

regard to a lack of genuine evangelism strategy that moves beyond being a good Christian role model, to reaching outside the culture and interfaith movements and extending the light of the Gospel to those lost in pervading darkness.

Rainer, Thom. *The Unchurched Next Door*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. 272 pp. \$13.26.

Reviewed by Amy Nicholson Jones. Amy is a Ph.D. student in the Fish School of Missions and Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Before her studies there, she served with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as a Journeyman in Europe. She earned a Master of Arts in Missiology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary while working with multiple church plants and replants after Hurricane Katrina. Her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance was earned at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Thom Rainer (Ph.D., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the president of Lifeway Christian Resources where he continues to write prolifically based on Lifeway's research. Before his tenure at Lifeway, he was the founding dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at Southern Baptist Seminary and led the consulting firm, the Rainer Group. *The Unchurched Next Door* is based on an award-winning national interview survey of unchurched people by Rainer and a large team.

This work highlights who these "unchurched next door" are, why they do not regularly attend church, and how believers can connect with and persuade them to become active church members. Like all of Rainer's works, this book is written to a Baptist-American audience and assumes many of the polity, leadership, and cultural issues that are specific to that community. That is not to say that he assumes that is the only church or that Baptists should steal sheep from other denominations. It only means that Lifeway and Rainer are part of this community and feel primarily called to speak to this group. This book was refreshing in that the interviewees and interviewers depicted in the book were not part of the stereotypes that are often used in an "us versus them" mentality. On the contrary, the humanity of all parties involved was evident.

Like most church health works that successfully balance biblical precedent and sociological science, this work uses good missiology to promote ways to reach those who are not connected with the body. The most obvious missiological tool of this book is based on the Engel Scale, which reveals that not all unbelievers are in the same place spiritually. The Rainer scale, with rankings from U5 to U1, reflects how open a person is to the Gospel and church attendance.

Rainer gives a profile of each number on the scale, with U5 being antagonistic to church and U1 representing those who are ready and willing to go

to church but are not going for some simple reason. In order to apply these abstract profiles to flesh and blood people, he then gives glimpses into the interviews that he and the other researchers conducted with individuals. This is particularly helpful because on the surface, they sound so much alike that the separation seems artificial, but the narratives and the researchers' insights show that there was a rubric for these choices, despite the subjective nature of qualitative research.

Rainer turns these insights into possible ways that individuals and churches could encourage these types to not only accept the Gospel, but also to become active members of the body of Christ. Without this, the book would be interesting enough, but Rainer shows his pastoral gifting as he admonishes his readers to act upon the insights they hear because these statistics are connected to real stories. By giving examples of successful and insightful conversations, he gives hope to his readers that they could do likewise.

The Rainer Scale is a good tool, though a little unnecessary when the Engel Scale already exists, but Christians need to understand that not all non-churchgoers are the same. In fact, this study proves that the stereotypical anti-Christian, anti-church unchurched person is a very small but vocal minority. Thus, because most people in America have neutral or positive views of the church, Christians should not be afraid to speak to people about their faith and their church. More importantly, the book's research shows that unchurched people are much more likely to be willing to talk about such topics with a person to whom they have some real connection. Therefore, Christians can be bold with those they love, knowing that they will likely hear them, and just as bold with new acquaintances with whom they connect.

This is most true in the case of inviting unchurched friends and family to one's church. Repeatedly, Rainer makes it clear that the most pressing difference between people coming to church or not is whether they are personally invited. This seems to be an obvious statement. However, by the number of people who remain unchurched, Christians are not inviting their friends and family to church with them, nor are Christians deliberately cultivating relationships with people who are not churchgoers.

Typical of Rainer's work, this book is rather simple in its message, but that message is important and supported with research. In this case, it seems that he is more focused on individuals in relationship over organized outreach of churches to draw unchurched people to church membership. This is a very good point for church leaders, members, and church consultants to keep in mind, but this book would be better kept as a companion of such books as *Essential Church*, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, or other books that take into account a broader understanding of healthy church practices, theologies, and ministerial philosophy.