

A summation of the Present Future by Reggie McNeal
Six tough questions for the church.

The New Realities

New Reality #1: The collapse of the church culture

Wrong question: How do we do church better?

Tough question: How do we convert from churchianity to christianity.

New Reality #2: The Shift from church growth to Kingdom growth

Wrong question: How do we grow this church?

Tough question: How do we transform our community?

New Reality #3: A new reformation: releasing God's people

Wrong question: How do we turn members into ministers?

Tough question: How do we turn members into missionaries?

New Reality #4: The return to spiritual formation

Wrong question: How do we develop church members?

Tough question: How do we develop followers of Jesus?

New Reality #5: The shift from planning to preparation

Wrong question: How down plan for the future?

Tough question: How down prepare for the future?

New Reality #6: The rise of apostolic leadership

Wrong question: How do we develop leaders for church work?

Tough question: How do we develop leaders for a Christ movement?

What catches my attention: Reggie McNeal reshapes questions that pastors, church leaders, lay people, and consultants feel moved to ask, but puts these questions in a missional outlook. Agreeing that Christendom is dead but never had a funeral, we inherently go back to making the church the focus rather than the kingdom of God the focus. This confronts a system that made its own reality, a club mentality.

So, the focus is not on how to make the church better, it is how do we follow Jesus more deeply. How do we transform our community?, NOT how do we grow this church. It turns out we all had questions but we were asking the wrong questions instead of the tough questions. The tough questions lead us out of the four walls of our churches to lean and trust that God is leading us into a new reality, a mission and Jesus focused reality.

It causes me to ask the following questions: Since the first read of this Present Future is a gut punch to many, my first question is how do we have this conversation? Clearly, people become defensive when they are told they are asking the wrong question. This will need lots of grace. My second question is, what do we do with people who are unwilling to engage in the tough questions? (Shoulder shrug) Finally, how do we process next achievable steps in mission because we have engaged the tough questions?

What is the holy spirit nudging us toward: Asking the tough questions engages us in mission and not in making the church better. This new reality allows us to engage our communities, make disciples, and share God's love for the world in new ways. Most importantly, this Present Future gives us a posture of mission and not a posture of church. I believe this is the first stage in engaging congregations who want to do mission but don't know how because they have been stuck asking the wrong questions instead of the tough questions.