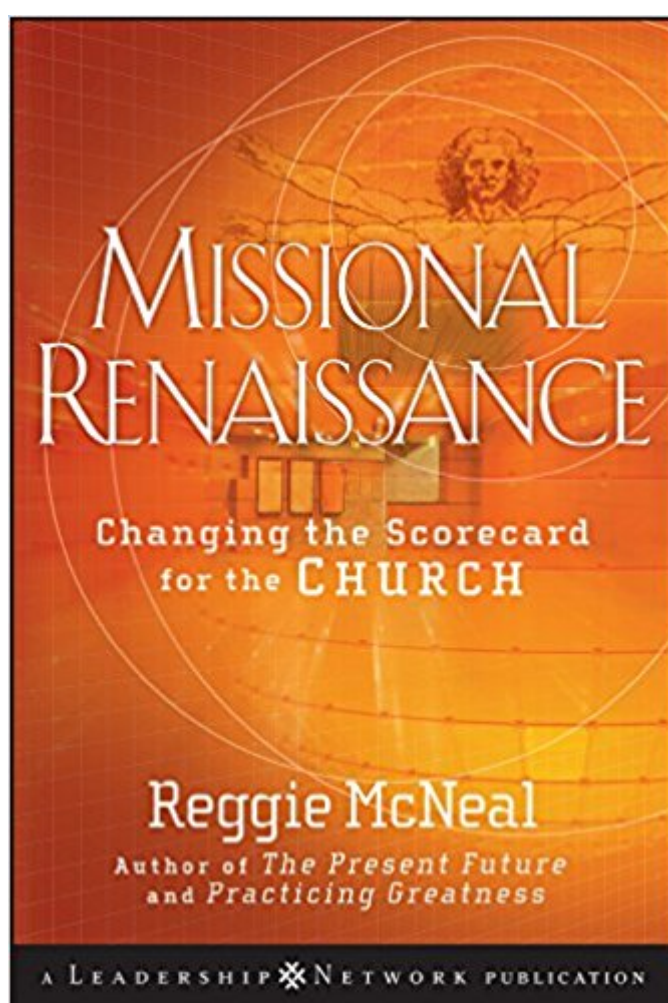


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# Missional Renaissance: Changing The Scorecard For The Church (Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series)



## Synopsis

Reggie McNeal's bestseller *The Present Future* is the definitive work on the "missional movement," i.e., the widespread movement among Protestant churches to be less inwardly focused and more oriented toward the culture and community around them. In that book he asked the tough questions that churches needed to entertain to begin to think about who they are and what they are doing; in *Missional Renaissance*, he shows them the three significant shifts in their thinking and behavior that they need to make that will allow leaders to chart a course toward being missional: (1) from an internal to an external focus, ending the church as exclusive social club model; (2) from running programs and ministries to developing people as its core activity; and (3) from professional leadership to leadership that is shared by everyone in the community. With in-depth discussions of the "what" and the "how" of transitioning to being a missional church, readers will be equipped to move into what McNeal sees as the most viable future for Christianity. For all those thousands of churches who are asking about what to do next after reading *The Present Future*, *Missional Renaissance* will provide the answer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Definitely a "chew the meat and spit out the bones" style of book. I agree with another reviewer, that McNeal seems angry at times. I am not a huge fan of writing a book that spends the majority of time criticizing past institutions, repeatedly, to inform the reader of a present need to change. Missional churches? Yes. At the expense of blasting the local church that has loyally served communities so well for generations? No. Change does need to come, but not at the expense of a critical spirit. It is in fact, the very church, the Reggie consistently criticizes, that has brought us to this juncture in time. Let's celebrate where we've been and what has been accomplished and look forward to a more missional shift for the future. But let's not beat up the pastors that have laid down their lives to see the gospel presented to their communities. Overall, I did glean some great points from the book, but found it hard to stay engaged due to the many referrals of how we have continually failed as program churches. I still believe the purpose of the local church is to train and release disciples into our communities, but they need a home base to return to and family to receive them. I'm for a hybrid model of what Reggie proposes, but not quite ready to throw it all out to embrace one mans idea of Renaissance.

I had hopes for this book, given McNeal's reputation. What I found was a book filled with jargon and light on specifics. Over and over, the author extolls the virtues of missional thinkers. They don't make the mistakes we common church people make; I think they don't make any mistakes at all! I found it condescending and tedious. The lack of specific definitions makes it hard to understand what makes up a missional community, or even why one would want to be one, other than the fact that the traditional church is dying. His solution of being missional apparently solves all problems, but the evidence just isn't there. It is not clear what the difference is between being missional and just being a good person. Missional people do all sorts of service work, but where does the faith formation come in? Obviously they never invite anyone to church, we can't have that, but then how do they mention Jesus? Missional people apparently automatically know how to share the Gospel without being too pushy or too quiet. But not all of us do. Some of his tips on leadership were good, but the lack of content to the missional concept limits their usefulness. If missional means everything except what churches currently do, then missional means nothing. I am looking for answers, but I didn't find them here.

The book certainly does that. As an example, here's another interesting and practical exercise that any congregation can start doing right now (from Chapter 6). Reggie states that "To change a culture, you have to change the conversations". So he helped guide conversations that one congregation's leadership team had with several hundred of their church members and participants, including teenagers. They called it "Real Talk" and used these five questions. 1) What do you enjoy doing? Many never make the connection that what they enjoy might be the way God wants to bless others through them. 2) Where do you see God working right now? In your life, your kids' lives, your neighborhood, at work, wherever. 3) What would you like to see God do in your life over the next six to twelve months? How can we help? 4) How would you like to serve other people? How can we help? Rather than trying to plug them in to service opportunities inside the church (although this will happen too), the focus should be about helping people outside the church. 5) How can we pray for you? Over time the results showed that by just doing this and then following up in a coaching setting for those that want to be more intentional about their lives, they advanced God's kingdom as well as added to the vitality of their congregation. This book is full of practical ways to be more outward focused and engaged in your community and beyond.

We love this book. It changed the way that we look at church in modern times. We felt for a while that something was wrong and didn't know what it was. McNeal shows us that we are now very inwardly focused. Instead of getting out and loving our neighbors, we are worried about how much to tithe and what programs are there to service our family. We need to be counting how many hours we are out in the community instead of counting how many people are at church on Sunday. If you are open to it, this book may change your life, as it did ours.

Reggie McNeal answers some BIG questions on the minds of many church leaders who are struggling mightily today, wondering, "What happened? Why aren't we prospering anymore? Where's that vitality, impact, and sense of purpose we used to have?" He offers excellent insight that speaks to Industrial Age and societal norms that have largely influenced what church is and the way we "do church" today. A simple review of what church was meant to be according to sound biblical analysis, combined with a very insightful understanding of how much differently our Post-Modern society thinks and acts today, informs the reader that if the church is to prosper today, three major paradigm shifts are needed. McNeal thoroughly lays out those shifts and offers an easy-to-follow path toward making them for those who are bold enough to step out in faith and make it happen.

I rated this book so highly because it challenged me to think and rethink what Christianity is all about. I would recommend it for any pastor from any denomination. In fact, I have recommended it. Hope it challenges and encourages you as much as it did me!

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