

Reasons why ACORN works

(These reasons have all come out of reflective experience, among people in three ACORN groups over a six-month period.)

8 min Introduction of programme by Dr Michael Harvey:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lcw16Z_y-k0&feature=youtu.be

5-6 min promo vids from groups:

<https://youtu.be/sCKAnwV-xrA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBG4qTzlrEQ>

Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/933478613810194/>



1. It puts God in charge

ACORN is not based on a programme/vision/theory or an individual. It focuses us on listening to God first and although He is in charge, He wants to connect with others, through us. What an honour it is to adventure with Him, following His lead! As Jesus says in John 5:19, *'I only do, what I see the Father doing'*

2. It puts mission first

Mission is often down the pecking order in our church lives. We tend to focus on fellowship, Bible study, teaching and group work first. ACORN resets that balance and puts John 3:16 front and centre in our lives. With many churches struggling to retain members, this helps address our connections outside church 'head on', and prioritises those who might be or feel far from Christ.

3. It acknowledges the here and the now

So many conversations in churches revolve around the future. ACORN focuses on what God is up to, here, now, among us. It concentrates on reality over potential and puts experience before possibilities. Improvement happens as He guides us.

4. Everyone can do it

ACORN moves ministry from a corporate church culture to individual disciples' responsibility, as followers of Christ. It is something that all of us can do. It is not limited to age, experience, spiritual maturity or skillset (as many church ministries are). (See Nehemiah 3)

5. Faithfulness creates fruitfulness

We are called to be faithful, not successful. Many of us have failed to invite people to church activities and have become disappointed and fearful. We are called to simply obey and leave the results up to God. Over time we see people moving with Him and towards Him. As long as we plant and water, He will bring growth. (1Cor 3:6)

6. It deepens relationships

Often, over time, God calls us to keep reaching out to the same person. Experience shows that these relationships grow and deepen as we turn evangelism into a natural lifestyle. This results in having honest and profound conversations with people, often centring on their deepest needs and questions.

7. Questions over answers

We don't need to be experts in apologetics or overt extroverts. ACORN allows for real conversations in which we are often asking far more questions than giving answers. This allows for open landscapes with people where we search for God together.

8. No need for resources

There is no need for a building, any resources, budgets, marketing, strategic decisions, or perhaps even leadership permission. It bypasses many limiting church structures. One person asks God to reveal one other person. We then call, write or visit. We might ask, *'How are you?'* and prayerfully find out what God is doing in a situation. A small group then reports and notices what God is doing. That's it, that's all. Groups can easily split and multiply, as it is a 'round the table' experience, rather than any kind of leadership-driven model.

9. It suits anyone's lifestyle

As there is no great need for resourcing, there is also no need to build in lots of space in our diaries. Experience tells us that we might need to make time to contact a person, but very often they call us, or we meet them at the supermarket. God uses the gifts He has given us, along with our natural rhythms and situations to reach out to others – who often, we may already know.

10. It encourages and builds up

Every time a group meets (online), there is much encouragement, as we hear from each other what God is doing. There is a shared ownership and recognition that the smallest thing we might see is 'God infused', deeply worthwhile and He will see it through to completion. ACORN grows a culture of expectancy and excitement about what God is doing.

11. It deepens our faith

Asking God who He wants us to connect with on a daily basis becomes a spiritual exercise, creating a deep longing to hear from Him, to expect more, to dive into the Scriptures and discuss with others what God is doing in us and through us.

12. Jesus gave us the task

Jesus calls us to reach into our broken world and be people completely committed to loving Him and loving others. ACORN very simply helps us to focus on those two commandments.

13. the power of stories

Jesus used many parables to connect with people. The basic use of stories is powerful. In Acorn we

share what God is doing in and through us. These testimonies are so helpful, as they are simple, relatable and inspiring.

14. Christians find new purpose

Acorn is proving to give many Christians new purpose and resolve, where they are now seeing that Christ calls His followers to follow Him and He will turn us into 'fishers of men'

15. Potential for mobilisation

Acorn, because it is so simple, has the potential to be a great mobilisation driver for the church. It helps church people move from a central Ecclesiology to a footing of Christology and Missiology (in other words from pew-sitters to God adventurers)

16 Input-output ratio

with lots of outreach we target a broad audience, of which some might be interested. Lots of time can be spent on strategizing, organisation, mobilisation for often short events. In Acorn we ask God, who to connect with, He brings out a specific individual, so this targeted approach can be much more efficient.

17. All are called to be 'ministers'

The playing field is levelled between ministers, elders, church members and even non-members, between those who are just walking with Christ or have done so for decades. Christ speaks to all and we learn from each other in a level playing field community.

18 Small is big

We obey the quiet voice of God of who to connect with. Often seemingly small & insignificant are God's whispers. But as they are God's they are inherently powerful and these lead to the biggest life changes in the lives of us and others.

19 Multiplication is easy

Multiplication is a Biblical model, where we are called as in 2 Timothy 2:2 to find reliable people that are able to bring others on board. Because the programme is so simple, it has the potential to expand quickly and bring many on board, more than many other missional expressions.