

VOL. 7 • NO. 2 • WINTER 2016 • 263–274

BOOK REVIEWS

Henard, Bill. *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015. 240 pp. \$14.99.

Reviewed by Nicholas Clark. Clark earned bachelors of science degrees in economics and in political science at the University of Southern Indiana, along with a masters of business administration. He also earned a master of divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he is pursuing the doctor of philosophy degree in evangelism and church growth while serving as a Garrett Fellow. Clark serves as the pastor of Heritage Hills Baptist Church in Santa Claus, Indiana.

Bill Henard is the pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. He also serves as assistant professor of evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he earned the doctor of philosophy degree in evangelism and church growth. He also holds the master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Can These Bones Live? points the reader to eleven reasons why churches need revitalization. Henard identifies these reasons by drawing upon decades of practical experience rooted in a clear understanding of the church and the biblical implications of revitalization. While this work is neither a detailed doctrinal analysis of revitalization nor a biblical theology of revitalization, it certainly points to biblical truth and wisdom of leading the body

of Christ to renewed life in the Great Commission. The first two reasons Henard identifies provide a basic understanding that a church in need of revitalization often does not recognize its need for revitalization, and/or the church does not want to grow. Statistics tell a grim story of the church, and Henard attests to the blindness of many such churches. He points to pastoral tenure as a primary reason why churches do not recognize the symptoms of a plateaued or declining church. The author suggests that pastors who persevere through the difficult years after the “honeymoon” are more likely to implement lasting change that would lead to meaningful revitalization. The other barrier to growth is a serious spiritual deficiency within the culture of the church.

Other reasons why churches need to be revitalized include physical barriers (including ministry structures) and pastor/staff mis-hires. Henard spends a great deal of time analyzing physical barriers ranging from buildings and parking lots to committee structures and assimilation. The pastor whose giftedness and abilities that do not complement the church seems to delay revitalization as well. Henard further points to the church’s fitness within its community. Churches in need of revitalization do not often reflect the makeup of the community. Inwardly focused churches, Henard says, hasten decline in those churches as well as do a host of external factors. Pastors, however, can overcome such obstacles by remaining faithful to the task. Still more reasons for church revitalization include a lost vision, inadequate ministry structures, loss of impact in the community, and a lack-luster desire to see people converted. Henard unpacks each of these eleven reasons with seasoned wisdom and points the reader to scriptural warrant and practical application.

The book culminates with the Change Matrix, which is a tool designed to help pastors lead wisely through the change process while taking into account a number of factors that are impacted by change.

While the book is not primarily a doctrinal treatise, Henard spends the first chapter of the book outlining the necessary biblical-theological principles by which revitalization occurs. This section will show Henard’s commitment to biblical authority and theological orthodoxy. Henard builds a strong biblical case for revitalization while introducing the assumptions that lay the base for the rest of the book. One particularly important concept the author introduces is the parallel of church revitalization and personal, spiritual revitalization. He sternly warns that neglecting spiritual growth, whether it is a church or an individual, will catch up to us (17).

The book is designed to serve as a means for a pastor to think through what revitalizing a church entails. Before he discusses the eleven reasons for church revitalization, Henard helps the reader focus on the initial steps of assessing a church for revitalization. Henard’s nonchalant manner exudes in this section as he describes the pastoral search process and subsequent

interviews as the “Big Lie” (24). He quickly tries to cut through the pretense of the interview and offers meaningful questions for pastors to ask churches that will shed light on crucial revitalization topics. Speaking from his own wisdom, Henard clearly states a helpful path for pastors to follow once they are hired (34). The other section involves assessing the church membership, including how those different groups respond to leadership. Henard takes Carl George and Robert Logan’s original berry-bucket theory that segments church membership into those who were members before the pastor is hired and those who become members after the pastor is hired, and expands on the notion by addressing human sinfulness in church power broker situations (30). Henard identifies five groups of people who hold various levels of power and discusses how best to promote revitalization in each of those groups.

Henard’s eleven reasons for why churches fall into decline provide a pathway of valuable analysis for every pastor to consider. Space limitations do not allow this reviewer to extensively critique each one; however, several important points should be made. First, in churches that either do not recognize their decline or in churches that simply do not want to grow, Henard encourages pastors to persevere. He suggests pastors of such churches focus on preaching, evangelizing, pastoring, and praying as a means of moving a congregation toward embracing the need for revitalization (68).

Henard’s section on physical barriers to growth, which includes assimilation and leadership issues, is straightforward. Some suggestions are common to other writers, while some are more nuanced. The author suggests pastors contend with the scriptural principle of hospitality when evaluating the facilities, so that nothing of man would be a stumbling block to a new believer (92).

Henard interacts with a number of voices in the field of church growth and builds on their particular theses when it comes to issues of revitalization [e.g., vision (159), leadership (122), and organizational structures (183)]. Henard seems to interact thoughtfully with a diverse set of people. He utilizes Stetzer and Dodson’s definition of healthy church growth from their work in *Comeback Churches*, which points to consistent five year growth, 35:1 member to baptism ratio, and 25 percent conversion growth annually (91). Henard consistently points to the necessity of a strong theology of evangelism and says, “Evangelism is the barometer of our theology” (97).

The Change Matrix is a helpful tool for pastors to consider in revitalization. The nature of the matrix is one of simultaneity and not a consecutive process (210). In other words, the four parts (priorities, parameters, players, and process) function in tandem in order to facilitate change in a harmonious manner. Upon looking at the matrix graphic, the purpose is

not immediately obvious, so it does require reading the final chapter to see how the matrix can serve as a thoughtful tool for the change agent. Henard reminds the reader that change is never easy, but being wise about it will go far in its implementation (215).

Henard loves the traditional church and has a desire to see it recapture its Great Commission mandate. He has provided a tool to help think through the implications of this important process. Henard has spent decades leading churches to revitalization and to regain the love they had at first (Rev 2:4). I heartily recommend this text for pastors in any context and the academy for training a new generation of pastors.

McIntosh, Gary. *Donald A. McGavran: A Biography of the Twentieth Century's Premier Missiologist*. Church Leader Insights, 2015. 384 pp. \$49.95.

Reviewed by Mike Morris, Ida M. Bottoms Chair of Missions, Associate Dean of Applied Ministry and Mentorship, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; B. S. Memphis State University, M.Div. SWBTS, D.Min. and Ph.D. Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

Gary McIntosh's long-awaited, definitive biography of Donald McGavran was published at a propitious time (2015, the twenty-fifth anniversary of McGavran's death), and the book does not disappoint this reviewer. McIntosh is a professor at Talbot School of Theology and the lead consultant at the Church Growth Network. Nelson Searcy, lead pastor of The Journey Church and founder of Church Leader Insights, wrote a helpful foreword to the book. Both McIntosh and Searcy are past winners of the Donald A. McGavran Award for Outstanding Leadership in Great Commission Research, and McIntosh is the 2015 winner of the Win Arn Lifetime Achievement Award.

Vern Middleton wrote an earlier biography of McGavran, but Middleton's biography only took the reader through 1965, and, of course, much happened in McGavran's life from 1965 until his death in 1990. McIntosh's book is thoroughly researched using primary sources such as personal correspondence, and it provides a complete picture of the life of the father of the classic Church Growth Movement.

Divided into eleven chapters, the book takes the reader on a comprehensive, chronological journey; the journey pauses at appropriate times to discuss in detail the key people and events in McGavran's life. From chapter one through chapter eleven, McIntosh refers to McGavran as "Donald," thus giving the reader a warm sense of familiarity with the man who was undoubtedly the greatest missiologist of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, although *Christianity Today* in 2006 ranked McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth* as the second most influential book that shaped