

Rethinking Church in Springfield, USA

Bible Study and Discussion for a Small Group of Young Adults

“What’s the big deal about going to some building every Sunday?”

- Homer Simpson in [“Homer the Heretic”](#)

Preparation:

- Locate a copy of the Simpsons episode, [“Homer the Heretic.”](#) This episode can be found on the fourth season. It’s the third episode.
- A chalkboard, white-board, or big piece of paper to write upon. Likewise, chalk, markers, or other writing utensil.
- Make sure you have a remote control or some way to pause the episode as you watch.
- Bibles

Gathering/Welcome:

“Tonight we will be watching an episode of The Simpsons called ‘Homer the Heretic’.”

Opening Prayer:

Option 1: *Dear God, you have called us to be your people. You have called us to love your world. You have called us to be salt and light. Renew our flavor and renew our shimmer for the sake of our neighbor and for the sake your mission for the heart of each person we meet. And, in the end, for the sake of your son, Jesus of Nazareth the Christ. Amen.*

Option 2: *Something else.*

Watch the Episode: "Homer the Heretic"

- Assign one person the task of pausing the episode whenever anyone in the room says "pause."
- Assign a different person to take notes on the chalkboard/whiteboard/big-piece-of-paper. Make sure they have something to write with.
- Assign every individual the task of yelling "pause" when they notice something important to them. Once the movie is paused. The individual states what they noticed, and the note taker jots it down. This is my list of things to watch out for or notice, but there could be others.
 - Where does the Bible appear in the story? How is it used?
 - Who prays and how? What are their beliefs about prayer?
 - What does this episode suggest church is like?
 - What kind of beliefs do Christians have here? How do they behave?
 - What kind of God appears? How is God active in the world?
 - How is the church portrayed? What do you think about mission and evangelism in the story?
 - Another level to all of these "noticings": Do you agree or disagree with what you notice the episode suggests? What about the portrayal of Christian life and belief do you believe is biblical and what is not? How do you decide if something is biblical or not?
 - Bonus points for opening your Bible and adding stories and passages to your group's chalkboard/whiteboard/paper.

An example "noticing": Pause! I notice that when Bart asks "Hey, where's Homer?" Marge is afraid to answer honestly. Why? Is she afraid that Bart will lose his faith in God, because of Homer? I think sometimes I try to cover up my and other people's doubt too. I wonder why I do that. [Restart the episode]

Questions and Reflections:

- Did you find the episode funny? Why or why not? Which parts were your favorite? In what ways was it funny (haha-funny, sad-but-still-funny, bodily-function-funny, etc.)?
- Did you agree with the portrayals of God, of religion, of Christianity, of humanity in the episode? Why? If not, what alternative understandings would you offer?
- Is this episode helpful at all for thinking about mission in your own context? How so? How is it not helpful?
- What questions came up in your notes? Is there anything you want to follow up on? Anything you want to take home?

Closing Prayer:

Option 1: *God, bless us as we live out your calling to be the church, to be the body of Christ. Guide us to what is right in our discernment. May we love our neighbor whether they be Homer Simpson or Ned Flanders. Amen.*

Option 2: *Something else.*