



God's  
**GRANDER**  
Design



# GRAVEN HILL

Sermon notes and small group questions

The Baptists Together video *God's Grander Design* is a 17 minute video that tells the story of what God has been doing on the brand new Graven Hill estate in Bicester through Orchard Baptist Church and Helen and Nick Baker. This video can be used in your sermon slot on a Sunday, for small group discussion, for a leadership team or just to circulate around your congregation.

These words have been put together for a Sunday service.

Reading: Jeremiah 29v4-7

While in exile, when the people of Israel have been removed from their homes and particularly the focus of their worship in Jerusalem, Jeremiah the prophet writes to them to encourage them to embrace their new situation and to do things differently. He instructs them to build homes and to seek the peace and prosperity of the city.

The Church is no longer at the centre of our society. We find ourselves at the edges. In such days, God may be calling us to do things differently. To immerse ourselves amongst the people. To build alongside them. To live with them and to seek God's peace and prosperity over them. This may look different to how we have done 'church' before but this could be God's intention and plan for many different new opportunities.

*God's Grander Design* tells the story of how church might be different on a new housing estate on the edge of Bicester called Graven Hill. Instead of building a church building, the church, alongside their new community minister Helen Baker, built a new home in the centre of the community so that it might become a hub of peace and prosperity for everyone who might move onto the estate.

Video - *God's Grander Design*

### Prayer

Thank you Lord for the move of the Spirit over Graven Hill and the anointing of Helen as their community Minister. We ask for your blessing, your peace and the prosperity of Jesus to be on each and every resident. Enable and empower both Helen and Orchard Baptist Church in their work and mission. Guide their footsteps and bring wisdom and direction into each and every day. Protect Helen and Nick's reputation as people of peace and grace and may your love flow from them to each and every resident that they serve.

And as we consider their story and how the Spirit has led your people into new ways of being 'church' we open up ourselves to be led down new paths and in new ways. May the creativity of the Spirit fill our lives too, and may we be filled with faith to follow your call and discover how we might be part of your work in bringing Christ's peace and prosperity to our own street, village, town or city.

In the gracious and powerful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen



## Small Group Questions

### Introduction

These notes and questions sit alongside the Baptists Together video that is entitled *God's Grand Design*, which tells the story of Orchard Baptist Church in Bicester, and how they called Helen Baker to be a Pioneer Minister of a unique housing estate called Graven Hill. They are designed to be used in a small group setting to consider how the Church can seek to serve its community in new and adventurous ways bringing God's peace and prosperity.

The video has five parts. You will find a set of questions for each section.

1. Helen's Story
2. The Conception
3. The Estate
4. The Build
5. The House

Reading Jeremiah 29v1-9

### Part 1: Helen's Story

Watch the Introduction and part 1 of the video (The beginning to 02:45)

Helen talks about her journey to become a pioneer as starting when she was atheist and outside of the church.

1. What examples are there in scripture of God working on people before they have chosen to follow him?
2. In what ways did God form and prepare you before you had decided to follow him, or before you knew how God was going to use you, or where he might lead you?
3. Helen says, "It became very apparent to me that the Church needs to go to the people. The people aren't going to come into the Church. We need to take the love of Jesus to the people who don't know him." Why is it, in your view, that people do not generally go to church or consider the Church to be a place that they would attend or visit?
4. Helen questions whether her energy in ministry was being misdirected towards writing sermons for the church rather than looking to serve the community. Do you think the Church has poured too much energy into internal functions and not enough into serving its community? What might our ministry look like if we were to consider rebalancing how we use our time and energy, and what sacrifices would we need to make?



## Small Group Questions

### Part 2: The Conception

Watch part 2 of the video (02:45-06:20)

1. Find either a local map or look up online a map of your local area and highlight the places that you are aware of where new housing has been built in the last 10 years, or will be built in the near future.
2. Why might it be important to consider new housing areas as part of your local mission as a church?
3. How might your church serve a new housing estate with the love of God?
4. Orchard Baptist Church chose to work alongside other churches. What positives are there when we work with other congregations, and what might be some of the challenges? In what ways did Orchard Baptist put aside differences across denominations to work with other churches? What can we learn from their experience?
5. Why do you think the vision of Orchard Baptist changed from building a church building to purchasing a plot, employing a pioneer minister and building a home? Why do you think God led them to make this change? What might we learn from this change of focus regarding mission today?
6. What challenges might there be with leading a church community into deciding to follow a non-traditional model of missional activity on a new housing estate, and how might you overcome these difficulties?

### Part 3: The Estate

Watch part 3 of the video (06:20-09:20)

Helen talks about the importance of understanding the unique nature of Graven Hill with its self-build plots alongside social housing.

1. What are the unique characteristics of your local new housing estates? What kind of people are expected to move into the estate? How might these characteristics adjust your vision for the estate?
2. Traditionally the Church has been at the centre of the community. Helen talks about her home and her ministry being at the centre of Graven Hill. Consider your new housing estates. How might a new mission be central to the life of the community on a new housing estate near you?
3. Helen has been called as a “community minister” to Graven Hill. She talks about living incarnationally within the community. What do you understand this to mean? How might this look in your situation and how might it be different from Helen’s?



## Small Group Questions

### Part 4: The Build

Watch part 4 of the video (09:20-12:10)

1. The work and ministry on Graven Hill has been very much a team effort between Orchard Baptist Church and Helen and Nick Baker. Nick had a key role in the building of their new home. What team can you identify that would work well on your new housing estate? What roles do you need? Who might God be calling to be involved?

2. What new gifts of the Spirit might be emerging within the Church to enable all kinds of different pioneering missional initiatives?

### Part 5: The House

Watch part 5 of the video (12:10-end)

1. How would you design a new home from scratch around the focus of mission? What would be the key aspect of design that you would want to include?

2. Why might the different seasons of the year help us with our own missional journeys throughout the year?

3. Helen said, "We are building Gospel values into the foundations of this community." Make a list of gospel values that you think are important for reaching people within a community near you? How might these values be shared and implemented?

4. For years Baptists have shared together by giving to Home Mission, which has enabled mission and ministry around our country. How might we as Baptists Together work more closely to support and encourage one another with new and exciting initiatives that bring the Gospel to our nation today?

5. What other exciting initiatives and possibilities can you think of that enable people to engage with the Gospel of Jesus effectively in new and creative ways?

**God's Grander Design was produced in partnership with Baptists Together, Southern Counties Baptist Association, Orchard Baptist Church and Fuelcast.**

**To find out more about Home Mission with stories of how God has been at work across Baptists Together, visit [www.baptist.org.uk/homemission](http://www.baptist.org.uk/homemission)**



For further information about Southern Counties Baptist Association visit [www.scba.org.uk](http://www.scba.org.uk)

