

# *Point of View*



A LEADERSHIP COMMENTARY ON LIFE TODAY BY BOB SHANK

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Dear Marketplace Friend,

It's a question you may not have heard since your adolescence: "Is yours an *innie*, or an *outie*?" The query probed a personal question about the technique employed by the doctor who cut your umbilical cord...

Reggie McNeal is asking that question in his recent book, ***Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*** (Jossey-Bass, 2009). He isn't asking about your navel; he's exploring the DNA of your church. McNeal – a former pastor, denominational leader, and now consultant with the Leadership Network team in Dallas – probes church at the deepest level to expose the vital differences between those that are *internally focused* and those that are *externally focused*.

Why thrust a book about church leadership on my mostly-marketplace based readership? Great question, and a great answer: it's because "church" isn't a building or a club. You are the church, and if you have proven that God hard-wired you with leadership gifts, you are – by rational extension – a church leader, and should be informed and sophisticated in that leadership.

Reggie argues that a Renaissance is underway, and the substance of the church is morphing back to a biblical

form. It involves what he calls three missional shifts. **Shift #1:** *From an internal to an external ministry focus.* **Shift #2:** *From program development to people development.* **Shift #3:** *From church-based to Kingdom-based leadership.*

I'm tempted to capture the essence of those three shifts in this short review, but I don't want to dilute the powerful message of the book. This isn't Bob's version of Cliff Notes; it's a teaser, to get you to buy and read McNeal's book.

I wore out a yellow highlighter with lines like, "*Jesus invaded all areas of life. Church was not an event or a place; it was a way of life. It must become a way of life, again. Enter the missional church.*" And, "...*what is the 'missional church?' ...the missional church is the people of God partnering with God in his redemptive mission in the world... Our job is not to 'do church' well, but to be the people of God in an unmistakable way in the world...*" The book is now half-yellow.

If the thought of reading a book about leadership strategies for the Church (*that's "big C," not "little c" church*) does not catch your

fancy, you are manifesting the misconception that McNeal writes to modify. If you are a leader, your greatest leadership assignment – ever! – will be participation in maximizing the impact and influence of the Church during your generation’s lap around history’s track. Nothing you’ll ever do in your profession will surpass the significance of that opportunity.

Two decades ago, I was asked to serve as the senior pastor of a church that had been established with an external focus. Four years after coming, an elder confronted me – during a monthly board meeting – with three charges: I was more of a teacher than a preacher (*proof: I didn’t bring him to tears on Sunday mornings*); I was an evangelist, not a pastor/teacher (*ala Ephesians 4:11*), and – the capper – “I had a greater heart for the Kingdom than I did just one church” (*that was no secret; was it a sin?*).

I pled “guilty” to all three charges; days later, I was freed to serve the Kingdom (*and not that church*). The language of **Missional Renaissance** wasn’t used in the process, but the message came through, loud and clear: some folks want an internally-focused church, and others long for an externally focused church. Leaders will orient toward one or the other. Their leadership will reflect that orientation.

Which way do you lean? If *you* are the church – and, *you are!* – what kind of church are *you*?

For The Kingdom,

Bob Shank

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