

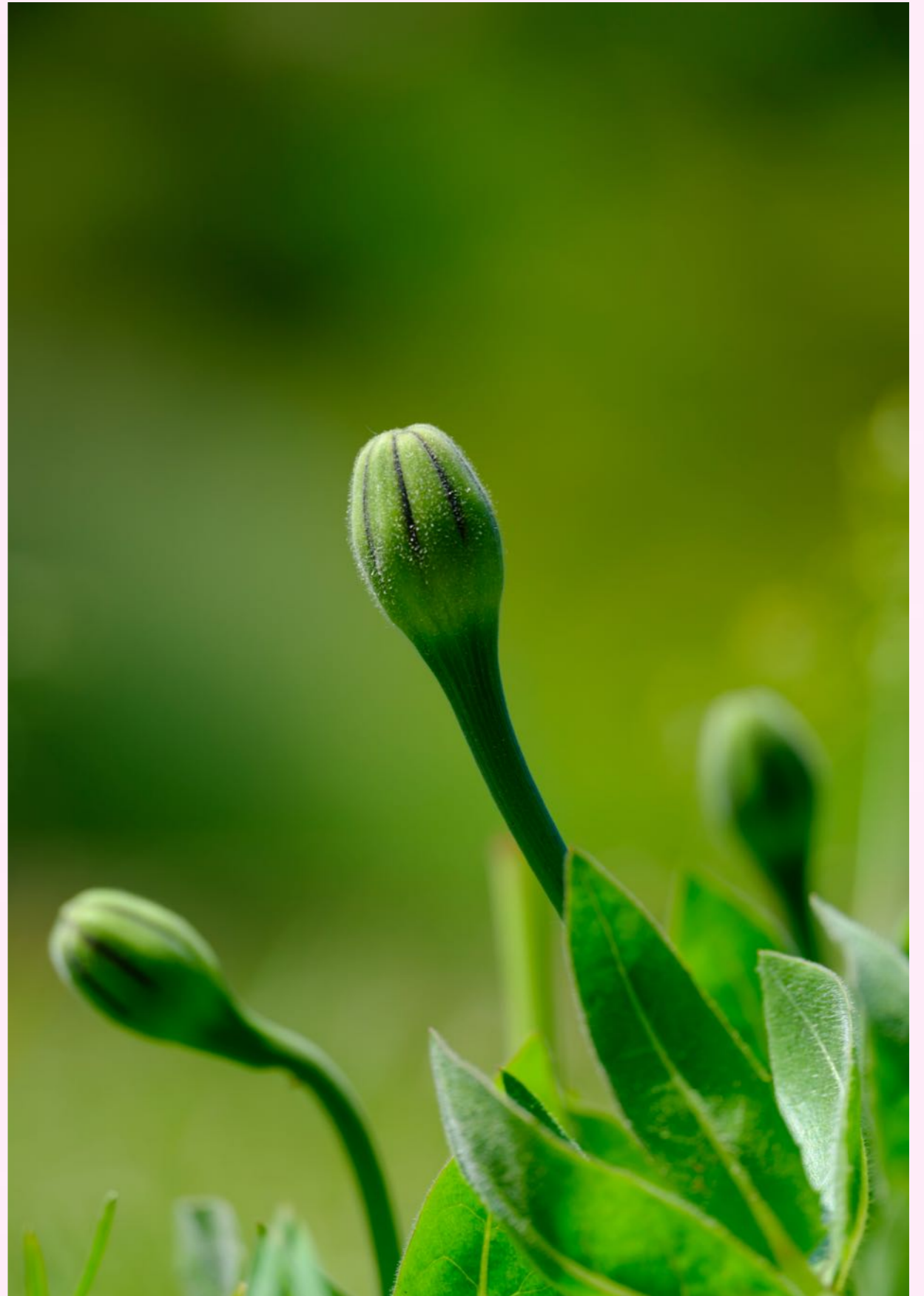
The Church Question

Life Together • *A New Kind of Christianity* • Brian McLaren

Presenter: Doug Olena, 4/19/2026

Book Two

Emerging and Exploring...



Out on the Sea

Of Many Possibilities

- From the first Book, are you feeling Liberated and Energized?
- Has the hope of the wellspring of God's goodness begun to rise in you?
- Are you a bit dizzy, or ajar from your normal posture?
- As new perspectives emerged from the horizon, have you felt unsettled and adrift?
- What have these changes done to your thinking, your sense of self, and your life in the Church?

The Church Question

**What Do We Do
About the Church?**



Most Churches Support

The Five Paradigms...

- the Greco-Roman narrative
- the constitutional approach to the Bible
- a vision of a tribal and violent God
- a rather flattened view of Jesus
- a domesticated understanding of the gospel. (p. 161)

What then should we do with the Church?

Churches Settle

Into Patterns...

- One thing available to those who are disaffected: Leave the church they're in and go somewhere else.
- This may help by changing the focus of their worship and practice.
- But it may not solve the underlying problems stated above. People carry their presuppositions about what it is to be Christian and how to do church with them.
- Some just leave church life altogether and join the “Spiritual and not religious” community thinning the ranks of churchgoers.

Transformation

From Grassroots to Institutions...

- Church formation begins with the grassroots communities of faith.
- They organize into regional groups.
- They appoint formal governing bodies.
- Eventually they solidify into formal, hierarchical institutions.

Transformation

From Institutions

- Since the Protestant Reformation there is a move away from these institutions back to more local informal and differentiated grassroots communities.
- “What if it is both more stable and more agile—more responsive to the Holy Spirit—when it exists in these many forms? (p.164)”

Acceptance of the Variety

Of Church Forms...

- “And what if, instead of arguing about which form is correct and legitimate, we were to honor, appreciate, and validate one another and see ourselves as servants of one grander mission, apostles of one greater message, seekers on one ultimate quest?”
- “That, I’d say, sounds like a new kind of Christianity. (p. 164)”

The church exists to form Christlike people, people of Christlike love. It exists to save them from the great danger of wasting their lives, becoming something less than and other than they were intended to be, gaining the world but losing their souls.

Brian McLaren — p. 164



The one grand calling, I suggest, tells us what the church most truly is: it is a space in which the Spirit works to form Christlike people, and it is the space in which human beings, formed in Christlike love, cooperate with the Spirit and one another to express that love in word and deed, art and action. (p. 171)

Acceptance of the Variety

Of Church Forms...

- “When we are unlocked from our conventional paradigms regarding the biblical narrative, the Bible, God, Jesus, and the gospel, the formation of Christlike people of love naturally becomes the grand unifying preoccupation and mission of our churches. (p. 165)”
- But breaking into a variety of smaller and smaller groups may be a negative when we are divided between ourselves, still wandering and unrestrained, blaming, judging other people and groups.

Table Manners

Make a Difference...

- McLaren focusses on the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols and contests the Corinthians' claims of knowledge because they use that *knowledge* as a means of judging and excluding each other, justifying themselves.
- 1 Corinthians 8:11 So by your *knowledge* those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. (p. 167)
- Paul concludes, “Without love I am nothing.”



These questions render us creative protagonists who have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to create a new future of the church as a school of love. ... Anybody who thinks this is all soft and easy obviously has little experience in actually seeking to live this way and helping others to do so.

Brian McLaren – p. 171

I am recommending that some of us experiment with throwing out the other lists and starting over again, with this item as number one, knowing that there may be no need for a number two.

Brian McLaren – p. 171

The Primary List

Is the Proper Focus...

- Let the Church be first: “a school of
 - listening
 - dialogue
 - appreciative inquiry
 - understanding
 - preemptive peacemaking
 - reconciliation
 - nonviolence
 - prophetic confrontation
 - advocacy
 - generosity
 - personal and social transformation” (p. 171)

Read:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13