



Moving Beyond Church Growth (Prisms)

Mark A. Olson

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Character development for communities of faith Mark Olson believes that trying to meet unrealistic expectations for church growth, along with expectations that pastors be all things to all people, has resulted in low morale, even burnout, among clergy and dissension within congregations. Olson's book argues that church-growth models exemplify and exacerbate the tendencies of the modern age and Constantinian Christianity, holding the church hostage to technique and marketing. These assumptions set up pastors and churches for disappointment and failure. But they also, in his opinion, miss an opportunity to envision a faithful alternative to the consumeristic church. Olson's valuable book calls church leaders to faithful, bold, and courageous rethinking of congregational life and witness in substance, purpose, and style. His own 20 years of ministry in rural, suburban, and urban congregations inform an alternative rooted deeply in the past and anchored in strong leadership and worship, but also profoundly compassionate and engaged in the surrounding community. In this model, pastors' primary responsibilities are not to fix everything and everybody but to enable people to be present to each other and to provide hope.

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