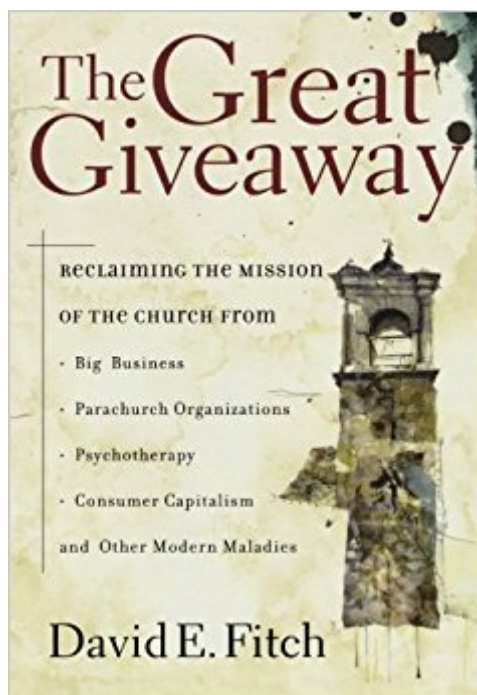


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The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming The Mission Of The Church From Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, And Other Modern Maladies



Synopsis

"North American evangelicals learned to do church in relation to modernity," asserts David Fitch. Furthermore, evangelicals have begun to model their ministries after the secular sciences or even to farm out functions of the church whenever it seems more efficient. As a result, the church, too often, has stopped being the church. In *The Great Giveaway*, Fitch examines various church practices and shows how and why each function has been compromised by modernity. Discussing such ministries as evangelism, physical healing, and spiritual formation, Fitch challenges Christians to reclaim these lost practices so that the church can regain its influence. Pastors, leaders, and students who minister to the postmodern world will find in this book fresh insight that will stir the hearts of many and spark muchneeded discussion about the evangelical church.

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Customer Reviews

This is a searing but loving insider critique of the individualism that marks North American evangelicals. Fitch, senior pastor of the Life on the Vine Christian community in Arlington Heights, Ill., blames an embrace of modernism for attempts by evangelicals to "individualize, commodify, and package Christianity." He criticizes mega-churches that end up functioning like capitalist businesses with CEO-style pastors judging success by the number of "decisions for Christ" produced. Each chapter outlines the various ways evangelicalism has "given away" its influence and then offers concrete practices designed to help the church reclaim its mission. Fitch's most scathing criticism is saved for the evangelical willingness to embrace modern psychology, which he blasts as

patient-centered rather than Christ-centered. He challenges evangelical churches to think smaller (in terms of congregation size), place less focus on coercive evangelism, return to communal catechesis, offer more liturgical worship and provide opportunities for small group intimacy where Christians can confess their sins, repent, read scripture and pray together regularly. Intellectually rigorous, this book's critical tone will undoubtedly upset many conservative evangelicals, but will point the way for the more moderate ones for years to come. (Oct. 15) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"In the growing stack of books dealing with gospel, church, and postmodernity, many are popular and pragmatic. Others are esoteric and abstruse. A few are scholarly, penetrating, and full of rich, practical implications. David Fitch's is in that rare category. Drawing from Lindbeck, MacIntyre, Hauerwas, Radical Orthodoxy, and his own extensive experiences and scholarship, Dr. Fitch offers an important work for evangelicals who seek hope for the church beyond pragmatics and culture wars."

Every Christian and Christian minister should read this! It is always hard to see the compromises in yourself, your church, your Christian organization/denomination, etc. - how the influences of your own culture have infiltrated your "faith

Provocative. Full of good insights and questions. I didn't agree with everything the author wrote, but it's an excellent read for folks who want to think through the issues that surround the church of the twenty-first century

I hope that "The Great Giveaway" will become required reading for anyone who is interested in helping the church regain its role in transforming lives. In this text, Dr. Fitch provides many well researched and hope filled suggestions on how the church can play a vital role in helping us become faithful to Jesus Christ in life and mission. Much of the text emphasizes how the church can be made relevant for persons with a postmodern worldview, however, this book is much more than a guide to setting up a postmodern church. This book helped provide answers to one of my most vexing questions; Why do many lifestyle statistics show very little difference between the church and the unchurched? Dr. Fitch provides convincing evidence that American culture has increasingly supplanted the relevance of the evangelical church. The church reflects this culture in so many ways that its ability to do its part to transform lives is diminished and increasingly suspect. Dr. Fitch

didn't just point out the problems; he blessed me with a renewed desire for community and for doing my part to help the church regain its relevance in the world.

He has some good points but may be over dramatizing it.

I came to the book by way of an online recommendation concerning the Christian Churches Ministry of Mercy, I was unfamiliar with either the author or the emergent church movement before I started this book. I had a terrible time getting through the book. Not because it is difficult reading, it's not addressed at intelligent layman, not technical. Not because I violently disagree with the author at every point and would rather throw the book away than finish it, for there were many times that I said "hey, that's the same thing as I think". But rather the problem stems from a use of vocabulary and phrasing that really sets my theologically error feelers wiggling. It is his use of the terms "post modern" "modernist" and a really set of ideas that has me either baffled, deeply confused, mislabelled, irritated, or just too old and out of the loop of modern thinking, I'm not sure which or which combination it is. In any case, I set the book down, put it underneath others to read first, yelled at it, and generally provoked a response of denial and puzzlement. I don't know what to make of this post-modern versus modernist divide he speaks of, I got to the point that I had heard it in so many different ways that there was an enforced familiarity with his ideas without really understanding them, a quieting of the yelling on my part so that I could pay better attention to his ideas. But even with this, I don't really have the desire to pursue the division, nor to read his quoted works to find out where his ideas came from, for me a sign that the book was interesting but not very motivating or persuasive. Often I drop something to follow up a good book, a good author or an interesting set of arguments, I didn't in this case. His arguments about being in a postmodern age with a very different kind of people than our old fashioned modernists bore me more than inspire, big deal. But that caveat aside, the more than a week it took to read, it isn't a bad book. Much of what he says, especially in a descriptive way appears to me to be right and proper criticism of the modern church. His prescriptions are less persuasive, more nebulous, often unobtainable even within his church and his committed circle of like-minded people. This is not an argument not to pursue the ideas, but rather one of cautiousness about trying to change things too much, too fast. (can't believe I said that, I must really be getting old and set in my ways, my dad called it realism, I'm not sure what I call it). Because of the specialized vocabulary, which struck me like reading orthodox Marxists—boy their language is really different than mine, even though we use the same terms they mean almost the opposite to us—I don't recommend just picking up the book and reading anywhere. It looks as if

this is a front to back reader, start for flavor in the introduction, if your a fossil modernist like i apparently am, you can at least see what he wants to accomplish with the book and decide if you can read it all without throwing it at the nearest wall. I have great affinity for the underlying ideas, however. The church has sold or given away it's birthright for a mess of porridge, he is right on the topics he zeroes in on. These are the big ways that the church has compromised with the culture. He is best in the middle chapters "The Production of Experience" and the "Preaching of the Word", the first i find persuasive the second downright wrong, but he has well documented his arguments and has a point, even when i think it wrong, it is worth hearing his side. That in itself is a valuable thing to gain from the book- a wider experience of what people think good and proper ways to do things in the church. In his later two chapters on "Moral Education" and "Spiritual Formation", on child education and psychology respectively are preaching to the choir, even with his prescriptions, despite the problems i have with his great divide-modernism and postmodernism. The big point of catechesis and rites of passage are properly substantially right, it is problems with implementation that i would look at next. But the book is mostly persuasive to description not prescription, although he is careful to present either what he had done with the church, what he has experienced as corrective to the problems he outlines. But the emphasises is on convincing people that there is a problem, more than convincing people to accept his solutions to the problems. I'm not sure who is going to read this book, even more unsure of who is going to stick it out and finish it. Maybe it is written to these postmodernists and they will find it the best thing since sliced bread, i don't know. I won't recommend it to my friends at church for i think they'd have the same problem as did i. That there are other books with the same descriptions of the problems. His accent on the believing community of the church working through the issues as a living breathing community engaged with the issues is a common enough idea, especially from the Mennonite or Historic Peace churches that this is not so unique of a voice that you must read this one book to here it. So i guess the natural audience is people like him, who have passed through or been born after the great modernist-post modern divide and see him as Moses leading into the promised land of the emergent church. I guess i was just born too early for this journey.

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