

Discussion Guide

“Hopeful Apocalypse: Charting a Baptist Future”

1. At the end of the video, Dr. Leonard answers two questions from the audience:

How do we take the Church outside of the sanctuary?

What are some ways churches can increase their financial stability?

What are some creative ways you see churches responding to this new day in which we live where the status quo is being challenged and congregations are called to innovate in order to thrive?

2. A former Christian educator at a Baptist church in a large Alabama city reported the following episode from the mid-1960s: One Wednesday afternoon, he received a telephone call from a concerned parent whose teenage son had learned that his local high school football team would be practicing that afternoon in direct competition with Wednesday night youth activities at the church. The staff minister contacted the high school principal to express his disappointment, and in less than one hour, received a telephone call from the football coach apologizing for the error in judgment along with a promise that it would never happen again.

What does this episode say about an earlier time of Protestant privilege in America and do such examples continue today? Is the loss of such privileged status for churches a problem, an opportunity, or a combination of both?

3. At the end of the video, Dr. Leonard quotes this paragraph from Albert Schweitzer’s well-known book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*:

“He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside. He came to those... who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words: ‘Follow thou me!’ and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an inexplicable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.”

Dr. Leonard suggests that the Church today may do a better job of reaching new disciples by following the example of Jesus at the lakeshore announcing that “The kingdom of heaven has come near” rather than the example of Jesus instructing Nicodemus to be “born again.” Do you agree? To what extent should changing cultural patterns cause the Church to reevaluate its methods of evangelism?

4. Can you think of certain historic Baptist principles which enable churches to speak authentically to the challenging new day in which we live?