

Revved up by The Rise of the Nones

James Emery White's book reports on the woeful condition of the Church in America. He takes research findings and expounds on the plight of religious life in a once "Christian nation."

From those who read this book, I hear pessimism resulting in a helpless, "What can we do?" For this review I decided to list a few of the author's suggestions for stepping into God's preferred future for the Church:

- Focus on conversion growth (chapter 6). "First, what is our mission? Few would deny that it is to seek and save the lost" (p. 81). "... the second question; Who, then, is our primary customer? The answer is inescapable. ... then our customer is the one who is lost" (82).
- Consider evangelism as a process of moving toward God (chapter 7). Change the mission and methods of the local congregation to become welcoming toward the unchurched and ungodly. Evaluate your congregation's attitude toward the Nones (see chart, p. 95).
- Act upon a worthy cause (chapter 8), e.g. freeing girls from sex trafficking or welcoming immigrants. Nones are drawn to a cause that unites people. The process most likely to effectively engage the unchurched is cause, community and Christ.
- Offer the Gospel as truth and grace (chapter 9). As an effective missionary "learn the language," "study the culture;" and "translate the gospel." "... the only kind of voice that will arrest the attention of the world will be convicting in nature, clear in its message, substantive in its content and bold in its challenge" (p. 122).
- Answer the questions people ask (chapter 10). Develop a new apologetics that addresses the "So what?" question. Move to a position of tolerating differences and of including diversity. Return to "mere Christianity" rather than Christianity plus (whatever). Develop and display the mind of Christ.
- Live in unity (chapter 11). "Churches have too many problems." Understand the distinctions among uniformity, unanimity and unity. The Church must stop accepting and legitimizing lovelessness.
- Atmosphere and acceptance open the front door of the church (chapter 12). Friendliness includes more than a warm welcome and a smile. Other means of welcome include a children's ministry, music, the building and visual stimulation (p. 155).
- "Reimagining the Church" (chapter 13). The local congregation is to become the one, holy, apostolic and catholic Church. Renew the New Testament vision of the Church for your locale. The Church is created to accomplish the Mission of Christ.

White, James Emery. The Rise of the Nones. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014.