise relationship of “Christian” to Jew? And of “Christian” to Messianic Jew? Romans chapter 11 is the background to this. Romans 11: 25-32 is the specific assurance that in the and times many Jews (most?) will come to faith in Jesus (see especially verse 26).
- How do you respond to the 6 FAQs identified in pages 132 – 135?
- Does it matter that Jesus never actually heard the word “Jesus”?
- How do you respond to the 7 clear areas that make up the 2020 vision? Pages 154 – 46 and Appendix 2 (page 173-75).

### **CHAPTER 8 – THE PRODIGAL CHURCH**

- If we do determine to consciously reconnect with our Hebraic root, how do we guard against the excesses of some Christians in this area? Pages 147 – 152. Should “fear” of *getting things wrong* prevent us from making this journey? (Or is this just an excuse?!).
- Can *the parable of the lost sons* also be read and understood as a parable of the relationship between Christian church and Messianic believer? (If not, why not?). Page 153-57.
- What sort of gospel does your church present? Pages 158-59.
- Do we think of God as our Father? If so what is our basis for doing so? Pages 160-162.
- Do you find the *gospel equation* helpful? (Grace + Faith = Salvation). See pages 165 -68.
- How do we present the gospel in a multi-faith, and increasingly inter-faith, environment? (Appendix 1 – see page 173).

### **WRAPPING IT UP**

After reading the book and engaging with the discussion prompts above, groups should be much better placed to respond to the coming challenges within the “Church”. Appendix 6 to “Rebel Church” provides more biblical data to evaluate where the church is being true to its Master – and where it is being untrue. A review of Appendix 6 could form a session in its own right. If so, a pre-reading of Revelations chapters 2 and 3 would be very helpful.