

Christian Book Reports

Jim Hoffman



The Author – Alan Hirsch

Alan Hirsch (born 24 October 1959) is a South African-born missiologist and a leading voice in the missional movement of the Christian West. He is an internationally recognized author of five books on missional living. Additionally, Hirsch founded one and co-founded two organizations devoted to equipping people for missional living. He and his wife Debra have been married and in ministry for over twenty years in Australia and the United States.





Church Attendance in the U.S.A.

- **If you do internet research you will see headlines like ‘church attendance in decline’ (2008) or ‘church attendance inches up in 2010’.**
- **Up to what? (35%)**
- **If only 35% of the population attends, how many do you suppose are born again?**





Before Constantine

- **Christianity was illegal.**
- **No buildings.**
- **No scriptures as we know them.**
- **No professional leadership.**
- **No seeker sensitive services.**
- **Church was hard to join.**

The numbers for Christians went from 25,000 in AD 100 to over 20,000,000 in AD 310.





Constantine's Ugly Legacy

- **And then, Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian.**
- **In AD 310 we had the Edict of Milan making Christianity the official state religion – maybe the worst thing that ever happened to Christianity.**
- **That marked the beginning of state sponsored organized religion.**





This is China's Story

“If anything, in the Chinese phenomenon we are witnessing the most significant transformational Christian movement in the history of the church. And remember, not unlike the early church, these people had very few Bibles (at times they shared only one page to a house church and then swapped that page with another house group). They had no professional clergy, no official leadership structures, no central organization, no mass meetings, and yet they grew like mad. How is this possible?” Alan Hirsch

China and the Early Church have a lot in common.





The Critical Question for the Church Today.

“The overwhelming majority of church leaders today report that they feel it is getting much harder for their communities to negotiate the increasing complexities in which they find themselves. As a result, the church is on massive, long-trended decline in the West. In this situation, we have to ask ourselves probing questions: "Will more of the same do the trick? Do we have the inherited resources to deal with this situation? Can we simply rework the tried and true Christendom understanding of church that we so love and understand, and finally, in an ultimate tweak of the system, come up with the winning formula?" Alan Hirsch

We must have the answer to this question – is doing church the way we have for the past 200 years still working?






*There was a time when church was done differently
and the numbers of believers exploded.*

“And it's not that reaching into our past is not part of the solution. It is. The issue is simply that we generally don't go back far enough; or rather, that we don't delve deep enough for our answers.”

Alan Hirsch

Acts 2:46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.






Time to learn a new word – missional.

**“But don't be fooled by the drab terminology-
missional ecclesiology is dynamite. Mainly because the
church (the ecclesia), when true to its real calling,
when it is on about what God is on about, is by far and
away the most potent force for transformational
change the world has ever seen. It has been that
before, is that now, and will be that again.” Alan Hirsch**

**Missional – living life with a goal of engaging the people in
your path with the gospel, whenever you meet them,
wherever they are, and whatever they are doing.**





Forced to go out?

“Persecution drove both the early Christian movement and the Chinese church to discover their truest nature as an apostolic people. Persecution forced them away from any possible reliance on any form of centralized religious institution and caused them to live closer to, and more consistently with, their primal message, namely the gospel.” Alan Hirsch

The two greatest historical movements of the church were ignited by persecution.






Apostolic Genius

“This story highlights the central assumption in this book and gives a hint to why it has been called *The Forgotten Ways*: namely, that all God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius (the primal missional potencies of the gospel and of God's people) lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time.” Alan Hirsch

We stand by the scripture that reads – God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.






Jesus is Lord

“Jesus Is Lord: At the center and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists a very simple confession. Simple, but one that fully vibrates with the primal energies of the scriptural faith, namely, that of the claim of the One God over every aspect of every life, and the response of his people to that claim (Deut. 6:4-6). The way that this was expressed in the New Testament and later movements was simply ‘Jesus Is Lord!’ With this simple confession they changed the world.” Alan Hirsch

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. NIV





Is the Institutional Church in the way?

“Phenomenal Jesus movements grow precisely because they do not have centralized institutions to block growth through control. Here we will find that remarkable Jesus movements have the feel of a movement, have structure as a network, and spread like viruses.” Alan Hirsch

How many times have we heard “well so and so can’t minister here because they don’t do this or they do that”?





The Fringes are Fertile

“It seems that when the church engages at the fringes, it almost always brings life to the center. This says a whole lot about God and gospel, and the church will do well to heed it.” Alan Hirsch

Luke 14:21

'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' NAS





The Church should be inclusive.

“So, in terms of approach, we decided that all we would do was build an authentic Jesus community where all who came our way would experience love, acceptance, and forgiveness, no matter what we did know a little about grace as we had all experienced it so convincingly ourselves.” Alan Hirsch

John 6:37

**All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**





What is a church?

“What's in a definition? Actually, the way we define church is crucial because it gives us a direct clue to the critical elements of authentic Christian community. It also highlights for us the major responses that constitute Christian spirituality, namely, worship, discipleship, and mission. We will be weighed up by God on the basis of the innate purpose of the church and thus our capacity to –

- 1. Make disciples: people who are learning how, and what it means, to become Christ-like,**
- 2. Engage in his mission to the world, which is our mission (his purposes flow through us), and,**
- 3. Develop the authenticity, depth and breadth, of our worship.” Alan Hirsch**






Outreach / Drag-in

“The Christendom mode of engagement, what I will later describe as evangelistic-attractional, was simply not up to the type of missionary challenge presented to us by our surrounding context: a context that required more of a cross-cultural missionary methodology than the "outreach and in-drag" model we had been using to that point. ” Alan Hirsch

What do we do with those who have either been alienated to traditional church or are just not interested?





Consumer Model?

“We were forced to the conclusion that all we had done was further cultivate a consumerist approach to Christianity. Like most churches in the modernist-Christendom mode, we had built the model of the church on a consumerist model and, in the end, paid the price.” Alan Hirsch

Do we see religious consumers in our pews? People who want to be entertained without participating?





Being Fed?

“That is, they are basically consumptive. They come to “get fed.” But is this a faithful image of the church? Is the church really meant to be a “feeding trough” for otherwise capable middle-class people who are getting their careers on track? And to be honest, it is very easy for ministers to cater right into this: the prevailing understanding of leadership is that of the pastor-teacher.” Alan Hirsch

How many times have you heard someone say “I left because I wasn’t being fed”?






TEMPT

“Each group /church has to be engaged in all the practices each time it meets to be part of the movement. How they are to do these is entirely up to them and depends on the individual makeup, the leadership, and the missional context of the group. We encourage them to explore and develop new ways of practicing TEMPT. We call these smaller cellular churches TEMPT groups.” Alan Hirsch

Community, engage with Scripture, be involved in Mission, Worship / Prayer, and Accountability.





***There are mission opportunities
everywhere.***

“On one occasion some youth ministry specialists I work with identified in an hour fifty easily discernible youth subcultures alone (computer nerds, skaters, homies, surfies, punks, etc.). Each of them takes their subcultural identity with utmost seriousness, and hence any missional response to them must as well.” Alan Hirsch

John 4:35-36

**Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields,
for they are already white for harvest!**

NKJV





Seeker Sensitive Ministries

“The problem is that the average church in the Christendom mode tends to be reasonably effective only within its own cultural reference. The Christendom church was built for that-it's called outreach and in-drag (and I'm not making fun, its how we actually operate). The seeker-sensitive approach is a pumped-up model of this ... and only in rare cases is it ever successful on a large scale.” Alan Hirsch

The problem with the western church is that our area of influence is limited to people like us.





Going to Church

“Is it not true that few can conceive of church without a special type of building with a special shape? We even call the buildings "churches," and we "go to church.”

Alan Hirsch

Acts 17:24-25

God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. NIV






Jesus on the outside of the church?

It is remarkable how Jesus can be so easily cast out from among his people. Have you ever wondered why in Revelation 3:20 Jesus is seen standing outside of his church knocking at the door and asking to come in? The question we must ask ourselves is "How did he get out from among his people in the first place?!" Honestly asking the question "Is the real Jesus really Lord in my community?" can be a very unnerving exercise indeed. In." Alan Hirsch

Revelation 3:20

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. NIV





Questions / Comments

