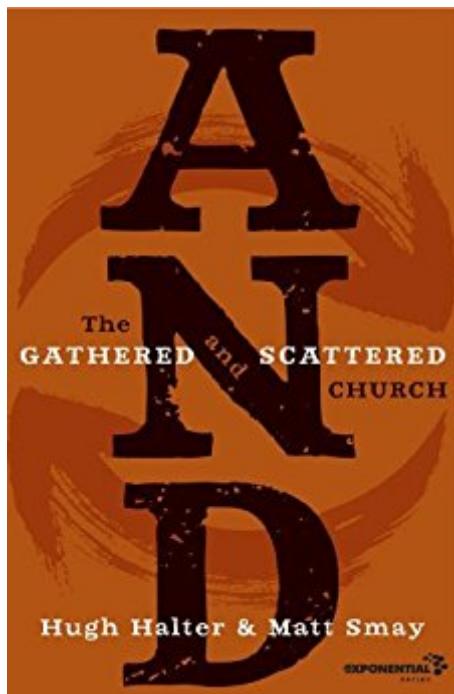


The book was found

AND: The Gathered And Scattered Church (Exponential Series)



Synopsis

What is happening to the church in America today? By all appearances, it looks like we are doing a better job than we ever have. Our programs are effective, our pastors are relevant, and our buildings are increasing in size. In the past 30 years the number of mega-churches has increased from under 100 to over 7,500. In the past 10 years the number of multi-site churches has increased from under 100 to over 2,000. By the numbers, these church movements enjoy the national platform, the national voice, and the resources to profoundly impact the Kingdom. But to what end? In spite of the rapid growth of these prevailing church movements we are still losing ground, and the church in the west is in massive decline. Numerous studies and books have been written documenting the flight of members from the institutional church. Yet the local church is Jesus' plan for reaching the world. The strength of the mega-church and multi-site models can be found in a strong emphasis on attracting people to the church, where they have an opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ. Yet many younger leaders are rejecting this model in favor of a more incarnational approach to ministry. These missional communities tend to focus their attention on trying to release people into ministry. In recent years a growing schism has emerged between those calling themselves incarnational leaders and those leading the prevailing church models. But what if we were able to incorporate the insights of both models into a cohesive understanding of the church? Can we bring together the very best of the attractional AND missional models for church ministry? What is needed is not another book about how to do church better. Our focus on the form church is misguided when the vast majority of unchurched Christians and non-believers aren't moving toward any form of church. Beautifully Sent will give permission for leaders to value existing church forms while catalyzing a missional movement of incarnational people into the world.

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Customer Reviews

I was quite eager to read AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church. AND discusses a question that is important for churches - what are the benefits of an attractional approach (draw people into the church to hear the gospel, find fellowship and build them up as disciples) versus a missional/incarnational approach (sending our people out into the lives of others directly to witness and grow as disciples). The book makes a strong case that the answer is Both-And, not Either-Or. After a solid introduction, Chapter Two was for me the most powerful section of the book "Starting the AND... wherever you are". The authors jumped right in with a key question: how can you take a church that is strongly attractional, perhaps even inward focused, and help its people better understand what it means to live missionally and to see new avenues for ministry outside the walls of the church. It had some great discussion about how you can reach the same essential core of incarnational communities coming either from a gathered perspective or from a scattered perspective. Those coming from a gathered church might well consider a pilot group of about 10% of the church (a tithe of members) to receive training and support on developing incarnational communities. One of the tough challenges in the book is really understanding what Halter means by the term 'Incarnational Community'. Is it a small group living missionally, a community ministry team, a home cell group, or something else? Is it something we've seen in a larger church, or something altogether different?

I just finished reading AND. Realizing that many of you will not either have or take the time to read it for yourself, I thought I would do a quick summary so you can get some of the blessing I received. So here goes... The authors really have no dog in the fight between micro and macro versions of the

church. They are not pushing for mega or house church or anything in between. The purpose of this book is to help the reader see that no matter what expression of "church" with which you are affiliated, there must be both the gathering of God's people for encouragement, edification and vision impartation as well as the scattering or sending of the people of God into mission. In fact, it is our involvement in mission that increases our need and desire for gathering. The authors accidentally found themselves pastoring a missional church when a young lady from a group they were discipling (unofficially) asked them, "Are we a church?" Trying to avoid getting back into what had been a very painful and disappointing church experience, Hugh said, "No, we are a faith community." After being pressed further on the matter, he explained that a church is a group of people who do mission together. That answer crystallized his understanding of what God wants for "church." The book examines how Christians can avoid the fruitless expressions of "consumer churchianity" that are what most of us have given our lives to. Instead he looks for ways for groups of believers to become "incarnational communities" in their personal contexts, becoming a safe haven where people can gather to experience kingdom Christianity and progress on their spiritual journey without having to navigate the obstacles presented by some of the more negative cultural forms of churchianity.

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