

[Defining The Emergent Church Movement](#)



By [Nathan Jones](#)

One of the signs of the end times is a great proliferation of false doctrines and teachers ([Matt. 24:11,24](#); [2 Pet. 2:1](#)). And, one of the most growing of these false doctrines today is the Emergent Church Movement. But, many people are scratching their heads trying to figure out just what this movement is all about.

An explanation of just what the Emergent Church Movement is was taken to one of today's foremost defenders of the faith, Eric Barger, the founder and director of [Take a Stand! Ministries](#) headquartered in the Dallas area. Eric is an authority on the cults, the New Age, and rock music today. From his past as a former drug addict and rock n' roll musician who was deeply involved in the New Age movement, Eric has emerged since he gave his life to Jesus Christ to become one of today's greatest defenders of Christianity in America.



Eric Barger

Eric, just what is the Emergent Church Movement and what do they believe?

The Emerging Movement came out of the young leadership network about 10 years ago, so it is a very, very new thing. But, it is all about the idea that the post-moderns have been left behind, that group of people, and there needs to be a new church now emerge to meet their needs or to reach them. And, I am all for reaching post-moderns, before-moderns, after-moderns.

Post-modern would be people who are in the post-modern generation. That would be people around my age (57) and younger. The Post-modern Age can be defined by its lack of formally accepted standards, a lack of good doctrine, and a lack of knowing what truth really is. Your reality is what you make it, which in reality is a New Age idea that you create your own reality and do your own thing.

The standard of where truth is has changed or where the anchor of what holds us together and where we can figure out what the word "truth" is. That is called "Epistemology," where we find out where our knowledge comes from and where beliefs and truths intersect.

Origins

One of the fellows that came out the Emergent Movement from right in the very beginning said that the conversation about doctrine is what bothered him. They were conversing on whether God really know the future? Does gender come with distinction? Is homosexuality really a sin? Do we have to keep the doctrine of the Trinity? Is there a need for the doctrine of the atonement? They began to check off these things that they were conversing about.

It seems to me like that the whole thing in the Garden of Eden that caused the fall of mankind was a conversation about whether God's truth was God's truth or not. This is the exact same thing again. This is the new liberalism and it is extremely prophetic. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2 to let no one deceive you by any means for that day shall not come until there come a falling away first. A falling away, or rebellion the Greek word there of course is, *apostasia*, an apostasy. And this is what we see happening.

An Emergent church in the Emergent Movement starts as the youth group of an evangelical church and they emerge out of it. So, I can see why there is a strong feeling that they are conservative because they come out of it. And then the church realizes, "Hey, wait a minute! They are not following what we are doing. They are cutting all ties. They are not listening to leadership." And, they go and spin off and form their own church.

Redefining "Evangelicalism"

The catcher is that those in this new liberalism hide under the guise of conservatism, calling themselves evangelicals. These people claim to be us, and if this is evangelicalism, I am no longer an evangelical.

The word "evangelical" has lost it's meaning. It has been redefined. It used to mean that a person who was an evangelical was a person who relied on the Word of God for everything they believed and all of their actions and attitudes in life. Today, for "evangelical," it just doesn't.

Reinterpreting the Bible

For three days in February this year at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho, Brian McLaren, a leader of this movement, redefined Christianity. He said the term "the world" in [John 3:16](#) is not talking about spiritually lost people, but is talking about the Earth. They then showed a film by the Sierra Club.

He says Jesus came to save and die for the Earth? He then said the term "Kingdom of God" is not a spiritual term or a religious term, but it is a political term and that it meant God's eco-system or God's global love economy.

What They Believe

The Emergent Movement is just the same old liberalism. It is the old Social Gospel in new clothes.

They are looking for something different than conservatism or atheism. They want a spiritual experience. Rob Bell, another one of the leaders in this movement from Grandville, Michigan, has 10,000 people in his church. And to paraphrase he said, "This is just not Christianity dressed up. We are discovering Christianity as an Eastern Religion." That is where it is going!

To sum up the Emergence Movement, it teaches:

1. experience over reason
2. spirituality over doctrine and absolutes
3. images over words
4. feelings over truth
5. earthly justice more important than salvation
6. social action that trumps eternity

Brian McLaren

That explains to me how the leader Brian McLaren on the back cover of his book *Generous Orthodoxy* could make the comment that he is a Buddhist, a Confucian, a Jew, is in everything, and is also a Pentecostal, non-Pentecostal, charismatic and non-charismatic. In reality, he doesn't believe in anything! Now, his books are being published by major and once reliable Christian publishing houses.

While Brian McLaren is considered a leader of the Emergent Movement, he is more the godfather of it. There really is no leader as these people are all self-styling and do their own thing.

I went to a conference that hosted Brian McLaren and I was of course shocked that this was happening. I wanted to go hear from the horse's mouth. And so, a pastor friend of mine and I went together. We both took a lot of notes. In the Friday night meeting, the songs that were sung any Wiccan priest could have sung along with because they were so morbid. They were all about the earth, that it has been tortured and raped. No glory of God, no worship of God in them could be found. Then they showed a film by the Sierra Club. Next, McLaren went through the redefinition of the terms of Christianity. At the end, we were looking up and front and we couldn't quite tell what it was up there in front on these tables that they had. We were a few yards away from it. McLaren said, "Now if you feel lead, come up and take water out of the vat and rebaptize yourself into the new Christianity." And then he said, "While you are there, make sure you put your hands in the dirt to find out what needs to be saved."

Now, again, this is not a voodoo ritual we are talking about. These are people who claim to be evangelicals, who are sold at Christian Bookstores, and are speaking in our seminaries and Bible colleges around the country.

We must take the churches and seminaries back for God. We should be concerned about it. This has become a problem for all denominations.

For more information on what the Emergent Church believes, check out our article [What Does the Emergent Church Movement Believe?](#).