

In the book called “Woke Church,” Eric Mason discusses the importance of the Church of Christ to be awoken from its spiritual slumber. In other words, the Church must reconcile their inward differences among different races and denominations, admit their wrongs, and heal from past and present transgressions such as racism and discrimination, before it can be active in its community. The overall target audience Eric Mason is aiming towards is the entire Body of Christ in America as he believes that believers have been too swept up by Western influence and secularism.

Furthermore, one of Mason’s strengths is that he organizes the entirety of his book by the four main themes of a concept which will be discussed later in the paper. He even addresses which specific chapters are corresponded to each theme of the book. This facilitates the amount of effort the reader has to expend in order to discern the organizational structure of the book. As one of his readers, I can greatly appreciate this. Another one of his strengths is the usage of personal narratives in the beginning of the chapters of the book. This serves to ease the reader into the subtopic and serves as a decent hook to get him or her into the flow of the author’s words and stories. Another advantage of this is that these personal narratives help illustrate the author’s point in a more easily understood context. For an example, when Mason was discussing the significance of family history, he had written about how his father had begged the recruiter to let him fight in World War Two so that he could escape South Carolina so that he can go to the North when the war was over.¹

The third and final strength of the author is the utilization of biblical scripture to support his points and themes. For an example, he mentions Ephesians 3:10 when he discusses how “Prophetic preaching must be clear on the issues of our day.”² Another example is when Mason

¹ Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 76.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

uses the biblical verses of Micah 6 to demonstrate that accountability cannot be bought with the Lord.³ In order to be accountable before the Lord, as believers, we need to have a vision for change. “It is driven by biblically based, gospel- centered, Jesus exalting commitment for the church to draft a strategy to help realize shalom in our cities.”⁴

However, an apparent weakness of the author is that his following quote sounded similar to Pelagianism. “God has already given us the holiness. We do not try to be holy. We are already holy. We just have to live and reflect that reality in how we respond to one another and the world.”⁵ The author is implying that we are already holy and that we are not tainted by sin after the fall of man. That may not be his intention, but it certainly sounds like it. I do believe that Eric Mason should take this quote bordering on heresy out of his book to not misinform his readers. However, besides that particular quote, I do concur with everything the writer advocates in the book.

The first concept I learned from this reading was the “Gospel Justice Restoration and Reciprocity Cycle.”⁶ This cycle involves awareness, acknowledgement, accountability, and action to produce an awakened church or woke church as the author coined the term.⁷ We must first be aware of all of the injustices that are happening in the world such as poverty and human trafficking as well as being aware of the importance of unity as a Body of Christ.⁸ Second, we must be willing to acknowledge the less than reputable parts of the history of our nation.⁹ Third, we need to be accountable for the Great Commission by spreading the good news.¹⁰ Lastly in

³ Ibid., 131.

⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

terms of the cycle, we have to be active.¹¹ “When Christians spend time arguing about what is going on in the public square and not engaging it, we miss redemptive opportunities.”¹² Whether the injustice is poverty or racism, we need to demonstrate our Christian faith through our actions instead of our words. This is because words do not mean anything without action. As James 2:17 advocates, a faith without works is a dead faith.

Another notion of thought is to be clear on issues when preaching prophetically.¹³ This means that “In order to appropriately engage the issues, we must know them. There are many glaring issues that need a prophetic voice: classism, sexism, elitism, poverty, ignorance, wealth, greed, etc.”¹⁴ This also signifies the importance of keeping up with the news and politics to a basic degree for the sake of attaining general knowledge on an international scale. A believer can preach and know his Bible well, yet if he does not know the current events which are happening, his development as a pastor will be stagnated in terms of practical application of his ministry. Nonetheless, if he is aware of them, he can propel a visionary goal to help alleviate poverty as well as offer powerful prayers to the Lord regarding these issues.

A third concept which I have learned was the divergence between three categorical types of justice which can help implement a vision of change. They are intervening justice, preventative justice, and systemic justice.”¹⁵ According to the author, intervening justice pertains to injustices that are easy to resolve that are “up close and personal.”¹⁶ One can assume that by giving out free sustenance to alleviate impoverished individuals can be considered a form of intervening justice. In terms of this justice, “The Woke Church is one that is aware of the urgent needs in its

¹¹ Ibid., 35.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 121.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 141.

¹⁶ Ibid., 137.

community and does more than just talk about those needs. It marshals its forces to make a difference.”¹⁷ The next type of justice is preventative justice which is self-explanatory.

The author explains that “The Woke Church is one that will ... be forward in thinking about ways in which it can prevent certain evils from continuing to cause dysfunction in our context.”¹⁸ The third and last type of justice is systematic justice. “This is where we begin to bring gospel renewal to systems.”¹⁹ In more direct terms, instead of resolving injustices on an individual basis, the Woke Church will resolve the stemming issue of them all which is the overall social system of society. One example the author gave was the “school-to-prison pipeline.”²⁰ This is when “Many schools have policies in place that push students from the classroom and into the criminal justice system at alarming rates.”²¹ Thus, the Woke church should resolve such issues such as this to bring the gospel into peoples’ hearts and save them from such hardships.²²

In pertinence to my application of the book called Woke Church to my ministry, I have discovered three visionary goals I can implement. The first goal is to help change my home church into a multiethnic church at least for its english ministry.²³ My home church has two primary groups of congregates which are the Korean Americans for the English ministry group and the Koreans for the Korean group. Many members of the latter group cannot speak english well and some do not even understand it as they just immigrated from Korea. Unfortunately, I do believe that it will be next to impossible to assimilate Americans into the Korean group because of the language barrier for the fellowship, worship, as well as for the sermons.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 140.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 141.

²³ Ibid., 176.

Nevertheless, as I have stated before, it is very plausible for the English ministry group. Right now, we cannot be called a multiethnic church because we only have one Lebanese American and he is on vacation now to Vietnam. Thus, as of right now, we have zero Caucasian Americans as well as African Americans in our home church. Therefore, my Korean American congregates and I should venture more out of our comfort zone and should approach strangers more to get to know them and evangelize them. Nonetheless, the apparent problem is that many atheists now perceive Christian evangelizers as shallow recruiters who only care about evangelization rather than actually knowing the individual. Thus, we should prioritize getting to know the worldview of the nonbeliever slowly but surely while doing secular activities together such as mountain biking, swimming, hiking, bowling, etc. After all, it is harder for one to say no to someone the stronger their relationship is and vice versa. I strongly believe that such endeavors will pay off in the long run if we are dedicated and patient, not solely through our own efforts, but through the work of the Holy Spirit within people's hearts. I also believe that there is great benefit for this vision for change even though it may be uncomfortable at first.

The second visionary goal I would like to implement would be to resist dismissiveness and indifferences toward injustices. After all, the author asserts that "An injustice done to one human being is an injustice done to us all. Each injustice seeks to weaken the fabric of our humanity and must be resisted at all costs."²⁴ The problem of being apathetic is that a believer can feel little to nothing regarding another individual's suffering, especially if that someone is a stranger who the believer does not know. The reason for this is that the media portrays injustices every day and so the human mind simply does not care as much as before. Just like how if someone constantly complains about their suffering, we eventually go from feeling sympathy to feeling apathy. A solution to this is reading and mediating upon Scripture daily. This can change

²⁴ Ibid., 150.

a believer from reading the Bible out of duty to being filled with grace, mercy, patience, and love by the Holy Spirit. In more direct terms, the Lord takes away our apathy and changes it to sympathy if we spend more time with Him. Therefore, there should be accountability among the church congregates of my home church to read and mediate on the bible daily, by which a believer holds another believer responsible for this daily task throughout the week. If he or she fails to read and meditate upon scripture every day, then there will be a friendly penalty. It could be as simple as be treating their brother or sister in Christ to lunch or dinner. Not only will this strengthen the individual faith of believers, but it will also strengthen the interpersonal relationships between them.

The third and final visionary goal to implement would be to advocate more roles for women in the church besides dishwashers, cooks, and deacons. Because my home church is a Korean Presbyterian Orthodox Church, only the males are permitted to be elders. However, women are permitted to give testimony and even be bible study leaders if they have seminary training. Nevertheless, the next step would be to empower female believers more by allowing them to become elders to stand shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts.

In finality, I would like to commend the book for its practical applications, its organizational structure, and for the author's insights, personal narratives, and his utilization of key bible verses to highlight the primary points of the book. As Mason contends, the Church of Christ in America needs to be awoken from its inactivity and needs to be relevant to society in terms of addressing injustices not only inside the church but also outside of it as well.

Bibliography

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