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## Preparing for the Future!

As I have traveled around speaking and talking with people in conjunction with the book I wrote, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*, I have run into an increasing number of people who are expressing fundamental doubts about the viability of the church. These are not critics from the outside who don't like what the church is doing. These are connected leaders who don't like what they are experiencing in church. What I say in the book and what I believe is that we can't keep "doing church" the way we've always done it and expect it to thrive. Because it won't. When you watch this series of sessions on the DVD, you are likely to find that some of your own assumptions about church are being challenged:

- If you build the perfect church (the way we think about church), they (all who aren't already there) will come.
- Growing your church will automatically make a difference in the larger community.
- Developing better church members will result in greater evangelism.
- The church needs more workers (for church work).
- Being involved in church results in discipleship.
- Better planning will get you where you want to go (in terms of missional effectiveness).

Those assumptions describe a church world that has only a limited time left. A future already exists that significantly alters the spiritual landscape in North America. Church leaders and members who want to participate in a renewal of the North American church must face this "present future" and its new realities. These realities represent tectonic shifts in the ethos of the spiritual quest of humanity. Each reality requires the church to shift its thinking

from answering the wrong question to pursuing the implications of a tough question.

The motivation behind this DVD series is the desire to help churches and church leaders deal with these realities and to be obedient to what God is asking the church to do as a consequence. It is a tall order because many, if not most, church members have never experienced missional living. They've just experienced church.

Here are some questions to get people thinking and exchanging ideas. You might want to jot your initial thoughts down in the space provided. If you do this throughout the guide, you will create a journal of what you were thinking or what God was saying to you.

*Conversation Starters*

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What would spiritual awakening in your community look like? How would it be different from church as usual?

How would spiritual awakening affect your community?

How would spiritual awakening affect your church?

What would you be doing—and doing differently—in a spiritual awakening?

What would your church be doing—and doing differently—in a spiritual awakening?

What is keeping spiritual awakening from coming?

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## **Introduction to the DVD Curriculum: What Are You Looking At?**

The John 4 account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria has a fascinating subplot that shows how challenging it will be to reorient North American Christians to God's mission in the world. In the Sychar experience, Jesus had a harder time getting through to the disciples than he did in achieving a radical transformation in the life of the Samaritan woman. It is possible that the disciples passed this woman on their way into town and on their way out. They apparently didn't engage her (or any other Samaritan).

When the disciples returned to Jesus at the well, he was enjoying a personal moment of missional accomplishment that they knew nothing about. He was so filled with joy that he had no room for food. When they wondered aloud if someone had slipped him some food, Jesus launched into a description of the smorgasbord of missional opportunity if the disciples could only learn to see.

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:34–35, NIV). The disciples never saw the Samaritan woman. They couldn't see the harvest.

The reason Jesus had trouble getting his disciples to see what he saw was simply this: they had grown up in church! They had been trained to be concerned with internal issues rather than to keep their eyes on the harvest. Not that they forgot the harvest, but it was in the future ("four months more"), after their own internal needs had been met.

The disciples had grown up under the influence of Pharisees. The Pharisees' approach to sharing God was "Come and get it!" What they offered was the invitation for people to convert to their

culture in order to get a shot at getting connected to God. They had contorted God's mission to a message of moralism: "You people 'out there' need to straighten up!" They had developed a very insular culture. They lived inside a Pharisee bubble (doing business only with other Pharisees, eating only with other Pharisees, worshiping only with members of their sect, and so on). In short, they operated a religious club for club members.

Jesus' evangelism strategy directly challenged the Pharisees' approach (and the behavior of disciples who had been trained in it). Instead of "Come and get it!" it was "Go get 'em!" Instead of withdrawing from people for fear of contamination, he ate with them. Instead of insisting that people clean up in order to come to God, Jesus preached that God accepts people as they are so that in the light of this love they can come to their senses (like the Prodigal Son). Instead of advancing religious institutionalism, Jesus talked about experiencing abundant life through a personal relationship with God. He gave himself away to poor people, sick people, unclean people, the disadvantaged, and those who had been disfranchised from the religion of the privileged.

In this series of DVDs, we're going to be discussing what it will take to move from a "come and get it" mentality to a "go get 'em" mind-set. It all starts with questions, in this case with pairs of questions: wrong questions (the ones we usually ask that keep us stuck in church as usual) and tough questions (the ones we need to be asking and answering if we want to move to a new present future).

Jesus had his hands full when it came to getting his disciples to "get it" in terms of his mission. In the DVD, the episode of the woman at the well is used to highlight the challenges church people face in seeing the world as God sees it.

As before, jot down some of your thoughts in preparation for discussing the following questions.

*Conversation Starters*

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Why do you think the disciples failed to engage the Samaritan woman?

In what ways is a Pharisee mentality reflected in the church culture of North America?

Who are the people “not like us” in your community?

What do you think it would take to engage them?

Is your church “looking out” or “looking in”?

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## **New Reality Number One: Generational Cultures and the Collapse of the Church Culture**

**WRONG QUESTION:** How do we do church better?

**TOUGH QUESTION:** How do we deconvert from “churchianity” to Christianity?

The collapse of the church culture as we know it will not be the death of the church. The church Jesus founded is good; it is right. It will survive until he returns. The imminent demise discussed in this series is the collapse of the unique culture in North America that has come to be called “church.” This church culture has become confused with biblical Christianity, both inside the church and out. In reality, the church culture in North America is a mere vestige of the original movement, an institutional expression of religion that is in part a civil religion and in part a club where religious people can hang out with other people whose politics, worldview, and lifestyle match theirs.

Church culture collapse can be demonstrated in several ways. One is through demographics. Statistical data reveal an accelerating drop in church participation. The only reason church attendance is holding up is that people are living longer. The further down we go in the generational chain, the smaller the percentage of each succeeding generation that reports going to church. The number of Americans reporting “no religious preference” doubled in the last decade of the twentieth century. These are not atheists (only 1 percent of respondents identified themselves this way). These are Americans who simply don’t see the church as playing a vital role in their spiritual experience.

Many congregations and church leaders, faced with the collapse of the church culture, have responded by adopting a refuge mentality. This is the perspective reflected in the approach to ministry that withdraws from the culture, that builds the walls higher and thicker,

that tries to hang on to what we've got, that hunkers down to wait for the storm to blow over and for things to get back to "normal" so that the church can resume its previous place in the culture.

People who hold this perspective frequently lament the loss of cultural support for church values and adopt an "us-versus-them" view of the world. Those with a refuge mentality view the world outside the church as the enemy. Their answer is to live inside the bubble in a Christian parallel culture. Evangelism in this worldview is about churching the unchurched, not connecting people to Jesus. It focuses on cleaning people up, changing their behavior so that Christians (read church people) can be more comfortable around them. Refuge churches evidence enormous self-preoccupation. They deceive themselves into believing they are a potent force in their communities.

The North American church is suffering from severe mission amnesia. It has forgotten why it exists. The church was created to be the people of God to join him in his redemptive mission in the world. The church was never intended to exist for itself. It was and is the chosen instrument of God to expand his kingdom. The church is the bride of Christ. Its union with him is designed for reproduction, the growth of the kingdom. Jesus does not teach his disciples to pray "Thy church come." The church is not the destination; the kingdom is. In its institutional preoccupation, the church has abandoned its real identity and reason for existence.

The correct response to the collapse of the church culture is not to try to become better at doing church. This only feeds the problem and hastens the church's decline through its disconnect from the larger culture. The need is not for a methodological fix. The need is for a missional fix.

## **New Reality Number One, Part One: Generational Cultures**

In this session, Reggie detailed the characteristics of each generation in American life, noting that each of these generational cohorts represents a distinct culture.

### *Conversation Starters*

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What new insights did you gain about your own generation?

What new insights did you gain about other generations?

What are the implications of this discussion for relationships in your family?

What are you going to do with these new insights?

Before we meet for the next session, please think about and respond to the following questions:

Which generation (or generations) is your church geared for? In worship? In its programming?

Which generations find your church most alien to their culture?

How are you and your church going to learn more about these generational cultures?

How can your church broaden its appeal across the generational cultures?

How willing is your church to take the steps necessary to connect with more generational cultures?

## **New Reality Number One, Part Two: The Collapse of the Church Culture**

“You can build the perfect church, and they still won’t come,” Reggie asserts in this discussion. He further points out that the church culture, dominated by a Christendom worldview, is losing its influence in North America. This session challenges our preoccupation with institutional “church” in this new world.

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### *Conversation Starters*

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What strikes you about the “person on the street” interviews at the beginning of this session?

What evidence of the collapse of the church culture do you see?

What is going on spiritually in our culture that resembles the world of A.D. 30?

Write your responses to the following questions before the next session.

Do you see evidence of “refuge mentality” in your church?  
In you?

What do you think were the most important aspects of the early Christian movement?

In what ways is the movement of A.D. 30 different from what you are experiencing?

How do you respond to the challenge of “deconverting” from “churchianity” to Christianity?

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## **New Reality Number Two: The Shift from Church Growth to Kingdom Growth**

**WRONG QUESTION:** How do we grow our church (how do we get them to come to us)?

**TOUGH QUESTION:** How do we transform our community (how do we hit the streets with the gospel)?

An entire industry of church growth experts, seminars, tape clubs, journals, and books all target church leaders who want to upfit their congregations to be competitive in the church market. Churches have jumped headlong into the customer service revolution. Many have carefully studied the unchurched population to determine the best ways to be “seeker-sensitive” or “seeker-driven.” The demand for more contemporary worship experiences required the redesign of worship services, including greater demands on worship leaders to produce high-quality musical offerings, often accompanied by drama or video productions. Massive infusions of technology have been required to update member communications. Buildings have been renovated or constructed to satisfy an increasingly high-maintenance church consumer.

All of this has been done with what results? Diminishing returns! While church members have moved around from church to church, there has been no real penetration into the pagan pool. It’s time to wake up and smell the coffee. We can keep on this track just to watch even more dismal results (the transfer of church members from the dinghies to the cruise ships will eventually stall).

Unfortunately, several decades of the church growth movement’s emphasis on methodologies have conditioned church leaders to look for the next program, the latest “model,” the latest fad in ministry programming to help grow the church. The focus of the church is on itself, on what it takes to succeed.

In the church age, cultural presence has largely depended on church real estate. People had to come inside the church to participate in Christian worship, to observe Christian sacraments, to study Scripture, to “join” the church. In the emerging future, this “come and get it!” approach will yield to another strategy.

Taking the gospel to the streets means we need church where people are already hanging out. We need a church in every mall, every Wal-Mart Supercenter, every Barnes and Noble. Fast-food companies are putting most of their new stores in places where people already are—hospitals, schools, food courts, gasoline stations, sports complexes.

When we go there, what we take is important. We take service. Serving others, blessing others, is the way we will do evangelism among people who will not come to us. This includes not only the targets of ministry but also the unchurched people who will join with us as we work for better neighborhoods, better schools, and better communities.

In the twenty-first century, it's going to take the smell of cleaning solution, dirty faces, and obvious acts of servanthood to gain a hearing for gospel in the streets. We Christians have been great in speaking the truth *without* love, but Scripture says we are to speak the truth *in love* (Ephesians 4:15). We have the truth; the trouble is, people can't hear it from us because we haven't earned the privilege to share it.

At the point people ask us why we serve them, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to be ready to give them an answer for the hope that is in us. We might say something like, “I am a follower of Jesus. I am following him by serving you, because that's what he came to do.” This sends the right message of good news while avoiding a reply that creates resistance. It signals to people that God is for them, not against them, but it also provides content to what it means to be a follower of Jesus, who gave his life in service to others and invites his disciples to do the same.

God's redemptive mission is for the whole world, played out in the world. The church has been created to partner with God in this mission. Once we get this truth, we leave the confines of the church to engage the world in mission.

*Conversation Starters*

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What strikes you about the “person on the street” interviews that introduce this section?

How do people gauge the “success” of your church?

How do these measures square with a kingdom perspective?

How does Reggie's statement, “The church is not the destination; the kingdom is the destination,” challenge or confirm your thinking?

What percentage of your church's time, money, and energy is spent on itself in relation to the use of these resources in the community?

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Before we meet for the next session, please think through and respond to the following questions:

What evidence do you see that God is at work in the world beyond the church?

Reggie challenged your church to have a blessing strategy. Who can you bless?

How do grace and blessing go together? What changes would be called for in order for you and your church to bless people who are not church people?

In what ways is your church serving the community?

How are you serving the community? In what ways are you loving your neighbor as yourself?

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## **New Reality Number Three: 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?

The first Reformation was about freeing the church. The new Reformation is about freeing God's people from the church (the institution). The original Reformation decentralized the church. The new Reformation decentralizes ministry. The former Reformation occurred when clergy were no longer willing to take marching orders for their ministry from the pope. The current Reformation finds church members no longer willing to have clergy script their personal spiritual ministry journey. The last Reformation moved the church closer to town. The new Reformation is moving the church closer to the world.

The historic Reformation distinguished Christians one from the other. The current Reformation is distinguishing followers of Jesus from religious people. The European Reformation assumed the church to be a part of the cultural-political order. The Reformation currently under way does not rely on the cultural-political order to prop up the church. The initial Reformation was about the church. The new Reformation is about mission.

Ministers have waged an enduring campaign to convince the laity to support church efforts with energy, prayer, time, talent, and money. This myopic vision has resulted in ministry being defined largely in church terms and laypeople often being viewed as functional resources to get church work done.

The collapse of the church culture and the emergence of kingdom growth as a paradigm for renewal spell the end of an era of church members playing supporting roles (even if those supporting roles have been recast as "every member a minister"). Many churches just don't get this. They view the recruitment difficulties they are

experiencing as a motivational issue rather than understanding the significant shift in how people are making decisions about how they will spend their lives.

Laypeople see the disconnect. For many of them, church has become increasingly irrelevant to their workday and home lives. Church ministry to them is an add-on activity to an already crowded life. They wonder why God can't use them where he has already embedded them—in their homes, their workplaces, their schools, and their communities.

The church has failed to call people out to the true potential as God's priests *in the world*. In short, we have to help people become missionaries in the world where God has already placed them. We must create a culture informed by missiology and help people see venues where they can practice being missionaries.

If you are a pastor or staff leader of a local congregation, you must model missionary behavior for the church to see. If you are a lay leader, you don't have to be cut out of the action. You might want to lead your church Bible study, your care group, or your ministry team to develop some community ministry. This might involve moving off campus. It might precipitate a complete shift in your ministry focus. You might find more expression outside the church than inside. You will find yourself becoming a missionary to the people you work with every day, many of whom will never show up at your church.

Releasing people to be missionaries will turn your congregation inside out. It will help people and families shape their lives around their sense of mission by reducing the compartmentalization that plagues them. Rather than trying to attract people's leftover energies (after work, school, family, and so on), release them to find and give expression to their missionary calling. Then watch the energy flow!

For the church to join God where he is at work (in the world) will require that we free up God's people to engage that mission in the community and in the daily activities of their lives, not just in

church. This session explores the implications of this shift for you and your church.

*Conversation Starters*

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What strikes you about the “person on the street” interviews that introduce this session?

How do you respond to the idea that it’s time to release people from the church for the sake of missional effectiveness?

What is your church’s scorecard for measuring what being a “committed” church member involves?

How would the scorecard change to reflect member-missionaries?

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Before we meet for the next session, please think through and respond to the following questions:

Where has God positioned you as a missionary?

What opportunities are there for you in mission to the people around you?

What would have to change in your life (for example, attitudes or behavior) for you to think of yourself as a missionary?

What do you need to equip yourself to be a missionary?

How can your church or ministry organization celebrate the move to turn members into missionaries?

How can your church or ministry organization create a missionary culture?

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## **New Reality Number Four: The Return to Spiritual Formation**

**WRONG QUESTION:** How can we develop better church members?

**TOUGH QUESTION:** How can we develop followers of Jesus?

Many church members feel they have been sold a bill of goods. They were promised that if they would be good church members, if they would discover their gifts, join a small group, sign up for a church ministry, give to the building program, learn to clap or dance in worship, or attend this or that, they would experience a full and meaningful life.

The trouble is, we don't have much evidence to support the assumption that all this church activity has produced more mature followers of Jesus. It has produced many tired, burned-out members who find that their lives mimic the lives and dilemmas of people in the culture who don't pay the church rent.

The faithful, silently or not so silently, wonder when their ticket is going to be punched, when they are going to experience the changed life they've been promised and expected to find at church. In North America, these people have been led to believe that their Christian life is all about the church, so this failure of the church not only creates doubt about the church but also leads them to all kinds of doubt about God and their relationship with him.

The approach to spirituality in the modern church has been to adopt the world's educational model. The basic assumption is that the path to Christian maturity involves the acquisition of biblical information. Spirituality in the modern church is largely a head trip. That is why the lifestyles and values of people in the church mirror so closely the lifestyles and values of people in the larger culture. We have a rational faith. The test for orthodoxy typically focuses on doctrinal stances, not character or spiritual connectedness to God and others. Faith, in the modern world's church, is about cognitive assent, not belief in the biblical sense.

Christians in North America largely practice their faith in a segmented way, separated from other parts of life (business, family, and so forth). That is why we “go to church” to do our spiritual activity. That is why we don’t do spiritual formation at home—that’s what the church is for. After all, spiritual “education” should be left to the professionals who have the training and credentials for it. The end result is parents unable to talk to their kids about God, church members who take their teenagers to church (believing that this activity inoculates them against the influence of a pagan culture) but don’t talk with them about life implications of faith, couples who are embarrassed to pray together—the list goes on and on.

People who claim to be followers of Jesus claim to have a relationship with him. This means they *know him*, not just *know about him* (this was Paul’s claim in Philippians 3:10). Yet we have turned our churches into groups of people who are studying God as though they were taking a course at school or attending a business seminar. We aim at the head. We don’t deal in relationships. And we wonder why there is no passion for Jesus and his mission. It’s because, in our efforts to disciple people, we’ve been barking up the wrong tree.

The deal is this: we have assumed that if people come to church often enough, they will grow. We’ve got to be much more intentional than this. The current approach to spiritual development focuses on the members’ involvement in church activity. What if we took out a clean sheet of paper and asked, “What do we want people to learn?” Better yet, what if we asked them!

Spiritual formation in the emerging world will be much more customized to the needs of the person rather than an invitation for people to attend a class or participate in a seminar or follow whatever template the church has created for personal growth. More and more, we will engage people in crafting a customized development path. Perhaps we will begin with an interview that asks them to declare how they most experience God, how they would like to grow, how they would like to serve others, how they would like to be coached, and how they can be prayed for.

Spiritual formation will be concerned more and more with helping people debrief their lives. It will happen increasingly outside church classrooms and schedules, and it will be intergenerational.

This session deals with our spiritual growth and development. Throughout the presentation, Reggie contends that we need to “broaden our bandwidth” of spiritual formation efforts to include more than Bible study. Ultimately, spiritual formation is about developing people. This truth prompts Reggie to call for churches to engage in greater “life coaching.”

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*Conversation Starters*

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What strikes you about the “person on the street” interviews that introduce this session?

In what ways do you see God most at work in your life?

In what ways do you see God at work in your family?

In what ways do you see God at work in your workplace or your neighborhood?

In what ways is God at work in your faith community?

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Before we meet for the next session, please think through and respond to the following questions:

In what ways would you like to serve other people? What contributions would you like to make?

What would you like God to do in your life over the next three months?

Six months?

What kind of help do you need from others or your faith community for you to grow?

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## **New Reality Number Five: The Shift from Planning to Preparation**

**WRONG QUESTION:** How do we plan for the future?

**TOUGH QUESTION:** How do we prepare for the future?

Most of what affects the church happens outside of it and outside its control. That's why we need a completely different approach to the future. We can't predict and plan for it, as though we lived in a world that experiences significant continuity. Our current environment is too changeable. If predictions are off, planning is off. Planning also tends to be incremental, pushing what we are currently doing into a world that we imagine will be the same as it is today. And one thing we know is that the world *won't* be the same. Incrementalism as an anticipatory strategy is dead.

Instead, a strategy of preparation makes much more sense in a world experiencing massive discontinuities.

The difference between planning and preparedness is more than semantics in the biblical teaching. God does the planning; we do the preparing. It is God who declares, "I know the plans I have for you" (Jeremiah 29:11). He does not say, "I am waiting for you to develop plans I can bless." There is a dimension beyond planning that is critical for us to understand. Spiritual preparation has the goal of getting God's people in partnership with him in his redemptive mission in the world.

Spiritual preparation is not a formula. Nor is it a set of principles. It is not a program that comes in a kit. But it does have an architecture. In fact, these elements have a fractal quality about them, meaning that once these elements have been identified, they are iterated and reiterated through every part of a spiritual effort or ministry organization. The five elements of spiritual preparation architecture are vision, values, results, strengths, and learnings.

**Vision.** In the emerging world, people will increasingly demand intentionality in the organizations they belong to. They will belong only to organizations that help them experience the vision they have for their own life. This makes vision all the more critical to the church's ability to recruit people into the great mission of God. To move beyond a program-based, activity-based approach to church life, church leaders will increasingly need to be able to cast a compelling vision of kingdom growth.

**Values.** Kingdom vision requires kingdom values to support it. Vision is the seed; values are the soil. Leaders who don't pay attention to clarifying values are often frustrated because they don't know why the vision goes nowhere. Make no mistake about it: competing value sets do not coexist peacefully. One set will win over the other. The clash between "club member" values and missionary values has claimed a lot of casualties.

**Results.** Great organizations and leaders get results because they go all out and are willing to live and die by the results they identify as their benchmarks for success. Effective missional congregations are no exception. They know what constitutes success in God's eyes, and they go after it. This is really a scorecard issue. The missional church scorecard looks very different from that of program churches. While the latter churches track how many people come to church activities, how involved they are in church programs, and how much they contribute to the church ministry, missional congregations expand the bandwidth of accounting. They also want to track how much money is given away, how many missionaries are deployed, and how many people are touched in ministry. Missional congregations measure their impact beyond the church walls; other congregations take their cues from what happens on church real estate during church time.

**Strengths.** As a component of spiritual preparation architecture, strengths include both strength awareness and strength building.

This is true both for organizations and for people. Designing a strategy for preparing for the future based on the congregation's strengths signals to the followers of Jesus that they should also pursue a course of discovering their own talent and applying it to their life experience in order to live more intentional and abundant lives.

**Learnings.** Much of the incrementalism that plagues the North American culture results from a failure to engage in learning, the fifth component of being prepared. Learning is often preceded by unlearning as we figure out what no longer serves the purpose of helping the church join God in his redemptive mission in the world. Church leaders must “go to school” all the time. Their course of study will depend on the challenges they face, but some of the most common include understanding the culture, casting visions, communicating, mastering organizational behavior, developing leadership, doing apologetics, and futuring, just to get started.

The future belongs not to those who plan for it but to those who prepare for it.

In this session, Reggie explains how we prepare (rather than plan) for the future. He identifies five key components to spiritual preparation: vision, values, results, strengths, and learnings. Answer these questions with reference to the church.

#### *Conversation Starters*

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What hunches do you have about the next “missional” chapter for the church?

What behaviors will be required to support this new chapter for the church?

What strengths does your church need to build on?

What do you need to learn to help you become more missionally effective as a church?

What does your church need to “unlearn”?

The following questions probe each spiritual preparation component for your life and personal ministry.

What hunches do you have about the next “missional” chapter for your life?

What behaviors will be required to support this new chapter for you?

What personal strengths do you need to practice?

What do you need to learn to help you personally become more missionally effective?

What do you need to “unlearn” as a follower of Jesus?

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## **New Reality Number Six: The Rise of Apostolic Leadership**

**WRONG QUESTION:** How do we train leaders for church work?

**TOUGH QUESTION:** How do we train leaders for the Christian movement?

Leadership is always in high demand and short supply. Sometimes the leadership deficit is more acute. This is especially true in times of great paradigmatic shifts, when the leadership requirements are shifting as well. It takes time for a new crop of leaders to come up to speed to the new set of challenges. We are in such a leadership crisis right now in the North American church. Simply put, we have critical shortage of the right kind of leadership necessary to help the North American church become more missionally effective.

The kind of leadership we need is the kind of leadership the Christian movement enjoyed in its early days. The similarities of the challenges between the first century and the twenty-first century are striking: globalism, religious pluralism, and collapse of institutional religion, to name a few. We need again the kind of leadership that shaped the movement's development in A.D. 30. We need leadership for a new apostolic era.

Apostolic leaders in the first and twenty-first centuries evidence distinctive characteristics. They are missional, meaning they order their lives around a missionary purpose. Apostolic leaders believe they are responsible for fulfilling the Great Commission. They are visionary; their efforts are energized by a vision of a preferred future, not just informed by a denominational program or the latest methodological fad. They are entrepreneurial, taking calculated risks in order to create markets for the gospel. Apostolic leaders prefer to work in teams. They plant churches in teams. They give leadership to existing churches in teams. They are not Lone Rangers. Apostolic

leaders release ministry to people and people to ministry. These leaders are genuinely spiritual. Their lives cannot be explained apart from the power of God. Apostolic leaders have a core value of cultural relevance.

Leaders of this ilk come in both the clergy and lay varieties.

While other ministry motifs and models require leaders to be competent to work inside the church, the apostolic leader's competency revolves around the ability to work outside the church in the world that is not a part of the church culture. Even though many of them operate in a church position, they measure their effectiveness by their impact beyond the church walls.

The development of apostolic leaders usually occurs in an intentional learning community. The training of apostolic leaders pays attention to four major arenas of learning: paradigm awareness, microskill training, resource development, and personal growth.

**Paradigm Awareness.** Paradigm awareness acknowledges that how leaders view the world profoundly affects their vision, values, and behaviors. The “refuge paradigm,” for instance, militates against church missional renewal. Yet many church leaders operate from this perspective. Many have not reckoned with the implications of shifting from a member culture to a missionary culture. They have not considered the new world that requires that the church *be* the church, not just *do* church.

**Microskill Training.** Microskill training for apostolic leaders has a different content to it, though it might cover some of the same skill sets used by other church leaders. Areas for development include vision cultivation and vision casting, communication, team building, leading change and transition, mentoring and coaching, and conflict management, just to name a few. This training is not limited to clergy. Having an effective missionary force will require that leader-missionaries know how to establish and conduct conversations about Jesus, how to develop relationships for the sake of the gospel, how to network believers in the marketplace for prayer and

support, and a host of other skills that enable them to be a blessing to those around them.

**Resource Development.** Resource development targets the resources of prayer, people, time, money, facilities, and technology. A church member culture approaches the development of these resources quite differently from the way a missionary culture does. For instance, the member culture soaks up members' time in church activities, whereas the missionary culture creates time for missionary expression. All leaders have the same categories of resources to work with.

**Personal Growth.** The issues in the personal growth arena of apostolic leader development are both different and the same for clergy and lay leaders. Some items, such as practicing spiritual disciplines, are similar no matter what the leadership venue. Some issues, however, are significantly affected by the scope of ministry assignment. A compendium of personal growth items would include talent identification and development, family relationships, emotional intelligence, financial matters, and finishing well, to name a few.

The goal of an apostolic leadership development process is to create a core of leaders who are capable of strategizing, launching, and conducting a mission for expanding the kingdom of God.

This session focuses on the leadership qualities and learning agenda for leaders of the movement in what Reggie describes as a "new apostolic era." The suggestions he makes emerge from his perspective that "it is A.D. 30 all over again."

#### *Conversation Starters*

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What paradigm issues (how you see your world) do you need help with?

What specific skill development or training do you need for missional leadership?

What resources do you need to help you in your development or redeploying for missional living?

What areas of personal growth would you like to focus on?

How will you be a leader of the Christian movement in your world?

How can your church help develop you as a leader for the movement?

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## What's Next?

At this point in your journey, you are a different person from who you were when you started. Ideally, that difference includes a greater desire to be a person of God who joins him in his redemptive mission in the world. You have probably already determined to make some adjustments in how you live, how you pray, and how you bless others. As you answer the following questions, you might want to read back over your workbook, remembering how God spoke to you.

What lessons have you learned from this journey through the six present futures? List two to four that stand out most.

How are you going to live missionally?

What will need to change for this to happen?

Who else needs to be involved in your missional journey?

What help do you need? How do you intend to get it?

Who are you going to tell so they can pray for you?

What are the first three things you are going to do?



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## The Author

Reggie McNeal is the director of leadership development at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. His past experience involves twenty years in local church leadership, ten years in various staff roles, and ten years as a founding pastor of a new church. Reggie has lectured or served as adjunct faculty for multiple seminaries, including Southwestern Baptist (Ft. Worth, TX), Golden Gate Baptist (San Francisco, CA), Fuller Theological (Pasadena, CA), Trinity Divinity School (Deerfield, IL), and Columbia International (Columbia, SC). In addition, Reggie has served as a consultant to local church, denomination, and para-church leadership teams, and as a seminar developer and presenter for thousands of church leaders across North America. He has also provided resources to the United States Army Chief of Chaplains Office, Air Force chaplains, and the Air Force Education and Training Command. Reggie's work also extends to the business sector, including The Gallup Organization.

Reggie has contributed to numerous denominational publications and church leadership journals, including *Leadership* and *Net Results*. His books include *Revolution in Leadership* (Abingdon Press, 1998), *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), and *Practicing Greatness: Seven Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

Reggie's education includes a B.A. degree from the University of South Carolina and the M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees, both from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Reggie and his wife, Cathy, have two daughters, Jessica and Susanna, and make their home in Columbia, South Carolina.

