

## THE LEADERS'S EDGE

*“Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.” Proverbs 9:9*

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| <p><b>Category:</b><br/>Church Renewal</p> <p><b>Rating:</b><br/>Content: A<br/>Style: B+</p> <p><b>Memorable Quotes:</b></p> <p><i>“Surely the challenge of the church today is to be taken captive by the agenda of Jesus, rather than seeking to mold him to fit our agendas, no matter how noble they may be.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”</i><br/><i>Gandhi</i></p> <p><i>“What happens in the beginning of a movement is that the people encounter the divine in a profound and revelatory way, but with successive generations this encounter tends to fade like a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Christ’s whole life in all of its aspects must supply the norm for the life of the following Christian and thus for the life of the whole church.” –Soren Kierkegaard</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>BOOK SUMMARY</u></b></p> <p><b><i>ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church</i></b> by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.</p> <p><b>Core Content:</b><br/>Frost and Hirsch, co-authors of <i>The Shape of Things to Come</i>, team up again to provide a provocative call to realign the church in the West to the raw, undiluted reality of Jesus the Messiah. From a prophetic and apostolic stance, these men expose the incongruity between the Founder of Christianity and his followers today, the disturbing disconnect between the kind of radical faith community Jesus had in mind and the domesticated religion which exists some 2,000 years later.</p> <p><b><u>Rebooting the Church</u></b><br/>The urgent need is to recalibrate the church, restoring it to its original essence. This process has been likened to rebooting a computer. “By rebooting a computer, we restore its original operational settings, thus allowing it to function properly again. The software is back in sync with the hardware again.” To counter the inevitable drift toward institutionalization, every movement must return to the original ethos and passion of its founder. We see this dynamic reflected in denominations seeking to recover the roots of their historical distinctive (Methodists rediscovering John Wesley; the Salvation Army seeking to recapture the missional passion of William Booth; the Alliance striving to regain the initial Deeper life/missionary zeal of A.B. Simpson). A greater quest every Evangelical church needs to pursue is ReJesusing—recapturing the life-giving power of the living Christ.</p> <p>The core values of a movement must be constantly reapplied in fresh ways to changing cultural realities. “The original believers were largely Jews, and The Way was considered a sect under the broader umbrella of Judaism.” After the destruction of the Temple, early Christ followers were forced to rethink the basis of their faith. Within a generation, the Christian movement was forced back to its Founder to rediscover its original DNA. This revisiting of the core ethos of Christianity must be repeated over and over again.</p> <p><b><u>WWJD Revisited</u></b><br/>The process of ReJesusing the church entails believers emulating Christ, what Frost and Hirsch refer to as the “conspiracy of little Jesuses”. WWJD (what would Jesus do?) begs the question, which Jesus do we emulate? Unfortunately, over the years, the church has sanitized and tamed Jesus, encasing him in bland, abstract theology. The authors critique the distorted images of Christ projected throughout history via the arts. For years Christ has been depicted as meek and mild, shrouded in halo-bearing otherworldliness. “But Jesus’ contemporaries saw him as a usurper of institutional religion, a blasphemer, a heretic, a drunkard, a glutton, and a false teacher. He was an unschooled rabbi from the God-forsaken north . . . he was an extremist, a radical, a revolutionary.”</p> <p><b><u>Missional Christology</u></b><br/>The renewal of the church does not begin with cultural updates in technique and</p> |
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“Jesus was a wild man. He was a threat to the security of the religious establishment. He was baptized by a wild man. He inaugurated his ministry by spending time with the wild beast of the wilderness. He was unfazed by a wild storm that lashed his boat on an excursion across a lake and with the wildness of the demoniacs of the Garderenes.”

“We cannot encounter God and walk away unchanged and unmotivated. We cannot confess with our lips and not follow by our lives.”

“I have chosen the Christ-like God approach because it enables us to avoid the perennial mistake of superimposing upon the life and personality of Jesus our preconceived ideas of what God is suppose to be like.”  
Albert Nolan

“We must read the Bible on its own terms. The Bible should not in the process replace Jesus as the focus of our faith. Our focal point remains the Messiah and we must be guided by the Bible toward a true experience and understanding of Messiah. The Bible functions something like the wardrobe in C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series—it is the gateway to

methodology. Rather, it emerges from the rediscovery of foundational theology. Frost and Hirsch emphasize this progression:

### ***Christology determines Missiology which in turn determines Ecclesiology***

Reestablishing the primacy of Christology allows us to see God, the church and the world with new eyes.

1. Seeing God Differently (*mission Dei*). When our imagination has been captivated by Jesus, we see that mission is not merely an activity within the purposes of God, but an essential facet of his very nature. Missio dei is better translated “the God of mission” rather than “the mission of God.” He is both the sent and sending God.
2. See the Church Differently (*participatio Christi*).
3. We see the World Differently (*imago Dei*).

### The Shema Schema (One God, One Love)

Frost and Hirsch link the Old Testament Shema (Duet. 6:4-9) with Jesus’ exclusive claim to whole life allegiance—seeking first the kingdom of God. Our tendency is to fragment life by bowing to a multitude of competing gods. It is not a little love for many gods, but all our love for one God. We must avoid the trivialization of God, the deification of self, the seduction of consumerism, the objectifying of God and the compartmentalizing of life into secular and sacred. Jesus, our one Lord, provides the centre of gravity around which all of life must be reoriented.

### Christological Monotheism

The authors argue that we deduce everything about God from what we know about Jesus—a Christological reframing of God. This prevents us from imposing onto Jesus our preconceived ideas of what God is suppose to be like. They are quick to add that this does not mean we no longer need the Old Testament, but that we need to understand the Old Testament from Jesus’ point of view. He is the prism through which we gain an accurate picture of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

### Letting the Bible Read Us

The Western church has largely embraced a Hellenistic worldview with an emphasis on speculative and philosophical thought. The scriptures, however, are shaped by a Hebraic worldview. A Hellenistic approach focuses more on separate pieces of rational, linear thought while the Hebraic approach emphasizes whole blocks of thought, with a propensity for paradox. These authors call for a shift back to an Eastern way of interacting with scripture. This will entail embracing three interrelated “ways of knowing”--

Orthopathy – the Way of the Heart

Orthopraxy – the Way of Action

Orthodoxy – the Way of the Mind

Within the nexus of these overlapping lenses we discover a full appreciation of all God have revealed in his Word.

### The Church Jesus Built

The book’s final chapter is the most specific and practical. It demonstrates the strong parallels between Jesus’ teachings about the church and those of the Apostle Paul. The authors describe the following essentials of a Re-Jesused church:

1. Jesus’ community will follow the example of Jesus
2. Jesus’ community will equip all followers

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| <p><i>another world; one goes through it in order to get knowledge, the love and wonder of God.”</i></p> <p><i>“And what is mission? It is the outward impulse of God’s people. Above and beyond evangelism and social justice, it is the irresistible propulsion of the Spirit that sends his people out to declare the lordship of Jesus in all and over all.”</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Jesus’ community will move outward to serve others</li> <li>4. Jesus’ community understands that worship is a whole-of-life exaltation of Jesus</li> <li>5. Jesus’ community practices the presence of Jesus</li> <li>6. Jesus’ community insists that we need to be continually re-evangelized</li> <li>7. Jesus’ community learns and lives the values of Jesus</li> <li>8. Jesus’ community devotes itself to scripture and the exercise of spiritual gifts</li> </ol> <p>Though you and I may not agree with all Frost and Hirsch have to say in this book, their ideas may stimulate us to rethink how we do church today, seeking to realign it more and more with the essence of Jesus.</p> |
|  | <p><b>Discussion Starters</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In what ways do you believe the Evangelical church in North America today accurately reflects the original ethos of Jesus?</li> <li>2. What gaps do you see between what the Founder of the church and his followers?</li> <li>3. How might we help bridge these gaps?</li> <li>4. What has shaped your understanding of Jesus?</li> <li>5. What would enable your view of Christ to more accurately reflect the Jesus we encounter in the Gospels?</li> <li>6. How can we recapture the initial DNA of Jesus and apply it to the changing realities of our contemporary cultural context?</li> </ol>  |