

through with their leadership as they work together to re-envision how God wants to restore them back to health and vitality.

Hunter, Kent R. *Who Broke My Church?: 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*. New York, NY: Faith Words, 2017. 261 pp. \$16.99.

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Who Broke My Church? is the latest book by Kent Hunter, founder of Church Doctor Ministries and author of 30 books dealing with various topics related to church health and church growth. In this book, the author seeks to provide practical strategies that will produce an organic growth movement in local churches. Typically called revivals, these growth movements have been observed in various countries by Church Doctor Ministries. Research has revealed “Kingdom culture” as the “spiritual DNA” that drives these movements, and the author describes this unique culture in detail and identifies strategies to break through seven “ceilings” that prevent Kingdom culture from flourishing.

The book explores the priority and nature of Kingdom culture in the first few chapters. While conducting survey research in 2006, the author observed that increasing numbers of Christians surveyed were articulating a “holy discontent” and anticipating significant growth of the church. These kinds of observations were particularly common in Great Britain, where much of the research for the book appeared to be centered (15). Evidently, church growth and vitality there is tied not to specific programs but to the spiritual health of individual disciples within the church (29).

In chapter four the nature of Kingdom culture is fleshed out, though not in detail. A Kingdom culture church is characterized by features like a priority on making disciples slowly and in small numbers (53). The priority is not to gather crowds but to equip Christians to disciple the people in their immediate sphere of influence—family, close friends, etc. This is put forward as the key to moving a church that has drifted from Kingdom priorities back to spiritual faithfulness that will, in turn, produce healthy and sustainable church growth.

The balance of the book explores seven strategies for removing obstacles or “ceilings” that cause churches to “drift” from Kingdom culture. The strategies are as follows: 1) Eliminate corporate confusion by adjusting church structures to facilitate a low control/high accountability movement. 2) Overcome the ‘country club’ mentality by re-defining the mission of the local church as the continuing fulfillment of Jesus’ great commission in Matthew 28. 3) Don’t substitute “baby food” for regular Bible intake by every member undergirded by a strong commitment to the authority of Scripture and to faithfully applying its truths personally. 4) Replace a resistance to change with a hope-filled posture towards the future and a willingness to try new ways to reach the unchurched. 5) Equip every member to multiply themselves through intentional discipleship, thus enabling the church to grow by multiplication instead of merely by addition. 6) Discard volunteer recruitment in favor of spiritual gift identification with the goal of releasing people to serve in their area of strength and to train others to do the same. 7) Cultivate an atmosphere of generosity in all areas of life, replacing a scarcity mentality with an abundance mentality.

Who Broke my Church? concludes with advice for leading change in the direction of Kingdom culture. Patience is encouraged, and the Jesus-modeled practice of prioritizing making disciples over making leaders is key. Given that leaders are often tempted to do all the work themselves, “failure to let God grow the garden” (219) is described as the leaders’ greatest obstacle.

The book’s findings are based on research conducted by Church Doctor Ministries over the years involving thousands of individual churchgoers. CDM developed a plan to “field-test” their conclusions regarding the key role of spiritual health with local churches, and they coached numerous congregations through “Kingdom Culture Development” in an attempt to break through the seven ceilings described above (19). Individuals in the participating churches were surveyed before consultation began and then again with the same set of questions six months later. Various markers increased 13-34%. The results are summarized in an appendix on page 257. Unfortunately, there is no information given regarding the numerical growth of the individual churches during this time.

The chief strength of *Who Broke My Church?* is its focus on cultivating

a Kingdom culture that prioritizes making disciples over all other activity. “The Kingdom cause is not first about quantity. It is about quality: making disciples. Growing Christians to spiritual health is always the first and most important step for an outreach strategy” (83). While this observation may seem self-evident, in the author’s research—including thousands of respondents from Christian churches—only 51% of respondents could correctly identify the goal of the Great Commission as “Make disciples of all nations” (181), and only 34% of respondents identified the main purpose of the Church as “to make disciples” (99). This reality gives the book its urgency and relevance. It reveals that the development of a disciple-making culture is not a high priority in many churches, thus limiting the potential for sustained church growth.

Acknowledging the reality that it takes time to build Kingdom culture is a second important contribution. “How to” books understandably focus on action that can be taken immediately, but they sometimes fail to mention that new strategies have to be faithfully implemented over long periods of time—often several years—before yielding results. The importance of perseverance comes through loud and clear at various points in this book. Addressing leaders in particular, the author states, “The movement toward Kingdom culture is likely to take two and a half to three years” (219).

Though the emphasis is on the long-term development of a disciple-making culture, the book also offers many points of immediate application. Particularly strong are the strategies offered to help people take action to reach out evangelistically. Developing a culture of “storytelling” is encouraged, that is, teaching people to share their testimony as a more natural form of evangelism that everyone can participate in (175). A practical way to identify personal networks of “not yet Christ-followers” is offered in the form of a sociogram—a simple chart that identifies various social relationships such as friends, neighbors, relatives, work associates, etc. (176).

This book could be improved by reducing the number of Christian cliches employed without adequate definition. Kingdom culture was referred to throughout the book, and occasional contributions to its definition were made, but an overall summary of what Kingdom culture is was missing. Culture itself was defined as comprising values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldview

(8), but the practical unpacking of these components with respect to the Kingdom of God was uneven, leaving the reader without the tools necessary to lead a movement towards Kingdom culture in the local church.

Interesting statistics were put forward but were often obscured by unclear language, and conclusions based on the numbers were sometimes offered without adequate explanation. For example, “breakthrough potential” was the label given to a church with 40-50% of its participants active in Kingdom culture and “breakthrough readiness” for churches with 65% or more (229). Why this particular change of 15-25% was a tipping point was not explained, and the difference between “potential” and “readiness” in this context remained undefined. As a result, how one would effectively distinguish between one kind of church congregation and another remains a mystery.

Also, the vital role of preaching in culture-building was overlooked. Critical to any kind of shift toward a Kingdom mindset within a local church would be teaching on Kingdom subjects, yet this crucial area of ministry was left virtually untouched. One assumes that the author would agree that no meaningful development of a new culture of disciple-making can ever be realized without a systematic teaching plan. But the nature of what that plan might look like is never explored. Given the clear implication from the author’s own research that Kingdom Culture is not being systematically taught in most of today’s churches, this crucial component of renewal must be directly addressed.

Finally, in the author’s discussion of tradition and the temptation for Christians to do what “feels good” instead of what is effective for outreach, the focus inexplicably landed on Christmas carols. “Away in a Manger” was dismissed as largely meaningless to today’s culture (152), and the singing of favorite carols for adults was similarly disregarded as “traditionalism” (161). This seems oddly off the mark since in American culture these carols are virtually the only Christian songs that are annually piped through shopping malls, secular radio stations, and small-town main streets. They are frequently still sung in public school Christmas programs from Florida to California. Granted, they aren’t fully understood, but their ubiquity is actually an opportunity for the Christian church to connect them with the life-changing Gospel message.

Who Broke My Church? offers some helpful priorities for church leaders longing to see their congregations renewed with a passion to fulfill the Great Commission. In particular, it offers a clear call back to Jesus' priority of making disciples that make disciples. For this reason, it is a helpful tool for church leaders looking to build their church growth vision on a biblical foundation of disciple-making.