

THE REBIRTH OF THE CHURCH

By Greg Wiens



Music: organ or guitar? Attire: vestments or jeans? Preaching: factual or funny? Potlucks: allowed or *verboten*? On paper, these choices may seem like small potatoes. In real life, however, these insignificant differences split churches and Reggie McNeal has something to say about it: *who cares?*

Not *who cares* about the divisiveness (which most certainly is a problem), but *who cares* about these issues in the first place? Why are they even important to Christians? In his new book, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, McNeal clearly calls the church to reawaken its true mission: to reach the outside world for Christ above all else and forget our self-preoccupation. As he puts it, “Our acts of service and love, not our oratorical brilliance and institutional success, will intrigue people with our message.”

WINDS OF CHANGE

McNeal does not dally with whether the 21st-Century church is falling short; it is. *Missional Renaissance* contains clear yet inspiring suggestions for Christian leaders interested in reviving the church. The world around us is radically changing, and McNeal challenges the church to adapt. Society is more altruistic, and the search for personal growth and spiritual vitality has reached new heights. The harvest is ripe, and it’s time for church to get over itself and make a real, measurable difference in the lives of others.

Doing so requires a true paradigm shift in how we “do” church. This is the missional renaissance. McNeal outlines three shifts that must take place for a church to become missional:

Missional Shift 1: From an Internal to an External Ministry Focus

The church must no longer measure its effectiveness by what transpires within the building, i.e. hip, new marketing, entertaining music, or increased attendance. Instead positive, lasting community impact should be the church’s metric for success.

Missional Shift 2: From Program Development to People Development

To have real staying power, the church must stop investing so much time and energy on new programs, and begin to develop its own people to be able to go out into the community and sustain the work of God. Also, ministries must create programs that develop those they are trying to reach. This is the kind of service that will get the world’s attention. Anything else is just ministry for the sake of ministry.

Missional Shift 3: From Church-Based to Kingdom-Based Leadership

Church leaders can no longer settle for serving only those who come into the church, but rather they must proactively engage their community. Leaders no longer need skills to fill a traditional church sanctuary, but rather Kingdom impact through the power and presence of Christ in the world. These leaders are fundamentally different in calling from their distant cousins in the traditional church.

These shifts are major, and churches will need new metrics in place to determine success. However, each church's focus will differ (one church may have a passion for prison ministry, while another is concerned with providing safe drinking water in developing countries, while still another is committed to feeding the hungry in its neighborhood) so McNeal explains that metrics can be implemented to reflect the individual church.

Reading *Missional Renaissance* is like looking in a mirror—you may not like what you see, but you're guaranteed to want to do something about it. To be clear, here is what you won't find in this book: snappy and "relevant" evangelism tactics to make your church "cool" and increase your Sunday headcount. What you will find: a clarion call to all Christians to challenge the status quo of the church's role in society.

McNEAL'S ROLE IN MY MINISTRIES

As a leader of 140 churches and over 500 pastors, I have used McNeal to shape our movement for the last eight years. He has helped many of our pastors find their niche and fundamentally changed how a few do their ministry. For instance, one sold his building and built a Community Life Center that hosts 16 weekly services for different churches to reach different types of people. The center also provides services for people in the community, many of which have no other relationship to the church.

Another pastor resigned his position in a large church to lead a network of ministry groups that serve the people in the community by meeting their needs. To fund the endeavor, this pastor gave up most of the traditional pastoral accoutrements and got a "secular" job in order to see lost people come to know Christ and grow in Him. Both of these ministries were founded on the principles in this book. Both were encouraged by McNeal and were also encouraging to him.

If you want to continue to do church on Sunday morning by attracting the most people you can through your service, then this book is not for you. If you are serious about carrying out the mandate of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, then this book will challenge your socks off. And it may lead you to one of the most effective times in your life.

Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church

By Reggie McNeal

Jossey-Bass, 224 pp. \$24.95

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG