

## "A DIALOG WITH BRIAN MCLAREN AND PAUL DROST ABOUT DOING MINISTRY IN A POSTMODER MATRIX"

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Randy Walls, Director of AGTS Continuing Education interviews Brian McLaren, Pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in the Washington D.C. area, and Paul Drost, Director of Division of A/G Home Missions Church Planting about the issues for church leaders in dealing with the effects of postmodernism on the local church.

Walls: What are the primary tasks for church leaders in the new millennium?

Drost: The primary task for church leaders is to understand what it takes to be effective in engaging the world around us with the claims of Christ. This includes effectively communicating with our congregations in such a way as to inspire them to get on board and empower them to accomplish this mission.

McLaren: Four huge, and exciting, tasks come to my mind. First, we need to come to grips with the epochal change as our culture transitions from a modern world to a postmodern world. Second, we have to come to terms with the fact that we live in a post-Christian culture. This means we have to approach our culture with a missionary strategy as though we were presenting the gospel for the first time. I think Christian faith thrives in this kind of situation and provides us with wonderful ministry opportunities. Third, we need to plant scores of new churches, not just new in age but new in kind, relying on Holy Spirit-inspired creativity to chart new courses and explore fresh territory for the sake of the gospel. Fourth, the boomer generation must empower, encourage, and enfranchise the next generations for leadership or else we will become a bottleneck in God's kingdom.

Walls: What must church leaders know about postmodern culture to effectively reach the unchurched?

McLaren: I devoted a whole book to this (*The Church on the Other Side*), yet I continue to grapple with this subject. However, I can boil it down to two statements. 1) Postmodern people are less impressed with our claims to being right; they want to know if we're good. Good deeds and good relationships are more important to postmodern people than good arguments. 2) Truth is relational. It isn't just an abstract proposition floating in a rational vacuum. Truth is incarnated in people, relationships, lives. For this reason, Paul's words (and Jesus' words!) become more powerful and relevant than ever—without love, we're nothing!

Drost: It is important for us to first believe that postmodern people are reachable. These people are searching for a genuine spirituality. We must change our language and methods of ministry to communicate and minister in ways that are authentic, understandable, and desirable. I am also conscious of the fact that postmodernism, while pervasive, may not reflect the worldview of every unchurched person. Thus, we have to be sensitive to the cultural milieu of every person we are trying to provide an adequate presentation of the gospel.

Walls: What role does church planting have in reaching America with the gospel?

Drost: Peter Wagner has called church planting the single most effective evangelism methodology under heaven. He has documented this statement with a statistical study that shows new church plants bring more people to Christ than churches with a long history. This has profound implications for the established church as we enter the new millennium.

McLaren: That's right. There may be a few places where a status quo ministry can be maintained, in the short run any way. But for the long run, we must revitalize, reinvent, and re-vision our current churches to help them make the transition from modern to postmodern ministry. However, this is the most difficult option for church leaders. Change is a lot harder than we used to think, at least, change of the profound type we need to reach a postmodern culture.

Drost: This reality is why church planting offers church leaders an advantage. Church planters are usually highly motivated, creative, and visionary people. They are high on strategies for reaching the lost, but not yet encumbered with the barriers that can arise in the traditional structures of the established church. Church plants are a new life form with a language that is more easily understood by the unchurched.

McLaren: Innovative new churches can lead the way in reaching postmodern people for Christ. As new churches are planted, I think they will actually be of help to existing churches that want to transform. The new churches will create many new models and creative innovations that will help their older siblings. For that kind of cross-pollination to take place, we must cultivate and guard a gentle and kind spirit, not becoming an "us against them" kind of thinkers. In Christ, it's all "us!" In other words, new churches are an asset, not a threat, to the more established churches.

Drost: I think of it in terms of saturation of the gospel rather than competition for people and dollars. Every healthy church establishes a fresh new presence of God and another voice for the Good News! We need a greater diversity of churches to reach the increasing diversity of America.

All: We invite you to enter this dialogue with us by attending the "Transforming Church Ministry for the 21st Century" seminar which we will hold on August 6 & 7, 2001 in Kansas City, Missouri.