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Pastoring the Urban Church
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REVIEW OF WOKE CHURCH BY

INTRODUCTION

In the world today, it seems like the churches have become unaware of its duties. The role of the church is to stand up with the people and fight for justice. The church as one body should be able to conquer those who seek to destroy God's people. We can all agree that it is time for the church to wake up, and see all the atrocities that are being committed against the poor. The church should be the place where those that are in need can find refuge. The question is what are some of the ways that the church can get involved in issues like social injustice and racial inequality. As I review the book *Woke Church*, I am going to summarize, analyze, critique and show the strengths. I will also talk about my takeaways from this book and how it will impact my ministry.

SUMMARY

In this book, the author's aim is to ensure that the church wakes up and starts speaking out against racial injustice. The purpose of this book is to help the church understand how important it is to live out the gospel in the right way. Each chapter is interwoven with bible verses to demonstrate how the church should be involved in justice. Eric Mason uses this book to bring awareness to the people in the church that we are all one big family. How we relate to one another is the key to coming together as one body. We should care about what happens to each other. The concept is, when one is hurting, we are all hurting. Mason talks about seeking justice for all as the main goal of every church. He challenges the church to reclaim its rightful place and rise up and be the prophetic voice for the people. We as the church should remain focused on

the vision. The gospel is what the church was given to carry into the world, so that it can make an impact on the people. Mason gives a clear understanding of the damage that was caused in the separation of black and white churches. He talks about how the refusal of black people in white churches brought about the birth of black churches. Mason calls on the church to see the broader perspective of the vision of change. He looks into how it would benefit the people, if the black and white churches come together and become one body. The church is not called to be passive, its mission is to be active in all the issues that affect the people. Mason also gives insight on what it will look like, if the church begins to imitate what Jesus did when he walked upon this earth. He envisioned that there would be multiethnic churches all over the world and reconciliation would be an easier process.

ANALYSIS

The book, *Woke Church*, was written to the people in the church and their leaders. The writing style was very suitable for its intended audience. Mason plainly lays out how racial inequality has affected black people, especially those in the black churches. He urges the church to wake up and take action. Mason argues that the church should be rooted in Christ consciousness. In his view, before all this could take place, the church must come together, we must have a relationship with one another. I couldn't agree more with Mason when he said, "God saved us to be in relationship with him, but he also bought us to be in relationship with one another." (p.23). In my opinion, the church should be an example of how to be relational. Mason commissions the church to live out the future truth in our present reality. It is my belief, if the church adopts this motto, they will be able to stand in their authority. As we look at the churches

today, one may begin to think that the church has lost its prophetic voice. Mason compiled his argument by

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stating, “We should be the main communicator about challenges that happen in our country on race and justice.” (p.24). This is a valid point but the question is how can the churches communicate if they are not willing to use their voices. If the church does not speak up, then who will speak for justice.

The gospel is one way that the church can use their voices. They can use the gospel to show the system what God says about equality. In the words of Mason, “What should connect the church in a vital way to the issue of justice is the imperative of the Gospel.” (p.33). Mason believes that the gospel will bring reconciliation. In support of his belief he said, “But in the gospel, man is not just reconciled to God by faith. Man is also reconciled to man by faith.” (p.41). In order for justice to prevail, there must be reconciliation. According to Mason, we are to proclaim the gospel to change people within the systems. (p.47). The bible is where we find the answers to our questions on justice. Mason argues that justice is one of the main themes in the bible, and it is the least that is spoken about. He also points out that justice is God’s character. He stated, Seeing God in this way helps define and root justice in the Lord. To ignore justice is to ignore God.” (p.54). The gospel is all about God and God is justice.

In continuing to prove his point, Mason makes the argument that the church should be ready to speak up for justice at all times. The power is in the hands of the church and we must learn how to use it. Mason stated, “People are waiting, literally, for the church to say something.” (p.69). The church is responsible for the well being of the people. In Mason’s view, It is not enough just to talk about justice, the church has to do something about it. The church cannot be

asleep while racial injustice continues to plague our country. In my opinion, the world is depending on the church to get this right. We have to let them see the image of God in us.

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Mason argued that if slaves were introduced to the theology of the imago dei, slaves would have understood that they were fully equal with their masters in value. (p.80). I believe, if we do not know who God is, we will not be able to identify who we are. When we can identify ourselves then we would be able to understand our human rights.

Mason talks about some of the things the church had to lament on. In his discussion on these laments he raised some good points. In his words, “When America tells African Americans to forget about the past when we haven’t even talked about it, that’s unhealthy.” (p.95). I agree, how can anyone forget what the system did and how they continue to humiliate Black Americans. We all have seen how White America treated Blacks as the inferior race. Mason pointed out that there were times when blacks were not permitted to sit in white churches. He believes because America is so polluted with racism, black churches had to be created. Because of the ongoing racism, Mason fears for the black churches, that the whites will try to take away their freedom. He said, “I fear that if we partner with whites that they will find a way to subjugate blacks and make us dependent on them in a way that kills our freedom of a truly black led institution.” (p.100). His overall concern is that the black churches are not using the power they have to speak up for black Americans against racial injustice.

While concentrating on the issue of justice, the church must reclaim the prophetic voice in preaching. According to Mason, the preached message must address the reality of sin, on an individual level as well as on a systematic level. (p.118). He believes that it is imperative for the people to understand that social injustice is a sin against God. In my opinion Mason is clearly

sending a message to the church, that it is not wrong to preach about justice in the pulpit. Black preachers have the power to use the pulpit to educate their congregation about social injustice

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and racial inequality. Mason argues that Jesus spoke up against injustice while he was on earth. He said, “Jesus is the perfect expression of what the gospel does.” (p.120). We must preach the gospel with Christ at the center and address the issues of today. In Mason’s view, the preacher’s job is to proclaim the wisdom of God to the seen and unseen authorities. He points out that the preacher’s voices are alarmingly quiet in the face of rampant sin and injustice in the culture. Mason urges the preacher to be the voice for the people.

According to Mason, the Woke Church must be awake and ready for action. We must get involved in bringing systematic justice to our communities. The church must go out and meet the people like Jesus did. Mason stated, “Many churches have died because of the lack of the foresight to break through the walls of their building to meet and engage the people they drive and walk past week after week.” (p.148). When the church begins to follow Jesus’ commission to go out, then they will be able to find out the needs of the people, and get involved in the social issues that the community is facing. It is time for the black churches to wake up and educate our people on who the bible says that they are, so that they can stand in the rightful place.

STRENGTHS

- 1) The author’s passion for the topic that he is writing about. He made it his duty to reiterate Over and over the need for the church to wake up. He showed how much he cared about the well being of the black community and churches. The arguments that he made were supported by his experiences. He demonstrated his vast knowledge of what he was talking about.

2) The way the bible verse were interwoven to strengthen his talk about the importance of the gospel. The verses he used were relevant to the topic. Every chapter is loaded with bible

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verses in reference to what Jesus said about justice. He uses the bible verses as a tool so the reader could look at justice through the lens of the bible.

3) The chapters of the book flowed into each other. This made it very easy to follow the message

the author was conveying. The heading of the chapters helped bring out a better understanding of the importance of a Woke Church. The sub headings also supported the topic and allowed the reader to gain more insight on what is expected of the church. The action steps at the end of the book were also very helpful as a guide to follow on how to take action as a Woke Church.

CRITIQUE

In this book, Mason talks about multicultural churches and reconciliation. While this is already happening, I believe that there will always be white and black churches. This is not because the church is perpetuating racism but it is about people's choices. The way some white churches worship is different to how black churches worship. In my opinion, Mason seems to be advocating separate churches as racist. Although some white churches may be clearly racist, I do not see it as stereotypical. There is a need for multiethnic churches, but people will always feel comfortable among their own kind.

In my opinion, this book is very useful to the audience that it is intended for. There is sufficient information for the reader to completely understand the topic that the author is writing about. The arguments that the author is making in this book are relevant and it helps to wake up

the church from its drowsy nature. The author clearly explains what it means to be a Woke Church.

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TAKEAWAY

- 1) The urban churches must go out into the community and be with the people. They have to talk about the issues, especially racism in the community. The church has to wake up and speak out against injustice. The bible teaches that we have to take care of the poor and the marginalized.
- 2) There is a need for black and white churches to come together and understand the issues that are relevant today. They need to start building a relationship with each other. We have to be aware of what is going on and not turn a blind eye. We are all God's children and God is justice. We should be mindful that the church is failing to proclaim the gospel mission through the eyes of racism, oppression and injustice.
- 3) Without Justice there could be no peace. If we want to experience God's shalom, the church must continue to stand up with our black brothers and sisters and fight for justice. This is not a question of whether we should or should not. The people are waiting for the church to stand with them. The church is the prophetic voice for the people. God has given us all the tools that we need we have to learn to utilize them. The church has the charge to see the gospel take root throughout humanity. The church is called to be the peacemaker. As long as the issue of racial injustice exists, there would be no peace.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR MY MINISTRY

The book, *Woke Church* has truly been a blessing to me and my ministry. I feel like everything spoken about in this book is spot on for where I am in my ministry. As I continue to focus on building a new ministry, I will use what I have learnt to enlighten the people in the congregation about the issues that we as black people face in this country. I take the prompt that Mason gave to go out into the community and engage with them. Let them see the image of God in us. As a part of the body of Christ this book reminds me that we cannot be silent when it comes to the issue of racial injustice. I am going to do my part to ensure that my ministry uses their voice and that it is heard. After learning the meaning of Woke Church, I am committed to lead the people into a church that is fully awake concerning the issues of the poor and the needy. We are not only going to be awake, we are going to put our plans into action.

CONCLUSION

There are many churches that have not woken up to the issues of racial injustice. The church can choose to remain silent or they can speak up for justice. God's plan is for the church to be an example for the world. The world already knows this and they are waiting for the church to walk in its authority. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God." As a church we must demonstrate God's Shalom in the world.

Work Cited

Mason, Eric, *Woke Church, An urgent call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice*, Moody Publishers, 820 North LaSalle Boulevard, Chicago IL 60610, 2018