

John B. Hayes, *Submerge*, Regal Books: Ventura, CA, 2006.

The most recent presidential campaign witnessed a president who won an election with the following campaign slogan: "Change." For a nation, business, or church to change, there must be action by the individuals who make up those entities. In like manner, John Hayes urges believers to submerge into the cities and cultures around them. If believers do not go into the culture eating with people, struggling with and loving them, the people in the city may never know believers exist among them.

Hayes begins by illustrating the realities of urban areas, most of which are areas are low-income areas. Hayes discusses a personal journey to Calcutta, India, one of the largest cities in the world. He details numerous accounts of poverty and his reaction to the deformed and destitute people. He says, "I remember flinching and feeling terribly ashamed" (43). Unfortunately his feeling of shame turned into distance.

To bring this first section about poverty to a close, Hayes makes the valid point that while we may not be as poor financially as those in other nations, each one of us remains poor in spirit, but for the love of God (79-80). Hayes reminds us that King David displayed low points in his spiritual maturity, making him poor in spirit. May this serve as a reminder that all people remain poor in spirit apart from rest in Christ.

Perhaps the biggest theme in *Submerge* is action. Submerging ourselves into the lives of others allows us to strip off passive attitudes, otherwise unbelievers may not be willing to listen to our message. One of the main ways in which someone submerges into the lives of people is through submission. Submission means getting over our stability. This includes submitting our own church planting plans to God's. Hayes talks about those who have a model in mind prior to going to a particular city. Hayes says, with a humble tone, "We should expect each city, each

work, to look different as it reflects the unique genetic code of hopes and aptitudes present among the poor and among our team members" (177). In other words, church planters must be incarnational (a point made a few times in this work) and willing to adapt their plans to the needs of the people.

On the subject of submerging being an active task, let us pause to look at Christ. Imagine if Christ had not taken his ability to save the world seriously and waved it off. No! He did not do that. He actively, yet humbly, took the cup God gave him and drank. If we are to be apostolic church planters, we must be willing to be active and take on the challenge of loving people so that they may come to know Christ. Praise the Lord for his gift of salvation.

Finally, Hays looks at the local church's role in submerging into the culture. Hayes does a great job showing the similarities between people in places like Calcutta and those in America. He also stresses that to submerge must take action on the believers' part. Hayes' intent to challenge the church is mostly done in the latter part of *Submerge*. The history of the church gives us several examples of how certain areas did or did not show ambivalence to the poor. These groups include bishops and friars among others. Most notably we must speak of St. Francis of Assisi. Hayes tells his story a bit earlier in *Submerge*, but he summarizes quite well his mission to the poor as follows: "St. Francis and his early followers challenged traditional notions of helping the poor, moving the Church beyond charity to take on the lifestyle of the poor and intentionally keeping company with them" (267).

The church universal must move beyond charity. Charity is of high regard, but it cannot be taken for genuine reality until the church moves into the neighborhoods of low-income citizens, doing what they can to love through action. We must *Submerge* or we will remain on the surface.