

Study Questions for “Coming Alive and Resisting Conformity: Defining Pastoral Excellence”

By David R. Miller

1. According to Douglas John Hall, we live at a time when the church is being reshaped. What changes do you see in your local congregation? In the denomination? In the Christian world? To what extent are these good changes, bad changes, or somewhere in between?
2. Hall argues that mainline churches used to have the ear of government. Now they're on the sidelines. What has been the role of the Brethren when it comes to working with the government? To what extent have mainline churches challenged government and to what extent have they served to support most government policies, giving them a stamp of approval?
3. Miller's group asked themselves this question: “As persons called to the set-apart ministry, what traits and practices will best help us (and the church) come alive with vital hearts for the world God so loves, while resisting conformity to the world?” How would you answer this question?
4. We often believe “that if we just get the right preacher, or implement the right program, or meet one more felt need, we will grow again and the pews will be filled with smiling people just like before. We will attract the seekers. Such confidence in the right formula or technique characterizes the modernist mindset and deeply shapes the way most Brethren and other churches approach worship and church.” Is the problem for most failing churches that they just don't have the right pastor or the right program? If not, what is making so many churches fail or decline in numbers?
5. What are some of David Miller's discoveries about how the church is reshaping itself? Which of these have you experienced in your own congregation?