

Questions and Answers on *From Eternity to Here*

What follows is the entire collection of Q & A on the book, [From Eternity to Here](#) by Frank Viola, from approximately 40 bloggers.



Do you think that someone could agree with you completely about what the church is and could be but disagree about the form a local church should take (i.e. traditional, denominational church vs. house or organic church)?

Absolutely. In fact, Christians from a wide variety of church forms and expressions have endorsed the book: Ed Stetzer (Baptist), Alan Hirsh and Dan Kimball (Missional), Shane Claiborne (New Monastic), Myles Munroe and James Goll (Charismatic), Brian McLaren (Emergent), Greg Boyd (traditional evangelical church form), Leonard Sweet (Methodist, and who knows what else!), Michael Spencer (New Covenant-Reformation), Ralph Neighor (Cell Church) are just some of them. In addition, I've received a fair share of enthusiastic mail from Anglicans on the one hand and Reformed folks on the other, both of whom have resonated strongly with the message of the book.

All told, *From Eternity to Here* is a book written for all of God's people irrespective of which church forms and structures they might embrace.

What's the relationship between the local, visible church and the invisible, universal church?

Traditionally, we have begun the Biblical story with the fall of humans in Genesis 3. The result is that the entire story places the salvation of humans and the redemption of the earth as being God's goal. But those two elements, while part of the story, aren't the beginning point nor the ultimate goal.

Thus when we begin the Biblical story in Genesis 1 and 2 (which occurs before the fall) and in Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1 (which occurs before creation), the Biblical story is reframed from the standpoint of God's ultimate desire rather than with the needs of fallen human beings.

This changes the perspective dramatically, and it makes the story much larger and more God-centered. It moves us from a human-centered gospel to one that's rooted in God's relentless, eternal, and ultimate desire.

And herein lies the chief intention of God: to have a Bride for the Son, a House for the Father, a Body for the Son, and a Family for the Father.

In this light, the Bride, the Body, the House, and the Family have an identity and a reality in the eyes of God. You can call that reality and identity the 'universal church,' I suppose, but I think that term doesn't do it justice. If we would stand on a new mountain and get behind the eyes of our Lord and see as He sees,

it would change how we view God, the church, ourselves, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. (This is what the book attempts to do by tracing the purpose of the ages through Scripture.) However, the true identity and reality of the church can only be visibly expressed and practically fleshed out by local communities of believers.

What is one thing any church could do to take a step into “the ageless purpose of God?”

Moses saw the vision of the tabernacle on the heavenly mount before He could build it on the ground. This establishes a precious principle: Vision must precede building. By vision, I'm not speaking of a physical or mystical vision where a person goes into a trance and literally sees something. I'm speaking of a spiritual seeing, an insight, a “revelation” (as Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 14) into God's eternal purpose. It's knowledge that has the power to impact the heart, inspire the soul, and move our beings.

Hence, the first step, I think, is for God's people to receive a vision of God's ageless purpose — His grand and glorious mission (which includes, but goes far beyond the saving of souls and the healing of the planet). Such vision comes by the preaching of the eternal purpose or a written presentation of it along with the Holy Spirit's illumination of it to our hearts. So to my mind, a church must first be acquainted with what the eternal purpose is before it can respond to it accordingly.

What, if any significance should the Body of Christ see in the timing of God's increasing revelation of his eternal purpose that have been seemingly hidden and waning for thousands of years?

I don't know the answer to that question. But here are some observations. The teaching of the eternal purpose is not new. I think one of the first people to articulate it clearly was T. Austin-Sparks in the early 20th century. But Sparks' work is not widely known. His books were self published. Another person was Watchman Nee of the same era. His main work on the eternal purpose is put out by two very small publishing houses that are not very well known either. Devern Fromke put out his book on the eternal purpose in 1963 in the U.S. It too was self published. While it sold over 200,000 copies (since 1963), it still hasn't made a large impact on the Body of Christ.

God's people, by and large, are not familiar with God's eternal purpose today. However, we live in a unique time. A book like [Pagan Christianity](#) would have *never* been published by a major publisher five years ago. Yet Tyndale published it in 2008. I still can't believe that happened by the way. Equally so, this is the first time that I'm aware of that a major Christian publisher has put out a book that comprehensively unfold the eternal purpose. So hopefully by this fact alone, the message of [From Eternity to Here](#) will have more of an impact. Not to mention the fact that there will be a number of conferences through the U.S., South Africa, and Canada which will deal with the subject this year. It's a very exciting time in which to live.

Are you finding the truths that you've been writing about to be currently experienced world-wide among diverse cultures, or is it just North Americans that have had their heads in the sand? How have believers in other cultures, particularly those enduring persecution, responded to the ideas expressed in your recent writing?

I have no way to gauge this accurately. And I don't believe anyone else does. Take for instance China. I know a number of people who go there regularly. Their reports are diametrically opposed to one another. So I don't think anyone has a clear idea about what's really happening all over that country. I think it's quite diverse and mixed. Also, many Christian leaders have a tendency to exaggerate and “puff” things up.

I do know that all of my books are being translated into various different languages as we speak. And I receive letters from Christians from all over the world showing the impact they are having on their lives and communities. But it's hard to gauge beyond that.

What sparked you to write this book? This is an incredible book and I am honored to help promote it.

The message of the eternal purpose of God changed my life. It gave me a vision to live by, a purpose to walk in, and a growing passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. So I wanted others to have that same experience. In addition, I feel that the eternal purpose is a message that's not often preached or written about today, so I believe it's a book that the Lord wanted written and distributed.

The "three remarkable stories" that you trace throughout the book, when did you first become aware of this concept?

In April 1992. It was then that I realized that the Bible has two bookends that mirror one another. Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22. The rest of the Biblical story is the unfolding drama of the themes mentioned in those four chapters.

How did writing this book change your view of life, the church, and God?

The writing of it didn't change my views. It was the message that provoked the book that did. Every human being has five questions pulsating deep within their hearts. Who am I? How did I get here? Where did I come from? What is my purpose? How can I fulfill that purpose? God's eternal purpose answers all of those questions.

What ultimately do you want people to walk away with after reading the book?

I want them to see their Lord like they never have before, to be captivated by Him, to fall in love with Him (which is the natural by-product of seeing the eternal purpose in Christ), and to adjust their lives to His ultimate passion ... all so that God will get His dream. Our gospel today is largely focused on the meeting of human needs. But what about the burning intent of God that is for His own pleasure? That's what the eternal purpose gives us – a God-centered focus instead of a human- or me-centered focus. The earth is in desperate need of such today, I feel.

When you talk about the many brethren and how we are now the body of Christ, are you saying that even our personalities should be conformed to His image, or is there room for individuality? Was God looking for "clones" of Jesus in every respect or does He delight in different personalities?

Great question. God never seeks to take away our *individuality*, but He does desire to take our *individualism* to the cross.

Why? Because the Lord is after a bouquet of flowers, not simply a bunch of individual roses.

Consider the analogy of a father who has seven children. One Christmas day, he gives his oldest son a trumpet. He gives his youngest son a trombone. For his oldest daughter, he gives a violin. He gives another child a drum kit. Another he gives a bass. Another he gives a flute. And another he gives a piano.

Each child learns to play their instrument. The years pass, and each loves playing their individual instruments. It's a joy to them.

Years pass by and one day the father sits down with all of his children and says, "I am so happy you have mastered your instruments. Each instrument was given to you as a free gift. And I'm glad that you have come to enjoy and treasure your gifts.

But I didn't give you these instruments to enjoy by yourselves. I'm creating an orchestra that will produce music that this world has never before heard. *And I've invited you to be part of it.* That is why I gave you these gifts.

And so it is with our Lord. The gift of eternal life is not for ourselves. God wants an orchestra in every city. He wants a building, not a collection of individual living stones. A body, not a collection of individual limbs and appendages. He wants a corporate expression through which to reveal His glorious Son. And this requires the loss of our individualism and independence.

If God's purpose has always been to glorify Christ and make Him the first born among many brethren, what would have happened if Adam had not sinned? How would Christ have been glorified as He is today?

I believe that Adam would have partaken of the tree of life. And so would have Eve (I don't believe this happened before the fall, hence the reason why the tree of life was cut off from them).

By eating from the tree, God's uncreated and eternal life (which was contained in the tree) would have been dispensed into them. And they would have lived by that life. That life is the life of God Himself, and it would have been made visible through their lives. The earth, then, would have been filled (multiplied) with the image of God, which is Christ. Humanity would have been the earthly echo of the Trinity, for humankind would have been living in community all over the earth and expressing the Son of God – God's image – *together*.

That's ultimately what God wanted. Let *us* (a corporate God) create *them* (a corporate humanity) and let them bear my image and fill the earth with it (multiply).

The tree of life was the secret to fulfilling that purpose. For that reason, the tree reappears in the Person of Jesus Christ and again in Revelation 21 and 22.

I've seen all sorts of ways authors have chosen to explain our relationship to God (father, mother, brother, etc.) But, what made you look at our relationship to God through marriage?

The image of the Bride and Bridegroom is only the first part of the book. The second part is that of the House of God (Christ being the cornerstone, capstone, and foundation; God's people being living stones that comprise the House). The third and fourth images are the Family of God and the Body of Christ.

So concerning the first part of the book, the Bible is where I found it, namely Genesis 1 and 2. The pages of Scripture open with a boy and a girl, a man and a woman, a bride and a bridegroom, a wedding/marriage and the two becoming one.

The end of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, presents the same images again. In those chapters, we discover a boy and a girl, a bride and a bridegroom, a wedding/marriage and the two becoming one.

Genesis 1 and 2 are pre-fall. Revelation 21 and 22 are post-fall. The rest of the Bible traces this image throughout the Old and New Testaments. When Jesus comes on the scene, He's announced as the Bridegroom and His first miracle is done at a wedding. It's fascinating to see how it all works together, and the book traces these images from beginning to end to their final culmination. They give us great insight into God's eternal purpose and ultimate passion.

Is this book a jump start to another book that you may have in mind?

Actually, it's the fourth book in a series on the centrality of Christ and the importance of the church. The fifth book comes out in the Fall. Each book is a stand alone work, except for "Pagan Christianity." That's only part one of a conversation. "Reimagining Church" is the follow-up to it.

How does this book relate to the other books that you have written?

Well, let me walk through the previous titles and I think you'll see how they work together.

[THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH](#) contributed a fresh approach to the New Testament. One that was rooted in a chronological narrative reading of the Biblical text. In so doing, readers became familiar with the free-flowing story of the early church, and certain neglected principles were highlighted.

Then in January 2008, the second book in the series was released by Tyndale House (publisher of Watchman Nee's classic books).

[PAGAN CHRISTIANITY](#) (co-authored with the researcher George Barna) deconstructed the traditional practices of the modern institutional church.

The unique contribution of PAGAN is that it doesn't just call for the typical changes that many church reform books call for, a la, better pastoring skills, more outreach, better methods to make disciples, more cost effective church buildings, stronger strategies for making converts, etc.

Instead, it goes to the roots. It deals with the systemic problems. It raises the brutally challenging question, "could it be that the very way we do church — from the modern pastor, sermon-focused services, the common architectural arrangement of church buildings, etc. — is part of the problem? Or to put it in terms of a Clinton slogan, "It's the system, stupid."

So while THE UNTOLD STORY sought to give readers a fresh look at the New Testament church, PAGAN leveled the ground of the prevailing church structure and form, calling all of it into question.

The third book in the series was published by David C. Cook (publisher of Leonard Sweet, Brennan Manning, and Francis Chan). It's called [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#).

This book does what PAGAN CHRISTIANITY did on the opposite end. PAGAN deconstructed; REIMAGINING constructed. PAGAN challenged the old, REIMAGINING presented the new. Len Sweet rightly calls it "a theology of church as organism rather than organization."

Everyone who has read PAGAN CHRISTIANITY should read REIMAGINING CHURCH, else they are only getting one half of a comprehensive discussion.

The fourth book in the series, also published by Cook, just released in March. This fourth volume is by far my most important book. It reveals the heart of my ministry and gives the big "why" behind all my other books. Very thankfully, and surprisingly, it hit the CBA bestseller list last month, ranking #16 of all books in the Christian Living category.

[FROM ETERNITY TO HERE](#) is an unfolding of the big, sweeping epic of God's eternal purpose and grand mission. It seeks to present the grand narrative of the entire Bible as an unbroken story rather than as a systematic theology.

Readers have repeatedly told me that after reading FROM ETERNITY, my other books now make more sense. Some, who were critics of PAGAN CHRISTIANITY before, now view it completely different after reading FROM ETERNITY.

FROM ETERNITY TO HERE is the big river; my other books are but tributaries.

The fifth book comes out this fall. It's the practical follow up to all the other books.

Your new book, *From Eternity to Here*, seems to build on your earlier work, *God's Ultimate Purpose*. How has your thinking changed between the two books?

God's Ultimate Passion was a self-published experiment; only a small number of copies were printed. It was a rough draft to test the waters and get feedback from readers on the concepts presented. *From Eternity to Here* is the mature, professionally edited, finalized version put out by David C. Cook (publisher of Brennan Manning, Len Sweet, Francis Chan, etc. They do a great job!).

From Eternity covers many of the things that readers noted were absent from the earlier rough draft, as well as sharpened, clarified, and expanded what existed in the original draft. It's a far better book, and the reception so far shows that, I think. I owe a debt to all those who read the original rough draft and gave me constructive criticism and feedback. All of their comments were implemented in the new book.

How is this book different from your others, such as *Pagan Christianity*?

Let me try to do this in chronological order. *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church* is a socio-historical-chronological narrative of the first-century church. It blends together the story of Acts with the epistles and follows the theme of God's eternal purpose from Acts to Revelation, focusing on the story of the early church. *Pagan Christianity* looks at many of the things we do for church today and questions them on the basis of history. It's a deconstructive work. Yet it was never meant to be a stand-alone book. Its job was very narrow and focused. Namely, to show where our present-day Protestant church practices came from. It then leaves the reader with the question – are these practices a help or a hindrance to God's perfect will for the Body of Christ?

Pagan Christianity, therefore, was intentionally written as only the first half of a conversation. *Reimagining Church* is the second and most important half. It's the constructive piece. Both books can be likened unto a puzzle. *Pagan Christianity* throws out the possibility that the picture on the box we have been using hasn't been entirely correct and that's why the pieces haven't been fitting together. *Reimagining Church* presents a fresh vision of the picture on the box that's rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. And it makes the argument that ... just maybe, if we used the picture that Jesus and the apostles appeared to give us, the pieces would begin to fit.

One of the chapters in *Reimagining Church* is called "Reimagining the Eternal Purpose." Here's where *From Eternity to Here* comes in. It expands that chapter into an entire book. It presents the 50,000 foot view, if you please – the big, sweeping epic of God's ageless purpose and grand mission. It explores why the church is so terribly important to God and what she looks like in His eyes. It also shows that the church is not something for ourselves; it primarily exists to fulfill something for God, for His desire and for His good pleasure.

So you can think of *From Eternity* and *The Untold Story* as giving readers a macro view of the Biblical narrative, and *Pagan* and *Reimagining* providing a micro view of some of the ways that it can flesh itself out on the ground.

Interestingly, *Pagan Christianity* and *Reimagining Church* are books that mainly interest people who are rethinking church practice and forms. But *From Eternity to Here* and *The Untold Story* are much more accessible. They are written for all Christians. For this reason, pastors, teachers, and professors from all different denominations are using these two books with those they serve.

Interestingly, I've received letters from people saying that they really didn't appreciate *Pagan Christianity* until they read *From Eternity to Here*. It helped give them a completely different context by which to understand it.

I really appreciated the Christ-centered focus in this book. You write, "The chief task of a Christian leader is to present a Christ to God's people that they have never known, dreamed, or imagined." How do you suggest that we do that?

Thanks for the kind words. One cannot give to God's people what they themselves have not experienced. Thus a person cannot present the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that bowls people over by the unveiling of His glory unless they themselves have such a revelation of Christ beating within their own hearts. Put another way: If a person is not intoxicated by the infinite glories and unsearchable riches of Christ themselves, then they cannot expect to get others intoxicated with Him by their preaching.

We declare and present that which we have seen and experienced.

That said, I believe it begins with a hunger and humility. When I was in my late teens and early 20s, I thought I knew everything. My knowledge of the Bible exceeded most of those I knew who were quite older than me, including my pastors and leaders. (I say that soberly.) Then I was handed a book written by a Chinese Christian and I was stunned. I felt like a babe. This man had a depth and insight into Christ and into Scripture that I had never seen, heard, or knew was possible. That depth made me hungry. I wanted to know my Lord like this man did. Through reading that book, the Holy Spirit showed me that I didn't know Jesus Christ that well. Yes, I knew Scripture, church history, and even theology. I was an effective apologist as well. I was busy serving God in all sorts of capacities, yet I knew deep down that I didn't know HIM well at all.

That realization sent me on a journey. I dropped what I was doing and I ended up looking for people who were older than me who I perceived knew Christ in the depths (in the way this Chinese author did), and I learned from them. Some of them had been disciples of this author in fact (who was no longer alive). My goal was to learn everything they knew about knowing God in Christ *experientially*.

Around the same time, the Lord was gracious to put others in my life who were part of this same journey. That's when I touched organic church life and authentic Christian community. We were all pursuing the Lord together and we found Him in ways we never imagined.

Therefore, I would say to all who are reading this, especially those in their 20s. Consider the possibility that you don't know your Lord as well as you may assume. And if that's the case, search for those who know Him better than you do and learn all you can from them. Even if that means relocating to where they live so as to spend as much time with them as you can. And find a believing community where the members have no other passion but to know Christ and to make Him known. Move heaven and earth to be a part of such a group if you have to.

From my observations, I think the problem today is two-fold. One, many young people who are jazzed about serving God don't realize that (in so many cases) they have a very shallow knowledge of the Lord. I'm not speaking of frontal lobe knowledge; I'm speaking of personal experience and encounter. (Christ is still alive and He can be known.) Consequently, what they are ministering to others is not life, but information. And there's a huge difference between the two.

Interestingly, what often happens is that when these folks get older, they come to the arresting realization that they were serving the god of serving God. Rather than living **by** Christ Himself. Several times a month, I receive letters from ministers who tell me this very thing. It's quite amazing. I wish to see that prevented and that many young people don't waste many years "doing" instead of knowing Him.

Precious is the young man and young woman who refuses to take short cuts, waits on their ministry, and pours all of their youthful energy and enthusiasm not in trying to do something **for** God but in learning how to know Him profoundly with others.

To my mind, all of those who were greatly used by God in the first century took this very path. The Twelve spent time living in community with one another and observing, knowing, communing with Jesus for almost four years.

In turn, people like Barnabas, Agabus, Silas, Stephen learned the depths of Christ from the Twelve in Christian community in Jerusalem for a period of years before they began ministering.

In turn, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) learned the depths of Christ from Barnabas in Christian community in Antioch, Syria for five years before the Holy Spirit sent him out to fulfill His particular ministry.

In turn, Timothy, Titus, Aristarchus, et. al. learned Jesus Christ from Paul and lived in Christianity community respectively in Lystra, Antioch, and Thessalonica before they went out to serve the Lord.

I believe this principle is written in the bloodstream of the universe. Spend time learning Christ in a vibrant community that is centered on Him, learn from those who are older and know Him better than you, then wait on your ministry.

For some people, this kind of preparation means dropping what you are doing right now and searching for these two elements. But this, I believe, is the best way to prepare to minister Christ in the way I have described. Albeit, it requires both hunger and humility at the very least.

What do you hope to accomplish through this book?

My hope is simply that the eternal purpose of God will once again become center stage in the lives of God's people. And that Christians from all different walks of life will begin to explore it, discover it, and adjust their lives to it so that the Lord Himself will get His dream.

I was a Christian for about 18 years and had been a part of multiple denominations, non-denominations, Bible studies, para-church organizations before I heard anyone talk about God's eternal purpose. Just recently, I was in a conversation with a Reformed seminary professor and pastor and we were discussing my book. He made the statement to me and others that he had never heard this before. It was a completely new perspective to him. That's how I felt the first time I heard anyone speak on the eternal purpose. It literally blew my circuitry and gave me a brand new Bible.

In short, I think we are living in a day when the time is ripe for what Paul called "the purpose of the ages" to take center stage again. For the center of that purpose is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as All in All and the expansion of the fellowship of the Trinity on earth – visible, locatable, touchable, and experiential, brought straight from heavenly realms into a person's living room, even.

Who did you write this book for?

So that God's people would gain an understanding of God's eternal purpose – which is His grand mission and the grand narrative of Scripture – and be changed by it. From all the letters I'm receiving from readers so far, a great many are saying that they never heard this message before and it is changing their lives. This merely confirms that the time was right to release this book. At least it seems to me that way.

What do you hope to accomplish through this book?

That those who read it would fall in love with their Lord deeply, would be set free from religious bondage and obligation, would live with a sense of purpose and vision for their lives, would begin the journey of learning how to live by Christ with others, and would adjust their lives to stand for and fulfill God's ageless purpose which is by Him, through Him, and to Him.

In the preface of your book you mention having a major spiritual reboot: "For the first time in my Christian life, I discovered that I was involved in something much larger and more glorious than I ever dreamed. The Christian life was no longer merely about winning souls; helping the poor; learning theology studying doctrine; mastering the Bible; deciphering eschatology; praying more;

attending church services; praising and worshipping; doing spiritual warfare; exercising spiritual gifts; hearing God's voice; imitating Jesus; and engaging in good works. Nor was it about the other endless activities that I had been taught were the center of God's will." Can you describe what led up to this reset?

Yes, it began with noticing that Genesis 1 and 2 were mirrored in Revelation 21 and 22. That led me to see that the Bible is the unfolding drama of those four chapters, all of which have no sin or corruption in them. Those four chapters give us a glimpse into the eternal purpose of God. The Lord has many purposes in time, but He only has one "eternal purpose" (as Paul calls it) which drives Him and governs everything He does.

In Chapter 19 you discuss the Wilderness, a place of religious detox. Can you briefly describe what moved you out of this place of spiritual stripping and religious lobotomy?

Yes, He brought some people into my life who showed me how to tap into the unsearchable riches of Christ with others.

My favorite section in the book was part 1, the romance of God and His love for the bride. You summed up in this quote, "This passionate God of yours is simply looking for a people who will love Him." What would you expect to happen if the Church embraced this message? What would you expect to change?

One thing that would change is that God's people would fall in love with one another and the world would notice. Jesus prayed this very thing in John 17. The secret to Christian love and unity is simply by receiving a revelation of Christ, accepting His love, and loving Him back with that love. That's the taproot of loving others. It happens spontaneously as a result of authentic encounter with Christ. It doesn't happen by guilt, obligation, fear, or command. The former is organic and out of life; the latter is very human ... religious even. One is God working through humans; the other is humans trying to be like God.

The most challenging section of your book for me was part 2, the house of God. I was shaken by your statement that God is homeless, that the reason He has to visit a church is because He hasn't been given permission to set up permanent residency. You say, "The burning intent of your God is that all of His living stones be built together with other living stones to form His house. Not for themselves but for their Lord." There seems to be so much emphasis in the American Christian culture for building bigger things rather than being the dwelling place of God. What is this costing us?

Precisely. I think it's costing us a life that is in line with God's eternal purpose and the benefits that are bound up with it. We were created to fulfill His ultimate intention, for that's what provoked God to create. But more importantly, it's costing God a great deal. He longs to have His house on this earth in every city. We are called to be part of that building. And there's a price to pay for Him to have it.

Have you experienced detractors with this book and its message? Where do you find that these concepts have their greatest opposition?

No, I haven't. In fact, the book is being used by church leaders across America today. Some of them have been deeply impacted at a very personal level. One pastor told me recently that it was the most life-changing book that he's ever read. And he's preaching from it to his congregation. He's been in the ministry for 40 years. Humbling. But that's what the message of God's eternal purpose does when we really grasp it. That revelation has ruined me for life. Once you see it and it grips you, everything else starts to taste like plain yogurt!

can you explain the title of the book? what does it refer to?

God has had a purpose in His heart from eternity past that provoked Him to create. That purpose (Paul calls it "the eternal purpose") is what governs all of what God does in, with, and through His creation. And

that purpose is meant to be fulfilled here, on this earth, for that's why He created it. The book unfolds the above. Hence the title.

your previous books focus a lot on us (the church) and our mission. the new book turns more towards God and His mission. how are these intertwined? how does our mission and God's mission connect?

They aren't to be separated. God's purpose is to be our purpose; His mission our mission; His vision our vision. One of the main reasons why I wrote the book is to bring this out.

i've heard you say recently that you wouldn't give a dime for most house churches today. what do you mean by that? aren't you "the house church guy?"

Nope, I sure aren't (that's great English, eh?). That's one of the myths right up there with the idea that George Barna and I believe that computers are pagan because they weren't around during the first century.

My books and spoken messages consistently maintain that I'm not an advocate of "institutional church" or "house church." Instead, I maintain that *the organic expression of the church* or *organic church life* is what God is after. The church we see envisioned in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles was organic rather than institutional.

I'm told that one of my oft-quoted statements is, "Meeting in a home doesn't make you a church anymore than sitting in a donut shop makes you a police officer."

My message on the church is received more so by house church advocates (or "movement") simply because my critiques of the institutional/traditional church are the same. I also believe that it's good (though it's not a Mosaic Law) to gather in a home for some kinds of meetings.

But the issue is not the location of the church. The issue is the basis upon which a group of Christians gather and whether or not the members are living for God's eternal purpose. Are they learning to live by the indwelling life of Christ together? Are they expressing His life corporately in their meetings and community life? Are they living a shared life in Christ? Are they consumed with, intoxicated by, and enraptured with Jesus Christ or are they focused on some "it", "thing", or "doctrine"? Are they manifesting Christ's glorious riches when they come together? Do they know the experience of the cross and are they laying their lives down for one another? Etc. etc.

Many "house churches" and "simple churches" today do not even understand what God's eternal purpose is let alone live for it together. The same is true for the typical institutional church. The letters I'm receiving from the book only confirms this.

For those interested, I've addressed these themes in detail in my book *Reimagining Church* and a ["straight-talk message" to house churches that can be heard online.](#)

isn't this book really just an attempt to get mainstream christian booksellers to start carrying your other, more radical books?

Lol. That thought never crossed my mind, but I don't think it would work if some author tried to do that. Booksellers usually don't stock older books by an author even if they like a new one. As far as I know, all Christian bookstores and sellers have carried all of my previous books before *From Eternity* came out,

including *Pagan Christianity*, which is pretty remarkable. Family Christian Stores didn't carry it at first, but about one or two months after its release, they did. You can even find it on LifeWay's website.

so much of your writing is centered on re-educating today's Christians about their own true and biblical ecclesiology, mission and purpose. why do you think we've gotten so far off track? what factors contributed to the need for this re-education?

I really don't know. I think it starts at the top levels. Seminaries and Bible schools produce pastors and teachers. They in turn teach God's people. God's eternal purpose doesn't appear on the radar screen of most of those lesson plans, I guess. Plus, we've all been handed a certain mindset by which to interpret Scripture. D.L. Moody's theology has taken hold of the minds of most evangelicals. But that's another discussion.

other than reading your book, how can today's christians get back on track and rediscover their DNA as the Body of Christ?

To spend time visiting those churches that are living out of it. Or to find those who have been called to equip Christian groups to live by Christ's indwelling life together.

do you think that we are in the midst of a modern reformation of faith today? will the church be radically different 20 years from now?

The Protestant Reformation didn't change the church of its day. All it did was make an expression of church outside of Roman Catholicism acceptable. The same is true when the Pentecostal movement came along. It *eventually* made a new kind of church acceptable from what was on the earth previous to it.

I think the same is true with what's happening today. I won't put my prophet's mantle on for this, but in 20 years, I suspect the Protestant institutional church will still be here. The Catholic and Orthodox churches will be here. Even megachurches will still be around. What I think will change is that those Christians who gather *exclusively* under the headship of Jesus Christ without a modern pastor, a Sunday morning order of worship, a religious/sacred building, etc. will be accepted as "normal" by more people than they are today.

BONUS: Would you be interested in leading one of our discussion times at next year's Non-Con (non-conference) in March with David Ruis, Justin Fox and myself? It's a free, dialog-driven event for 45 people to explore the Temple, the Priesthood of the Believer and the Living, Daily Sacrifice here in Southern California.

I'm a big fan of David Ruis. His music in the 90s was in-cred-ible. I'd like to learn more about it.

Since the church is a result of the mission of God and not the other way around, why did you choose to write *PAGAN CHRISTIANITY* and *REIMAGINING CHURCH* before *FROM ETERNITY TO HERE*?

One reason is because deconstruction should precede construction. If a building has a faulty foundation, it must be torn down first. Then a new one built in its place. [Pagan Christianity](#) deconstructs. [Reimagining Church](#) constructs. Then [From Eternity](#) presents the big, sweeping epic picture explaining why the church is so important to God in the first place. And how He views it. How He views us. Getting behind His eyes is life-changing.

Do you think that *FROM ETERNITY TO HERE* gives more clarity to *PAGAN CHRISTIANITY* and *REIMAGINING CHURCH*? And if so, would you recommend that readers revisit your earlier works after reading *FROM ETERNITY TO HERE*?

Yes, absolutely. In fact, I've received numerous letters from people who didn't know what to think about *Pagan Christianity* (after reading it) or who were deathly afraid to read it (based on ominous warnings from people). Then, after reading *From Eternity*, they said *Pagan Christianity* made sense to them. It gave them a larger context to fit it into and to understand the spirit in which it was written. Incidentally, [I've explained on my blog recently how all my books work together](#).

What is it about the way that the average Christian reads the Bible that we miss these paramount themes that run throughout from creation to revelation? How can we be more aware of these themes as we go about reading the Bible to experience God?

I think part of it that we approach the Bible in piecemeal. A book here, a verse there, a story here, a parable there, etc. We use the cut and paste approach to Bible study. In many cases, we don't read it as a cohesive narrative. So we miss the big, sweeping epic that ties it all together.

As to your other question, once the grand narrative is brought out, you can't help but see everything tied into it. It's like those pictures that you stare at and then an image emerges that was once hidden. Once you spot the image, you can't help but see it every time you look at the picture again.

God's eternal purpose is a lot like that.

If you could challenge the church in just one way to change what would it be?

To actually make the Lord Jesus Christ the living, breathing, functional Head of the church and explore what that means practically and corporately. To learn what makes God's heart throb. To discover what He's really after above all else. That's what the eternal purpose gives us.

What are some by products of viewing the church like you portray it in your book (a body of believers, a bride, a prostitute, etc) rather than church as a place to meet, where a preacher preaches and their are stain glass windows and pews?

Lol. I actually don't call her a prostitute. She's not. She's holy and blameless. But in the fall, she became dirty and damaged. But Christ has taken care of that. And she's pure again.

In God's eyes, she's pure and holy for she is in Christ and has been in Him before time. Once we see the church from the Divine viewpoint, it changes everything else. And it does touch how we see the church and one another.

I've made the statement that no church should exist except to stand for, express, and fulfill God's eternal purpose. Any other reason is to miss the target. I stand by that statement.

How do you understand Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God in the light of God's eternal purpose, and, in your opinion, speaking the truth in love, would you say the Emergent Movement falls short of His vision?

I have no comment to make about the emergent movement as I've not followed it for some years. I hear from some that it's pretty much dissolved, but I don't know. The Kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching and God's eternal purpose in Paul's teaching are very tightly connected. The Kingdom is the authority and reign of God expressed through Jesus Christ in and through the church to the world. Thus the Bride, the House, the Family, and the Body live in and under the Kingdom (God's reign through Christ), which is essentially the headship of Jesus Christ.

It is well that we know God's eternal purpose. Yet coming down to earth, do you have any advice in regards to how we could relate the daily grind to His larger eternal purpose, so that we can practically discern God's present purpose for us and live joyfully in it amidst adversity and constraint? Or should we be more realistic and concede that we can't always understand how our present circumstances work out to fulfill His masterplan?

For a person to make the eternal purpose practical, they need to head straight toward a body of believers who are standing for it in the world and expressing it in their lives together. In my discussion on the Christian's natural habitat, I discuss some of what this may cost. My book [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#) gets into what I see as the practicals on what it looks like when a local church is displaying the eternal purpose. It's a large question.

If you have the opportunity to face the Lord before you leave this world, would you like to clarify with Him on issues in regards to God's eternal purpose. If yes, what will be your questions and the reasons for asking them? If no, why not?

Honestly, if I saw the Lord face to face now or in the future, I really have no idea what I would ask Him. But I am pretty confident that I would fall on my face at the sight of His glory.

what has God been doing in your life and/or giving you the eyes to see in our world, that has shaped your work in this book?

By His mercy, He has given me an insatiable hunger to know Jesus Christ in an intimate way. Ever since I've been a Christian, that hunger and thirst has burned in me. Equally so, He's given me a thirst for Christian community. I don't just believe intellectually that *ekklesia* is the Christian's native habitat; it's been my own experience. Beyond that, there is the cross and the breaking of God as well as His resurrection life, which stands on the other side of the grave. There is only one Revelation and one Revelator: The Holy Spirit's job is to reveal Christ to us, in us, and through us. I thank God for that.

if there is just one thing that you want this book's readers to "take away," what is it?

That God's eternal purpose and ultimate passion is beyond what any of us have dreamed or imagined. That it has the power to set us free from everything but our Lord. That we can live by Christ together practically. That we can live for His eternal purpose and adjust our lives to it. And that this is the "on-high calling of God" in Christ Jesus. Everything else is clutter.

So far, the overwhelming response to the book from readers who have written me about it have said things like: "I've fallen in love with my Lord all over again. How did I miss this? The Bible is a brand new book to me now. I'll never view myself, church, the Lord, or others the same way again."

Those are the kind of take-aways that humble me, encourage me, and bless my heart. I am very thankful that God has chosen to breathe on the book.

For His glory and pleasure alone.

In chapters three and four you repeatedly talk about the Church as God's "frustrated passion", "desperate love", "most captivating thing", "hidden masterpiece", etc. Does your description of the Church border on idolatry of church? Isn't God most captivated with Himself?

One of the most frequent comments by readers is how the book extols, magnifies, and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ beyond telling. Equally so, it presents how the New Testament portrays the *ekklesia* of God. According to the New Testaments, she is God's masterpiece, the Bride of Christ, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, the mystery that has been hidden in God before time, and the Lord's very inheritance. These are all Paul's words in Ephesians. My book explores those texts.

Consider this: If someone talked about the wonders and beauty of a man's wife and explained how the man cherished her and was out of his head in love with her, I don't think anyone would misconstrue that to mean that the man was somehow being slighted. Quite the contrary, it would bless his heart, for she is his passion.

It is the same way with Christ and the church. Thus, a person cannot properly love Jesus Christ and ignore or neglect His much-loved Bride, which is at the center of His purpose. Instead, they will eventually see her in the same way that He sees her and treasure her just as He does. To love Christ is to love what He loves, hence the reason why a revelation of Jesus Christ will always lead to loving His people and His church. Paul connects faith in Christ with love for the saints consistently in his epistles.

While the church doesn't replace Christ, and Christ is certainly distinct from the church, He is not separate from her. She's the bottom half of our Lord – His body. She's His very Bride, the most beautiful girl in the world.

You can't cherish the Lord and not cherish His church. This is the teaching of Ephesians.

Seeing this has an incredibly liberating effect on Christians. When they see themselves, their brothers and sisters, and the church as God sees her, it changes everything. The church, according to the New Testament, isn't a technique, a form, a structure, an organization, a denomination, a service, or any of the things we think of when we hear the word "church." She the community that God has had in mind from before time. The very expansion of the Godhead from eternity to eternity. The effects of receiving a revelation of the eternal purpose are amazing. Discipleship, mission, church practice, spiritual formation and devotion all take on a new meaning and experience as a result.

In your final chapter you advocate a "deep ecclesiology" centered on Jesus. Some would say this isn't deep at all, that a "Jesus band aid" doesn't make much difference. How do you recommend deep ecclesiology address the deep issues of sin and brokenness in the church?

Jesus Christ is not a band-aid. He's the Sum of all spiritual things. And everything in this universe is moving toward Him being All and All. He is *the* issue, period. For a person to separate the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the visible image of the invisible God – full of grace and truth – from the healing of deep sin and brokenness is to betray the fact that such a person doesn't quite know who this glorious Person is.

Such a view of Jesus reflects an anemic, flannel board version of the Lord over against knowing Him as the FULLNESS of the Godhead bodily. For this reason, Paul's passion was "to know Him" ... to know this incredible Christ in a living way. Jesus Himself said eternal life is knowing God the Father and Himself, for He is LIFE and REALITY.

Jesus Christ is God's answer to all human needs, and more.

Every time I've seen the fullness of Christ revealed, displayed, magnified and ministered, people's lives have been changed drastically.

"The look that melted Peter, the face that Stephen saw, the heart that wept with Mary, can alone from idols draw."

Jesus is no band-aid.

He's the heartthrob of God the Father and the center of His eternal plan.

How do you define the Gospel?

I don't define it. The Gospel is a Person. It is Christ. The early apostles preached a Person, not a theory, a theology, or a plan. As John said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ... that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

Preaching the gospel is to preach Christ. To give Christ. To reveal Christ. To declare Christ. Always has been; always will be.

What are your "marks of the church"? What is the bare minimum for the church to be the church?

I describe those specifically in my book [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#). In short, it's the same marks that we find in the fellowship of the Godhead.

When a group of people have met the Lord Jesus Christ experientially and are learning to live by His indwelling life together, then you have the *ekklesia* expressed and experienced visibly.

Frank, your thoughts about God's desire for a habitation and dwelling place with man were thorough and very well-stated. However, I struggled with the terminology of God as homeless. Would you further expound on and explain this quote? "After the death of the apostles, God lost His house once again. The living, breathing house of God became suffocated by a truckload of human traditions. The vision was lost. And God was again homeless."

I would agree with historians like John W. Kennedy and others who point out that the eternal purpose, the centrality of Jesus Christ, and the organic expression of church life began to be lost sight of when the church began to be coopted by Greco-Roman culture. This coopting came to its height with Constantine's arrival and era. Many writers today are discussing this shift in fact ... people like Alan Hirsch, Michael Frost, Greg Boyd, G.W. Nigel, George Barna and myself (in "Pagan Christianity"). In fact, I was having a phone conversation with Hirsch recently, and he used the term "dethroning Constantine" in our time, as a mindset and a system. The work of God in this hour, we believe, is that of recovery and restoration concerning the fleshing-out of God's eternal purpose in Christ in all dimensions.

I would like to hear your thoughts on the ideal of the body of Christ experiencing authentic church life versus the reality of the diverse, many-membered church, both past and present, in its imperfection as Christ's body in the earth. What are your thoughts about the many churches who are unaware of God's eternal purpose as members of the corporate body and participants in the new species?

"Church" has become such a muddled word in our day. It means drastically different things to different people. So for the purposes of clarity, I'll not use it here.

God has always worked and will always work through and in His people wherever they are found and in whatever religious organizations they choose to be a part of. Israel is the summary witness of this. Even when the children of Israel were worshipping in Babylon, God blessed them and used them.

However, God has always had a testimony that represented His full thought when it comes to His eternal purpose. For me, the issue is very simple. If I'm a lover of Jesus, I have got to be interested in God's eternal purpose in Christ, for that's His heartthrob and the very thing that provoked Him to create. Therefore, I am responsible to know what His central thought is and to adjust my life to it. I think this is the calling of all Christians. In essence, fulfilling God's ultimate intention is what following Jesus is all about. It's nothing less than that. The Kingdom of God and being part of a Kingdom community is certainly a large part of it.

Would you please explain where and how you see the fundamental flaw expressed in the following quote occurring in the missional movement? “Failure to understand that God’s ultimate purpose begins in Genesis 1 before the fall, not in Genesis 3 after the fall has been the fundamental flaw of much of the modern day missional movement.”

Note the words “much of.” There are exceptions of course. I speak as one who is part of the missional movement. My entire ministry is built on bringing into view the grand mission of God, which is His eternal purpose.

One of the things I appreciate about my friends and colleagues in the movement is that we graciously receive adjustment, challenges, and fresh thinking from one another. No one is defensive about it as we all realize that none of us sees the entire picture fully or clearly. So we learn from one another and engage in robust conversation sometimes.

Some within the movement (which is growing more and more diverse by the way) view God’s mission to be the salvation of the lost and/or the healing of the world. Other stress it to be the making of individual disciples and trying to imitate Jesus as individuals. As I point out in “From Eternity,” God created humans not in need of salvation and the world not in need of healing. Thus there was something else on His heart ... a purpose conceived before time ... that is by Him, through Him, and to Him. And it is corporate, not individualistic. Furthermore, the purpose of God cannot be fulfilled by trying or working. It is fulfilled by eating from a certain tree which contains a certain life form. God’s purpose goes beyond human redemption.

Jesus Himself said, “As the Father has sent me, and I LIVE BY the Father. So he that eats me shall LIVE BY me.” The purpose of God finds visible expression when a group of people learn to live by the Lord’s indwelling life *together* and display *together* it in their localities. That’s what true discipleship is all about. To separate disciple-making from the community of believers is like separating child-rearing, nurture, and development from the family. This touches the matter of “native habitats” that speak of in the book. To be a disciple of Jesus means to live by Christ, just as He lived by the Father. And that happens corporately for the most part. It’s not just an individual pursuit. Christ is, after all, our indwelling Lord.

I’m glad that we are beginning to hear more about God’s glorious purpose in missional circles right now, and I hope that continues. Interestingly, I was able to expand on this very question at a [missional church event at George Fox Seminary](#) recently. It created a lot of great dialogue afterwards that was profitable and brought oneness of mind among many who were present. I’m thankful for that.

You note the bride of Christ is removed from his side when the guard pierced Jesus' side (pleura) and blood and water flowed out. Is there a metaphorical significance to blood and water that you see there?

Yes, I believe so. The blood speaks of redemption. The water speaks of life. There are references to blood and water in John’s first epistle and in his Gospel. The Bride is cleaned by the blood; she is made alive and comes into being by the water (God’s life).

You note how important it is that Christ destroyed death to prepare the way for his bride. Was this a partial defeat reserved only for his bride or in totality for the restoration of the entire creation?

For the entire cosmos. The earth changed on resurrection day. On that day, the new creation was born. It will be consummated at the Lord’s return when His glorious Person will fill all things.

In the chapter on Mary Magdalene you note she was the first person Jesus spoke to and his words were an echo to Adam's "Woman..." Is Mary therefore the first member of the church?

I believe the church was formed on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out. Mary was certainly the first witness to His resurrection, which says a lot. Especially in how our Lord views women. In that day, a woman's testimony wouldn't hold up in a Jewish court of law. So the Lord made a great statement through appearing to Mary first. In the same way, Peter was the first male disciple who laid eyes on the resurrected Christ. Peter had just denied Him a few days earlier ... three times in fact.

What a Lord of mercy and compassion!

Your chapter on the 2 tabernacles was certainly the high point of the book for me, so I have two questions about that. First, have you considered an entire work on this theme? Secondly, why was Solomon's temple completely skipped in this discussion?

Thanks. It's my favorite image of God's house. No plans for a book on that, but I gave an [entire message on it that's on CD](#). People have said that the spoken message on David's Tabernacle is more powerful than the discussion of it in the book. I don't know if that's true or not.

I don't believe I skip Solomon's temple, but I don't treat it in any depth. When trying to capture the whole sweep of the Bible in a single book, you are forced to choose what you want to emphasize and expand. I felt David's tabernacle was more fitting for this particular book.

Thank you for this incredibly deep book. What impact do you hope *From Eternity to Here* will have in individuals and in the church in general?

I hope that it will ignite a passion for God's people to fall in love with their Lord like never before, to be set free from so many of the trappings that hold them in bondage today, to be captivated by God's eternal purpose (which is tremendous), and to adjust their lives to it. Thankfully, based on the emails I've received so far about the book, God is doing this in the lives of not a few who have read it. I hope that trend continues.

As you explain the church as the bride of Christ, the house of God, the body of Christ and family of God, what is the biggest struggle for you personally in living out these models?

There have been a few times in my life where I was living in the wilderness. Meaning, I didn't have others to be built together with into God's house. That's not been the case in a long while, thank God. But I've had to relocate to find those interested in standing for God's eternal purpose and being built together into Christ the Head. I think the greatest difficulty for me and everyone else who takes this path is being built together with those living stones whose personalities don't mesh well ours. But that's God's way of transforming us. It's painful, but there's glory in the process.

How does outreach fit into your paradigm? Can you give us an example of what it might look like?

It happens organically and naturally. Without obligation. Without duty. Without guilt. Without programs. How does it happen? A thousand different ways. On small example: a couple of brothers (in Christ) who are part of a church that's standing for God's eternal purpose are talking about Jesus on their job. They are consumed with Him. It's real and living. Others hear it; get interested and come to a meeting. They see Christ displayed by the members functioning in freedom, reality, and life. They see the community life of an assembly that's really being built together and where the members have fallen in love with one

another. It's arresting. Jesus becomes irresistible. That's the way it happened in the beginning. And it turned the Roman world upside down.

"Behold how they love one another" said the pagans.

Your paradigms are very corporate, and I understand the reason, but can you help us as individuals figure out how to fit? If we (as individuals reading this blog) could do one thing today to move toward being what you have laid out, what would that be?

Simply. Begin to pray that God will lead you to a community of believers who are standing for God's eternal and ultimate purpose. It may possibly involve relocating, because such groups aren't on every corner. But the Lord will lead if the heart is hungry.

What is your next project?

A few articles that rethink discipleship. The next book that comes out is on planting Christian communities that are standing for God's eternal purpose in Christ and displaying it to the world. Should be out before the year is out, hopefully.

Frank, you have said that this is your favorite/best work. What is different about it? Why should we read it?

Because it reveals more of the depths of Christ and God's ultimate dream more comprehensively than any of my other books. If someone is interested in exploring the questions: What provoked God to create, what is utmost on His heart, what is His grand mission, why hasn't discipleship been working well for the last 50 years, what is the grand narrative of Scripture ... and is open to explore these things in a new light, they will want to read the book.

Why do we so rarely hear the church talked about the way you, really the way Scripture does?

I think it's because of what we have been fed ... what's popular for the masses. If every Christian were on a deserted island, never heard a preacher preach, never watched television or movies, and read the New Testament from cover to cover, I don't think they would view Christianity or the church the way that many Christians do today.

We've been fed a lot on this score. Obviously, each reader will have to determine if I have done the same with the Scriptures as they read the book. It took many years of examining what the Bible really says compared to what I have been taught for many years to come to the conclusions I have in the book. I wasn't alone by the way. I didn't interpret in a vacuum. There are many witnesses who have said the same things.

One example: I was taught that God's ultimate purpose was to redeem and save humans. But when you open up Genesis 1 and 2, there is no fall. There's no sin. So obviously, God had something else in mind which provoked Him to create.

There was another purpose beyond post-fall salvation in His heart that preceded the fall. That purpose is what Paul calls "the eternal purpose" in Ephesians, and the Lord has never abandoned it. The idea that God's desires to redeem humanity is correct. But it's not complete. Redemption puts us back on track in

order to fulfill God's original intention, which is intensely corporate and centered in Christ ... not just as the Savior, but as so much more. Once we see that intention, it's so glorious and overwhelming that it changes everything. Thus one reader described the book as an unveiling of "the hidden obvious."

The book opens with this quote. I think it's an apt description of the eternal purpose.

Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into the future so that we can take the next step.... If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story. - Ivan Illich, Austrian philosopher

Very rarely do we hear the Old Testament used the way you do. So would even go so far as to say you take an allegorical approach. What are we missing in our neglect of the Old Testament.

Actually, the Christocentric interpretation of the OT was prevalent among virtually all Christians, scholars, and theologians before the 19th century. I've discussed this in detail in my article [BEYOND BIBLE STUDY](#). Thankfully, it's being recovered today again among a number of theologians and exegetes.

If the pastor and leadership team of an institutional, evangelical program- and building-centered church were to read *From Eternity To Here* and all were to deeply embrace the paradigms you present in the book, what might that church look like a year from now? Please be as specific as you can.

I think that church would be heading more toward community. It would be more Christ-centered. And I also think that if they took the entire message to heart, they would rethink their leadership structures, their mode of operations, and what they did in their services or gatherings. I've had some pastors tell me that after reading the book, they've begun a journey of knowing the Lord anew and afresh. And they are rethinking many things they had assumed, but now are admitting do not work.

Which of the three paradigms (Bride, House, Family) has impacted you the most? Why? How has it changed the way you relate to God? To other believers? To those who don't yet believe?

They all have. The Bride of Christ has caused me to see my Lord as a passionate Lover and so I've learned to join the eternal love relationship that's been going on before time between the Father and the Son. The House of God has caused me to see that I cannot live the Christian life by myself. I need other "living stones" with which to be built together to form a habitation for God's pleasure – a [Bethany](#), a place where Christ can lay His head and where He can find rest and reception. The Family of God has caused me to see my fellow Christians as *real* brothers and sisters and to see that I share the same life that Jesus, the Firstborn Son, does. The life of God.

Within the context of deconstruction found in Pagan Christianity and Reconstruction in Reimagining - how does *From Eternity to Here* fit into the trilogy?

Great question. "From Eternity" presents the big, sweeping epic of God's eternal campaign for a Bride, a House, a Body, and a Family. It's an unveiling of His eternal purpose and grand mission. It's the 50,000 foot view, if you please. The macro perspective. "Pagan" and "Reimagining" give us the "down in the weeds" view of church practice ... the micro perspective.

In regards to simple church or organic church, why do you feel the need to have *From Eternity to Here* as part of the dialogue? Isn't the dialogue noisy already with a myriad of books?

I wrote "From Eternity" precisely because the dialogue *is* so noisy and cluttered, lacking the stunning clarity that only Divine vision can give. So much of the discussion is about church forms, church structures, the way we "do" church, discipleship, and mission. But God is interested in one thing beyond all else. He has an eternal purpose that provoked Him to create. And He's never let go of it. Yet, in my observation, the eternal purpose is the missing ingredient in the whole discussion. Once we see the eternal purpose and are captured by it, it changes everything. Then discipleship, mission, and church practice all fall into place ... a different place, mind you. They adjust themselves to God's ultimate intention. So the eternal purpose of God brings clarity of vision and purpose to the whole conversation. It also does this for every individual Christian, because it goes so far beyond these other issues. It touches the very life of every believer and brings us to the heart of the Christian life as God would have it to be.

What do you think the impact of *Eternity to Here* will be on the US and world church landscape?

I don't know. It recently hit the [CBA Bestseller List](#) last month, which is an extremely encouraging sign. I do believe that if every Christian would read it, it would help change the course of church history. I say that soberly. It's not because I wrote the book; it's because of the message that it contains. A message we find in Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles. That message has been largely lost because of the theological "noise" that surrounds us. We hear bits and fragments of the purpose of God, but they are all disconnected and detached and made ends in themselves. The message of the "eternal purpose" (as Paul called it) is the governing vision of the Bible and the highest declaration of God in Christ that a person can know.

What prompted you to write this book?

The message of the book changed my life ... profoundly. It gave me vision, purpose, and passion. As well as a hunger and thirst for Christ that has never left me. In addition, it provided me with a framework for understanding God's grand mission and the entire Biblical story. So I wanted others to benefit from the message of God's Eternal Purpose as well.

In what ways did writing this book draw you closer to God and deepen your relationship to Christ?

The message of the book certainly did that. It caused me to fall in love with my Lord and to adjust my life to His ultimate intention. I no longer strive to serve God, but I've entered into His rest. The joy of watching Him work instead of working for Him is tremendous. And the joy of knowing Him and making Him known with others thrills me.

What was the most challenging aspect of writing this book?

Trying to articulate bursts of light that are largely beyond words into clear sentences that have the same impact on others as they do on my own heart and mind.

What has been the most encouraging response to this book that you have had so far?

Probably when a seminary professor and pastor said: "When you're as old as I am, I don't hear new stuff. You can hardly say anything about religion that I haven't heard several times. But this is so new to me. It's a whole new way of looking at the Scriptures, at Jesus, at the church, and at me." And the reviews where people said that it was the best book they've read next to the Bible.

What "void" are you hoping *From Eternity to Here* will fill. i.e. What message, in broad terms, is not being spoken that you hope this book will bring forward?

Very simply: what Paul calls “the Eternal Purpose” of God. We live in a day when many Christians believe that the grand mission of God is the saving of lost souls, making individual disciples, or healing the planet. While those are certainly pieces of what God is ultimately after, none of them embody the ultimate intention that drives Him. The eternal purpose, once grasped, changes our views of everything – including discipleship, mission, the church and her expression, as well as our view of the Lord Himself. It’s absolutely breathtaking.

What changes are you seeing in the church today that give you the most hope and encouragement.

I’m beginning to see a return to “the Purpose of the Ages” as the framework for understanding and speaking about God’s mission in the world. The centrality of Jesus Christ, knowing Christ in a profound, experiential way with others, corporately displaying His life, and living by His indwelling life (opposed to try to imitate His behavior) are just beginning to shape the missional conversation.

In chapter 14 of the book, you contrast Moses' & David's tabernacles. There we see a beautiful picture of "God's people... worshipping freely" and "God's holy presence... open for all to enjoy". Do you see those involved in what is currently referred to as the "worship ministry" (i.e. musicians, singers & worship leaders) playing a part in the restoration of the tabernacle of David? If so, would that look any different to what we currently see - how?

No, I do not. The whole worship leader/team phenomenon is a throwback to Old Covenant worship. We are in the New Covenant now where all believers are ministering priests, and they should be allowed to function as such. In organic church life, all carry a piece of the ark. Worship is in the hands of everyone together under Christ’s headship. (I describe what this looks like in my book [REIMAGINING CHURCH.](#))

The tabernacle of David is a powerful picture of the *ekklesia* of God where all of God’s people are functioning, ministering, and beholding the glory of God with unveiled faces. Those who have experienced authentic church life ... organic body life ... understand this experience. Due to space limitations, I wasn’t able to go into depth on it in the book, but I have done so in [a spoken message on the topic.](#)

As congregations become more aware of God's ageless purpose in the Church, what advice can you offer those who would seek to embody the expression of the bride, house, body & family of God in the Earth? Can you offer practical advice drawn from the experiences of other congregations who have made the journey?

Those Christians who are captured by the vision of God’s eternal purpose naturally seek others who have the same vision so they can stand for and display it with them. The eternal purpose is corporate, it’s not individualistic. Displaying and fulfilling it, therefore, requires a body of believers in a locale.

Two practical suggestions. One is to ask the Lord to bring others who have a vision for the eternal purpose into their path. Believe it or not, Facebook (of all things) has been used by the Lord to accomplish this recently. There’s a new [Facebook page for the book](#) where people of like mind and heart are connecting.

Secondly, there are special events going on all over the country this year on the Eternal Purpose designed to connect like-minded folks together in person and give them both vision and practical help on how to begin fleshing it out in their cities. People can find out more about these events at [www.ptmin.org/events](#)

First I really want to thank you for answering a lot of questions and shedding light on many things. I really loved the way you described the Kingdom of God in relation to the church and for a couple of days my mind has been pondering the realization that when we are able to create a really Godly community as a church, that is one of the most powerful ways to show His glorious Kingdom on earth! You're talking about unity being that everyone gather under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I totally agree with this point but in my nation and around the world as well I see how many church leaders are moving toward a more institutionalized kind of unity. Could you tell me a little bit more about how you see that the biblical unity looks like and how you think that the vision Jesus had that his church would be one will come to pass?

A very difficult question to answer. I address it in a whole chapter in my book [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#). But the bottom line is that Christian unity is neither organization, institutional, or doctrinal, but it's based in life. The life of Christ. If Christians would be seek to know Christ and live by Him, unity is a natural outgrowth. *From Eternity to Here* deals with how God sees the church, how He sees us who are membered to it. If we could get behind His eyes, it would change the way we view and treat other believers. That's what a revelation of God's eternal purpose does among many other things.

There is also a trend in some modern churches to shift over to a more "sacramental" liturgy, getting influences from the catholic and orthodox churches. While I really do believe there are millions of God loving Christians in both the orthodox church and the catholic church I have a hard time to see some of these traditions having their origins in the early church. What's your take on this?

That question is beyond the scope of *From Eternity to Here*, of course, because I don't discuss church traditions or practices in that volume. But as I've expressed in *Pagan Christianity* and *Reimagining Church*, so long as a practice doesn't violate the headship of Christ, the functioning priesthood of all believers, and the organic expression of the church, I don't see any problem with it.

We should strive to observe those things that express and enhance these three things. Each person must decide for themselves, then, if a practice or tradition is originating with the Lord's life or from some other source.

if you were in an elevator with someone and they asked you what is the ageless purpose of God, what would you tell them?

I'd say that trying to explain it in an elevator is like trying to put the Mississippi river in a tea cup. It's impossible. It's too high, too glorious, too wonderful, too incredible and too amazing to put in a sentence without diluting it or doing it justice. I'd then hand them a copy of *From Eternity to Here* if I had one on me, saying, "this is but an introduction." ;-)

what are some challenges you find about believing and knowing God's purpose?

The main challenge for me is trying to break through the mentality that is common among some Christians wherein they assume that they have heard everything and know everything there is to know about the Lord. Once someone opens the door to understanding God's eternal purpose in Christ, it wipes everything else off the table. We realize that Jesus Christ is far more than we ever dreamed.

what is the simplest way to describe and recommend this book to someone else? whether they are in ministry or are a lay person passionate about God. i.e. "you should read this book because..."

Well, if I may quote from many of the letters I've received so far, they would finish that sentence saying ... "because it will wreck you for anything else but Christ. It will change your life, and you'll fall in love with your Lord like never before. You'll discover what provoked Him to create, what His ultimate passion is, and where you fit into it. After having seen it, reading the Bible, viewing your brothers and sisters in the Lord, and viewing God and the church will never be the same." People can read some of those statements from the reviews at www.FromEternitytoHere.org

There is no way that your life can not have been changed as a result of the Spirit working in you while writing this book! Would you mind sharing with us the impact that *From Eternity to Here* has had on your life?

The message of the book has been an unfolding revelation 17 years ago. The message has caused me to love my Lord more, to receive His love more fully, and to adjust my life as much as I know how to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. It's given me a stunningly clear vision and purpose from which to live. It's also left me with a desire to know Him more.

I'm writing about the role of women in the Church. Have the revelations which the Holy Spirit has given you about Eve and the Bride of Christ changed readers' perspective on the role of women in the Church? If so ...would you please share some of the feedback that you've received?

Based on the feedback I've received, the main thing it has done is to show readers how passionately the Lord loves them. Both men and women, because we are all part of the New Eve, the Bride of Christ. Many have said they've fallen in love with the Lord all over again. This has brought great encouragement to my own heart.

What a Lord we have! He's amazing.

After expounding upon God's eternal purpose, you write that, "The Lord wants a people who embody the bride, the house, the body, and the family in every city on this planet." Does this mean that you believe the local church should be no smaller than a city? Do all these "churches" that we find in a single city really make up one local church, or are they local churches within themselves?

I address this in detail in my book [Reimagining Church](#). The first-century "city" was far smaller than today's cities. Most cities in the first-century where churches existed were between 1 and 3 square miles. Not the case in today's large cities. Each city today, I believe, should have at least one church that is standing for God's eternal purpose. But the more the better. The fact is, few churches today stand for the eternal purpose of God let alone know what it is. I believe that's beginning to change, thankfully.

Frank, I love what you say about the church's role in Commission, and I wish you would write a book on this topic by itself. On the one hand, you break down Revivalist theology (the belief that people have two purposes: 1) to get saved and 2) to save others). You also point out there are only two occasions in the New Testament where Christians who were not apostles preached the gospel to the lost...and you question whether any verse written by Paul, Peter, John, James, or Jude calls for Christians to preach the gospel to the lost. Yet you also do a great job talking about the church's role in this Commission. You write, "As the body of Christ, the church not only cares for its own, but it also cares for the world that surrounds it." You describe how this looked in the

New Testament age, but can you describe how you have seen this look in churches today...especially churches that you believe are in tune with God's eternal purpose?

Yes. Let me reiterate, you cannot find any apostle in the New Testament commanding God's people to preach the gospel. Read the epistles; it's just not there. Not even a hint of it. But the gospel did spread. It was mostly by the lives of the Christians together and how they revealed Christ by taking care of one another, loving one another, having joy, and taking care of the downtrodden who were not Christians – those that everyone else abandoned. Their corporate testimony is what caused the Roman cities in the first century to be startled. They'd never seen anything like it before. I discuss this detail in my book [The Untold Story of the New Testament Church](#). You've got to understand first century culture to appreciate how the Christians lived and the power of their testimony in that day.

As for today, it happens the same way I believe that it happened Century One. When a group of Christians are intoxicated with Jesus Christ and God's eternal purpose in Him, they begin learning how to live by Christ together. It's not a matter of them working for God; but of God working through them. Thus the sharing of the Lord to the lost in both testimony, life, and speaking, happens naturally, organically, not out of command, obligation, duty, or any other thing. It's one of the most natural things a person can witness. I talked about this some in my talk [at George Fox Seminary](#) recently, discussing where we got our modern evangelistic mindset from as well.

What inspired you to write From Eternity?

The message wrecked me. It changed my life profoundly. So I wanted to share it with others to hopefully see their lives impacted by the revelation of God's eternal purpose in Christ as mine had been.

In the book, you make the argument that Eve was always inside of Adam and that this symbolizes that the Bride of Christ has always been inside of the Son. Have you gotten any theologians' push-back on this?

No, I haven't. Paul makes quite clear that Eve is a shadow ... a picture ... of the church. (See Ephesians 5). And he directly says that Adam is a shadow of Christ in Romans 5 and in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ is the new Adam and the church is the new Eve. In Ephesians 1, Paul says that the church was chosen in Christ before time. All of this is strongly established among most theologians past and present. Some modern exegetes, however, who narrowly employ the modern hermeneutic (of 19th century modernism) have trouble with *any* Christocentric interpretation of the Old Testament. I deal with this in an article called [Beyond Bible Study](#). Nevertheless, you can find the interpretation about Eve discussed in detail as far back as the writings of the church fathers and in many of the great theologians of church history.

What theologians, writers, speakers, etc., if any, helped inspire some of the thoughts and ideas in From Eternity?

Some of the eastern church fathers, T. Austin-Sparks, Watchman Nee, Stanley Grenz, Mary McDonough,

If *Eternity* is the first book of yours that someone has read, which of your other three books (*Untold Story*, *Pagan Christianity*, *Reimagining Church*) would you recommend they read second?

It all depends. If they were someone who was open to the idea that church as we know isn't "it," and they felt that there must be more, I would give them "Reimagining Church" probably. If they didn't feel that way, I'd give them "The Untold Story of the New Testament Church."

How long have the central ideas expressed in *Eternity* been a clear focus for you? Was it revealed to you through a process of searching, or as a simple moment of discovery?

Both. There was an initial crisis in April of 1992. I had the "general outline" in my mind and heart, you might say. But since then, it's been an ever-expanding revelation within me, and many details of that outline have been filled in. That still goes on today. The Eternal Purpose cannot be exhausted.

I appreciate the vivid parallels between Adam and Eve and Christ, and Christ and his bride and the vision of the beautiful, beloved Bride. The church was born at the resurrection. the Bride of Christ existed as a spiritual body from that moment. We are part of her. But how does this fit with the image of the Body of Christ with Him at the head? I try to live by this model in my relationships with fellow believers and in my understanding of how we are church together under the headship of Jesus. I begin to feel schizophrenic if I also try to position myself as part of the already existing Bride of Christ who has a different relationship with Jesus than the Body of Christ. So my question is, how do these two things hang together. If they were just metaphors, or models, that give us some insight on reality from a certain perspective, then it could work for me. But if we are saying these are two existing spiritual realities - the Body of Christ exists and we are part of him, and the Bride of Christ exists and are part of her. Then I have quite some difficulty understanding where I am in the here and now and which way is up.

I'm not sure it's prudent for us to try to comprehend something as great as the *ekklesia* of God by the employment of the frontal lobe. Such spiritual realities refuse to fit neatly into Aristotelian categories. We know that the *ekklesia* is a multisplended organism, just as the Lord Himself is a multisplended Person. He is Lion and Lamb; King and Priest; God and Man; Alpha and Omega all at the same moment. He is a mystery and a paradox. In the same way, the church, which is His corporate expression, is His Body, His Bride, His House and His Family all at the same time. What the mind can't bring us toward our spirits take hold of and soar beyond.

Chapters 9 thru 11 are amazing - the Bride, the Wedding, the Wife of God. This shows the whole story that the Bible tells hanging together in a way I have never seen before. It shows an organic, big plan, strategy of God, in which the essentials of our existence have their rightful place - love, relationship, male, female, ... The way you show the repeating patterns from Adam and Eve, through Abraham and Isaac to Jesus Christ and His Bride is amazing exposition of the Bible. My question is: why have we never seen this before? why has it not been taught this way before? how have we missed this?

I'm not sure. Part of the reason, I think, is that we Christians typically read the Bible through a grid. That grid is handed to us by our teachers, preachers, and mentors. It's reinforced by the status quo around us. Much of the paradigm that's used today to understand God's goal and purpose comes from D.L. Moody. If T. Austin-Sparks' vision of the purpose of God had the impact that Moody's did, you wouldn't be asking that question right now. I discuss Moody's contribution and influence in my recent talk at [George Fox Seminary](#). His influence on evangelicalism is profound.

At the end of Part 3 you give a graphic description of an eight year experience you had with a group who lived as a shared life community. Have you any guidance on how such groups come together or find one another? On page 218 you say it was a "group of Christians of like mind". For such a group to function, what is the maximum margin of deviation in that "like mindedness." What is essential that people agree on?

Yes, one way is through the Internet. Facebook is being used for this right now believe it or not. Another is through conferences and events. There's a resource where people who are looking for like-minded people can connect through live events ... this to me is the best way. www.HouseChurchResource.org is the site.

As for as the bare beliefs of the gospel, I think that if we go beyond the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, we're getting into peripheral areas and we'll divide six ways to Sunday. Or we'll form a sect. (There are already over 33,000 of them in Protestant Christianity today.) Those two statements of faith embody what C.S. Lewis called "Mere Christianity" ... what most Christians have believed in most times and in most places.

In short, Jesus Christ Himself must be our center of gravity and our basis for meeting. Everything else is postscript.

The ekklesia is a community, but it is more than just a community. My impression is that there is a difference between Christians meeting together in community, and them truly forming an ekklesia. Would you agree, and if so, could you clarify the difference and speak about how a group moves toward being an ekklesia?

The issue is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Head of the church. He's also its Life. Those aren't theological statements. They can be experienced as reality. Therefore, properly conceived, an ekklesia is a community of believers who lives a shared life in Christ. They enthrone Him as Head of their gatherings, their community life, and they are learning to live by His indwelling life. All first-century Christians understood the church in this way. I develop this in my book [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#). *From Eternity to Here* doesn't deal with church practice, but instead, the grand mission of God.

How does a group of people, in reality, form a community when people in our culture are busy, have conflicting schedules, and there is a lot of transience--people moving between cities, jobs, schools, activities, social groups, etc.?

This is a very large question. I address it in my upcoming book which comes out in the Fall. It describes how Christian communities which are founded on Jesus Christ are started and sustained. It's a very involved matter.

In *From Eternity to Here*, I don't deal with such questions. Instead, this book focuses on the matter of God's eternal purpose. What is it? How can it be worked out? How does it effect the way we read the Bible and relate to other believers, no matter what type of church they belong to. It's an issue that goes straight to why God created. So many Christians and churches lack purpose. Or their purpose doesn't line up with God's ultimate purpose. This is what the book explores.

Can you give us a practical example of what it might mean for an individual or fellowship to partake of Christ? Is this a way of describing all spiritual activity a person or church does (ie, worship, prayer, thanksgiving), or do you mean something more particular?

Worship through song, prayer, and any other "spiritual disciplines" or activities can certainly be the vehicle through which a person partakes of Christ. However, an individual can do all of those things *without* partaking of Him. So it depends on whether or not their inner being is engaged and they are connecting with the Lord through it. For example, in Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts the Asian believers to be filled with the Spirit by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Now, one can sing a song and their heart (mind, will, emotions, and conscience) not be engaged at all. In such cases, there will be no "filling." Or they can sing the same song and be turning to Christ and receiving from the Lord's Spirit through it, i.e., eating and drinking of His life. It's the same with reading Scripture. One can read the Scripture in such a way wherein there's no spiritual transaction at all. Or they can read it as a means of spiritual communion with the living Christ. That said, I think of various spiritual activities simply as utensils. But those utensils are designed to carry food into one's body. It's possible to put an empty fork or spoon into one's mouth. We wouldn't call that eating.

You outline the superiority of living by eating from the Tree of Life rather than the Tree of Knowledge; you rightly point out that, biblically speaking, the Tree of Knowledge contains knowledge of good as well as knowledge of evil and that the only one who is innate Goodness is the Father. Can you share with us an example of an individual or fellowship who was partaking of the Tree of Life in a way that might have appeared 'evil' in the short term but was later vindicated as the highest Good (or Life) in the long-term? I'd love to hear a story from history or your personal experience.

I'm not sure if I can think of a case in my own life where something I did was considered "evil" in the eyes of others, yet I felt it was the Lord. Perhaps writing the book *Pagan Christianity* falls into that category ;-)

Nonetheless, I can think of many cases where a certain action wasn't understood or thought to have been wrong by others and the Lord's vindication came later. (At the same time, I can think of times where I completely mistook what the Lord was putting on my heart and interpreted it wrong. Or where I expected Him to do something, and He didn't.)

I'll just share one case that comes close to what you're asking. Once an individual came into our fellowship. For purposes of clarity, we'll call this person "Pat." Pat was frustrated because they felt I wasn't spending enough time with them. Pat then began to sow seeds of discord between myself and a friend of mine. It got so bad that Pat and my friend visited me unannounced and began to rebuke me for all sorts of vague things that Pat had "sensed." I didn't say a word. The silence was deafening. I was then rebuked for being silent and not responding to the charges. In a private conversation with my friend sometime afterwards, my friend pressed me about what I really thought of Pat. Feeling forced to give an answer, I said that Pat was not being honest with us about who they were. I perceived that Pat came into our lives under false pretenses and was sowing seeds of discord. My friend defended Pat and asked for concrete evidence. I had none. I just perceived it, and I was certain enough to say it. Not long afterwards, it came out to everyone that Pat had lied about who they were and where they had come from. The story shocked everyone who knew Pat because the details weren't pretty at all. As soon as we all found out, Pat disappeared.

As to your specific question about something appearing "evil," some would offer Bonhoeffer's decision to support the plot to kill Hitler as a case in point. Bonhoeffer felt it was God who led him to do this, even though he was seriously conflicted over God's will in doing it.

How do you personally handle criticisms about your philosophy, especially from within the ranks of Christianity?

I've really not had any real criticism on my book [FROM ETERNITY TO HERE](#). Quite the contrary. It's been received extremely well by some of the top leaders in the Body of Christ today, from every denomination. Many pastors are using the book with their congregations with the free discussion guide. Sunday schools are using it as well, along with Bible colleges and small groups, house churches, and missional churches. We've been rather overwhelmed by the huge response and the great reception it's had among Christians everywhere. It's a trans-denominational book, I think.

I've received some criticism in response to my and George Barna's book [PAGAN CHRISTIANITY](#). If someone has read the book and is actually interacting with the actual arguments that we make in the book (opposed to constructing straw-man arguments or *ad hominem*s), I listen and take it into consideration. The rest I don't pay attention to. To my mind, if someone criticizes someone else's work without reading it carefully or without interacting with what the work actually says, it's not worth taking seriously. On the other hand, constructive criticism given in a spirit of humility and love I esteem highly.

I realize everyone is very different, but I wonder, can you give a “list” of possible “steps” one may go through along the journey from institutionalism into authentic, organic church life?

From Eternity to Here doesn't address church practice, form, or traditions. It deals rather with the big, sweeping epic of God's grand mission and eternal purpose. To my mind, unless a group of believers understands and adjusts their lives corporately to God's ageless purpose, it really doesn't matter if they have a so-called “Biblical” form of church.

I know a good number of Christians who are part of house churches, simple churches, missional churches, and emerging churches, and they have no grasp of the eternal purpose at all. Consequently, I feel that such groups miss the beating heart of God. So to my mind, the critical issue ... the starting point ... is not structure, form, or shape. It's rather the receiving of a revelation of God's eternal purpose in Christ.

Once that happens, then each existing church and individual Christian will want to answer the question: Does my church match the eternal purpose of God? Is it standing for that purpose or is it hindering it? In what ways is it fulfilling it and in what ways is it detracting from it? These are large questions. My next book, [the final book in the series](#), explores it in detail.

You talk about how we cannot do anything for God, but that it is actually Christ living in us. How can I get more of this, and get out of his way? (Or is that the \$6,000,000 question?)

All of the exhortations in the NT to live by Christ are set in a corporate context. Most all the epistles are written to believing communities that had a shared life in Christ. They were not written to individuals. So the first thing is to be part of your native habitat ... a local, living, breathing community of believers who are learning how to live by Christ. Some practical help from someone who has gained some experience in communal living in Christ is of great help as well. Paul, Peter, Timothy, etc. were people who served in this capacity in the first century.

If it's all about rediscovering an eternal perspective of God's purposes, do church forms and models matter?

Yes, very much so. The eternal purpose of God is expressed corporately. Thus those church forms and models that best express God's eternal purpose should be encouraged and approved. Those that violate the eternal purpose or take away from it should not. I address this very question in detail in my book [REIMAGINING CHURCH](#).

In few words, can you describe God's eternal purpose as outlined in From Eternity to Here, and explain how you believe the modern-day church misses the big picture?

The eternal purpose cannot be explained in a few words without diluting it and doing violence to its overwhelming glory and power. It's sort of like asking someone to put the Atlanta Ocean in a coffee cup. It took a 300 page book to unfold it; and that's just an introduction really. I will just say that it has to do with the hidden obvious themes mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2 and then again in Revelation 21 and 22. One can spend a lifetime exploring those 4 chapters, all of which are without sin. If that sentence doesn't make sense to your readers, I would encourage them to read the book. I believe it will make a lot of sense then.

From Eternity to Here is divided into three sections. In the preface you state that you employ a “Christocentric interpretation” of Scripture in the first two. Can you explain what a “Christocentric interpretation” of Scripture is, and give us an example or two of how you employ it?

Yes, it's the interpretation that Jesus Himself used when He taught out of the Old Covenant Scriptures. "All Scripture testifies of Me," He said. Scripture reveals Christ, both Old and New Testaments. Jesus Christ is the subject of the Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom literature. He is hidden in the Old and revealed in the New. I discuss this at length in my article, [BEYOND BIBLE STUDY](#).

You allude to your first encounter with a demon-possessed man on page 236, but decided to "spare us from the dramatic details" in the book. Care to share those dramatic details here? I'm curious what you experienced (and doubt I'm alone).

It's quite an involved story (with some hair-raising moments) thus there isn't enough space to rehearse it here. For those interested, I tell it in detail in a CD series entitled [THE CHURCH AFTER GOD' SOWN HEART](#).

You mention Westerner's rabid individualism several times in your book. How is Western individualism a hindrance to carrying out the purpose of God as you see it?

Because the eternal purpose can only be fulfilled corporately, by a local body of believers who live a shared-life in Christ. This requires death to our individualism. Note that individualism and individuality are two very different things. It's the former that God wishes to crucify in us.

A line on page 180 says, "... the desire to make a name for oneself is carnal and antagonistic to the Spirit of God." You're obviously getting a lot of attention nowadays – especially after Pagan Christianity hit the shelves. How do you keep from giving into the temptation to be self-serving with your growing influence?

Hate mail helps a lot ☺ I don't consider myself famous by any means; "infamous" perhaps in some circles, unfortunately. My goal is to point all people who read my books and hear me speak to Jesus Christ. Therefore, you will find the centrality, the preeminence, and the supremacy of Christ as an overarching theme in all of my work, including "Pagan Christianity."

Bonus question: On the bottom of page 185, top of 186 you write, "Prophets are needed most when God's original mind has been lost sight of. Their primary ministry is to bring that mind back into view when it's been forgotten." Do you consider [From Eternity to Here](#) to be prophetic in nature?

I would prefer to leave that to my readers to decide. However, if we view prophecy also as "the testimony of Jesus" (as John put it in Revelation), then I would say the book is centered on presenting a glorious revelation of the Lord Jesus in His fullness and as the Center of God's eternal plan. Jesus is far more than the carpenter who died for our sins. He's God's beginning and God's end, the heartthrob of the ages, and the One who will eventually fill all things with Himself.

You seem to make the case in the first part of your book that God's greatest desire is for the redemption of his bride. Jonathan Edwards made the case that God's greatest desire was for his own glory to be known and cherished. How would you interact with Edwards' claim? It also seemed to me (I could be mistaken) that you were implying that God the Son somehow felt deficient without having an object of his affection when you use the words, "the frustrated passion of a love-filled God" (p. 39). Are we to believe that God was actually frustrated or discontent without having an object to pour his love upon? If we believe Edwards, I think we might come to the conclusion that God chose to love, not because he would be left lacking without having people to love, but rather, the echoes of his great glory would resound all throughout the universe if he created those who could love him and cherish what he cherishes

first of all, namely, his own glory. Have I misunderstood you? How would you interact with Edwards on this?

Yes, I think you have misunderstood. First, on the deficiency in God, here's a quote from the book that answers your question:

"Truthfully, God is perfectly adequate within Himself. But because God is love, He is not content to be adequate in Himself. For this reason, God the Son wanted someone upon whom to pour out the love that coursed within His being, which is the very same love that the Father poured out upon Him. Thus the superabundance of God's love required a receptacle that was not within the Trinity. Again, the Son's desire for a counterpart was not rooted in any deficiency within Himself. It was instead rooted in the overflowing excess of divine love."

Second, I'm not speaking of "the redemption" of God's Bride only, but the *formation* of her which was pre-fall and a thought and desire that God had in His heart in eternity past. I explain this by presenting Eve as a type of the church (a la, Ephesians 5). Note that the rest of the book doesn't deal with the Bride, but the House of God, the Family of God, and the Body of Christ. If we only stress one image, we'll miss the entire picture of God's ultimate intention.

Third, on the word "frustration," here's another quote from the book that answers your question:

"To say that the Lord experiences frustration in no way dilutes His power nor violates His sovereignty. The Lord is in complete control of the future, and He will eventually get what He is after. But in the moment, He can feel frustration. Here's an example of how the Lord tasted the anguish of suppressed love while He was on earth: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!* (Luke 13:34) Note the words "I have longed to ... but you were not willing." Such is the divine frustration."

The real issue here, I think, is what is God's glory? My book seeks to answer this by unfolding the grand narrative of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. On that score, I've had a number of Reformed scholars tell me that Jonathan Edwards would have loved this book ... ;-)

www.FromEternitytoHere.org