

## **MECHANICS OF METAVERSE MINISTRY**

We learned in the previous session about how to lay down a philosophy of ministry for the Metaverse. But once you are ready to enter the Metaverse it is time to learn some of the basic mechanics to get started.

I want to give you 6 practical steps to launch your Metaverse ministry.

The first step in launching is this:

### ***Explore the Metaverse***

As I mentioned before, the Metaverse is a world unto itself with multiple continents and thousands of tribes on each of those continents. It will be important for you and your launch team to do some short-term, exploratory missions trips to determine where in the world God wants you to go.

Before spending any money to buy a headset, I would download the free 2 Dimensional versions of platforms like Microsoft's AltspaceVR as well as VRChat and RecRoom. Realize, of course, that you are not going to really understand the power of VR until you get a headset and explore in 3D. I would encourage you to attend some churches like Cornerstone VR Church, Virtual Reality Church, Life.Church, and Lakeland VR Church, among others. This will give you some ideas on what ministry in VR is like.

You will also want to do some research about MMO games, or Massively Multiplayer Online games. This is another continent in the Metaverse that is proving to be a great way to reach the lost. Check out videos or streams of games like Rust, Final Fantasy, New World, Black Desert Online, Eve Online and World of Warcraft. MMOs may or may not be in your church's wheelhouse, but it is definitely something to at least investigate.

Next, join the chat program Discord to take a look around. Feel free to join Cornerstone's server at [cornerstoneyc.com/discord](https://cornerstoneyc.com/discord) to get a feel for what a server could provide for your church community. Finally, check out Twitch.tv and see how this tool might help you reach more people for Christ. Feel free to check out my twitch channel for ideas at [twitch.tv/pastorjaypo](https://twitch.tv/pastorjaypo) as well as my friend Jate's channel at [twitch.tv/JateLive](https://twitch.tv/JateLive). Jate uses Twitch very effectively to reach hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

The next step is to:

### ***Decide on a Platform***

I want to walk you through the aspects of the different platforms so you can know which one will best fit your church's ministry focus. If you decide to first launch in an MMO game, my friend DJ Soto would be a good resource for you. He has launched several churches in different games and knows the demographics and pros and cons of each.

When it comes to VR platforms, there are many similarities but also some key differences to note.

**ALTSPEACEVR:** This platform is one of the easiest to use and the most stable. This also makes it one of the least exciting, and therefore, less attractive platforms. There are far more users on other apps. However, there are still enough people on AltspaceVR to make a church plant viable. Altspace also provides ready-made environments where you can quickly set up your church meeting space. There is a broad age range of people in this platform, but the

average age would probably consist of people in the Millennial generation. There are a lot of totally unchurched people, but Altspace definitely has a higher percentage of people who are lightly churched or at least dechurched, than in any other app.

**VRCHAT:** This platform is one of the more difficult to use because of its instability and openness to troll sabotaging. VRChat is the wild west of the VR world. It can sometimes be a very dark place. There are *alot* of users on this platform. This platform typically has older Gen Zers as well as younger Millennials. By far, this is one of the most unchurched platforms. VRChat also does not have ready-made worlds for you to host your church. You will need to build your own.

**RECROOM:** This platform is one of the most user-friendly and stable, and reaches alot of people because of its ubiquity across multiple user devices. You can get RecRoom on VR, 2D Desktop, Playstation VR, Xbox, iOS, and Android. There are some spaces to host a church, but it is not as ready-made and simple as with AltspaceVR. RecRoom typically has mostly Zers and older Generation Alpha users. But Millennials can be found there too. It is also a very unchurched, unreached people group.

**HORIZONS:** Meta - or Facebook - recently launched their VR Platform, called Horizons. It is artistically designed to fit somewhere between what RecRoom and AltspaceVR offers. It is relatively user-friendly. The age range is more like that of Altspace with Millennials being the dominant users. There are still not that many users on Horizons, but it will likely continue to grow as Meta continues to push this platform.

**BIGSCREEN VR:** This platform was originally designed to watch movies together with friends in VR. The readymade theaters would be great places to launch a church. Churches that want to livestream their services may find this to be their most efficient option.

There are many, many other platforms, but these are the biggest and most well-known. But there are literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, using other platforms like: Second Life's "Sansar", ChilloutVR, Neos VR, and others. The massively popular game "Roblox" now has VR capability and voice chat, making it an even more attractive place to launch a church in the Metaverse. My friend Daniel Herron launched a church in Roblox nearly ten years ago and has been able to share the Gospel with over 24,000 people in that time frame. Again, the Metaverse...even before VR became popular...has been HUGE. With VR, it has only become bigger and more ripe for Gospel harvest.

Let's look at the third step in launching your Metaverse Ministry:

### ***Prepare Additional Platforms for Community Building***

In the last session I told you about the communal nature of the people of the Metaverse. They have a lifestyle that seeks relational engagement throughout the week, unlike what typically happens in the physical church. There are a couple of key tools you should consider using alongside your Metaverse Church to stay connected with them.

**DISCORD:** Discord is essential to Metaverse Ministry. Discord is a platform that allows organizations to host their own community server. Within that server, your church can have multiple text and voice channels for various aspects of community life. Here are some examples at Cornerstone: Prayer, Questions about Christianity; Share Your Art; Games You Are Playing; Daily Bible Reading; Private channels for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship; etc.

450 people from all over the world who call Cornerstone their home church interact 24/7 on our Discord Server all week long.

We use Discord to have weekly prayer times and various seminars and trainings. In this way, Discord is a huge part of our Hybrid philosophy. For example, we have had preaching training groups, Life Group leader trainings, Discipleship trainings, and Biblical Counselor trainings in both our physical church AND in our Metaverse Church *at the same time*. We use high-quality room cameras and mics and a large screen TV so that everyone from all of our church campuses can see and interact with each other seamlessly. Discord is free, but it is advisable to at least pay \$99 per year to have a better quality experience.

**TWITCH:** Twitch is a streaming platform like YouTube, but primarily hosting live content, especially for gamers. We stream our VR Services there each week and occasionally host other livestreamed Bible studies. This provides another opportunity for people at Cornerstone VR and Cornerstone in real life to interact together in the chat room as they watch the streams together. We also connect with additional people who are a part of the Twitch tribe that spends a lot of their time watching various streams. It also must be noted that Twitch, owned by Amazon, will pay you for producing content. The more subscribers and viewers you get, the more revenue you will make.

**PATREON:** You likely already have an online giving solution for your church. You can certainly just use this to give your Metaverse Church the opportunity to give. We also recommend the use of a giving platform like Patreon. Ko-Fi would also be another similar app. Patreon lets you be more creative in the way you encourage giving. Many artists and creatives use this. A lot of the younger members of your congregation in the Metaverse will understand this way of giving as compared to just “giving to the general budget of the Church”.

The fourth step in Launching your Metaverse Ministry is this:

### ***Know Your Equipment Needs and Costs***

If you already own a decent PC, you could launch your Metaverse Ministry for FREE. You can enter into VR apps using 2D desktop applications. You can use the free version of Discord. And you can do Twitch for free. You might even end up MAKING money from Twitch, and of course, from giving through Patreon or other online apps. Can you even imagine launching a church without ANY budget AND generating revenue?? It is possible in the Metaverse!

But to fully engage with your people, I recommend you at least buy a VR headset. You can get Meta’s Oculus Quest 2 headset for around \$300. If you do the more effective Discord server, that will cost you \$99 per year. You will likely want to get a better mic and camera for streaming and interacting on Discord via video. This will not cost you more than \$150. If you decide to launch a church in an MMO, a game is usually only about \$40 and a server hosting package will run you about \$150 or so per year. You will want to pick up a good gaming headset for about \$50 as well.

So if you want to launch an effective VR Church with two members from your physical church, you are looking at only \$800-900 to purchase two headsets, have a Discord server, and good livestreaming equipment. If you want to launch an effective MMO Church with two

members from your physical church, you are looking at only \$300, provided you already have a good pc that can handle games with heavier graphics needs.

Let's talk about human resources now in the 5th step launch step:

### ***Recruit People to Help Lead***

You will want to make sure to launch with a ministry partner. They will be able to moderate the technical details of running the service while you lead and preach.

But you will very quickly want to form a volunteer team, especially with people who are natives of the Metaverse who begin regularly attending your church. From this group it would be wise to recruit the following roles:

- a Moderator to kick trolls who will not stop disrupting the service after warnings;
- a Basic Builder who can quickly learn the onboard building tools in the platform. They can make sure important items are set up in the template meeting space provided by the platform
- an Event Administrator who can make sure all events are updated in the platform's public schedule
- a Greeter to welcome people who spawn into your church event
- a slides and worship video administrator to ensure smooth transitions in your presentation
- a Streamer who can make sure your service is sent to Twitch, as well as Facebook and Youtube if you desire this
- a Discord administrator to set up the server and maintain it
- a small group leader or more than one
- a campus director for each new campus
- an advanced world builder down the road so you can have custom-built campuses

You will find that some individuals can take on several of these roles at once in many cases. As you grow you may want to hire staff to oversee your Metaverse Ministry. At Cornerstone, we hired a Metaverse Pastor.

Let me conclude with this final step

### ***Don't Be Discouraged by Initial Obstacles***

I told you in the last session about Trolls and Tech issues. You WILL have tech issues. But don't give up. You will gradually be able to work out the bugs. And remember, the people of the Metaverse are used to tech issues. They won't be fazed by them...even though you might be at first.

And you WILL have trolls. This past Sunday in one of our campuses a troll caused me to be kicked out of my church in the middle of my sermon twice! The people are not thrown off by this. They just wait for me to log back in. One time during a sermon a troll somehow figured out how to start playing House Mix Dance music. I just played along with it and didn't let it throw me off. My moderator was able to stop it within a few seconds. Again, this does not throw off the people in your church. They are used to this.

An interesting thing to note regarding troublemakers in the Metaverse Church: we have had to practice Church Discipline more than we ever have had to in all my years of physical

church ministry. We had one young man that couldn't get his act together on our Discord Community. We warned him and then put him in a cool-down channel where he could only interact with me and my Metaverse Pastor. This provided an opportunity to help him grow through his struggles and now he is a faithful volunteer in one of our campuses. Restorative and Upbuilding Church Discipline is not as common as it probably should be in the Western Church. Can you believe that the Metaverse Church might be the place where the entire Church learns how to use this ancient and helpful Christian practice again?!

I hope this has helped you consider some practical next steps for launching your Metaverse Ministry. Again, you are always welcome to come visit one of our churches to do some exploring. Please go to [cornerstoneyc.com/vr](https://cornerstoneyc.com/vr) to see how to do so. In our next and final session, I want to give you some guidance on how to Expose your existing church to Metaverse Ministry without Imploding them. Metaverse ministry is a strange new world for many. It will take some winsome leadership to guide them in a way that moves them into this new missional frontier without causing them to push back.