



# *Re-Thinking Church*

by John Frye

## **CHURCH: WHAT WAS JESUS THINKING?!**

And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.

—Jesus (The Message)

When we make Jesus timeless, we make Jesus useless. (see N.T. Wright, Scot McKnight, Ben F. Meyer; and others on historical Jesus studies; check [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for books by these authors)

Christology → Missiology (“the kingdom of God”) → Ecclesiology  
(*Frost and Hirsch, The Shaping of Things to Come*)

### **Getting Into Jesus' Head**

What was Jesus thinking? “Getting into Jesus' head” requires a commitment to the Story of God, a humble dependence on the Spirit and an exuberant, community-wide (even global) conversation.

As much as we can ‘get inside Jesus' head,’ what are the current global/cultural dynamics that compel us to think about “church” the way Jesus did?

I suggest 7 dynamics (though there are many more): 1) changes in the dominant thought-world, 2) a relational vision of God, 3) a different and deeper appreciation of the Bible, 4) gracing all people as ‘image-bearers of God,’ 5) redefining spirituality as ordinary life, 6) particularism (tribalism) or the demise of the “one-size-fits-all” gospel, 7) inclusion and the quest for community. I contend that each of these dynamics were at work in Jesus' life and his 1st century, 2nd Temple Judaism world which was dominated by the oppressive Roman Empire.

### **Following Jesus' Ways**

Jesus continues to tell and actually makes happen the Story (dream) of God. “The kingdom of God is near. Change your thinking and live into this good story!”

How did he advance a kingdom of radical love in a culture of violent, religious fanaticism and world of imperial military oppression?

House to house, village to village (Luke 9—the Twelve; Luke 10—the Seventy-two) Exhibiting sheer genius, Jesus instructs how to advance a subversive kingdom of love under the noses of those, if they knew what was really happening, would kill him.



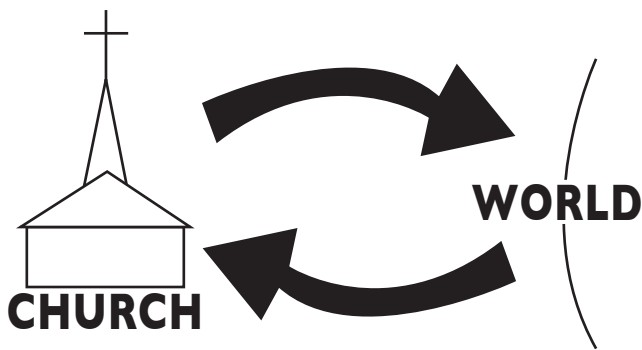
### Matthew 10

Jesus' way: the authority of compassion, intimate relational community, locally strategic, little or no expense, dangerous (Matthew 10:16-36 in context), and catalyzing commitment to God.

Since I believe that communities of Jesus-followers are outposts of the kingdom of God committed to living the Jesus Way, I think that it is best to see these communities come into being and live the way Jesus instructed (see Neil Cole's Organic Church). These communities will be...

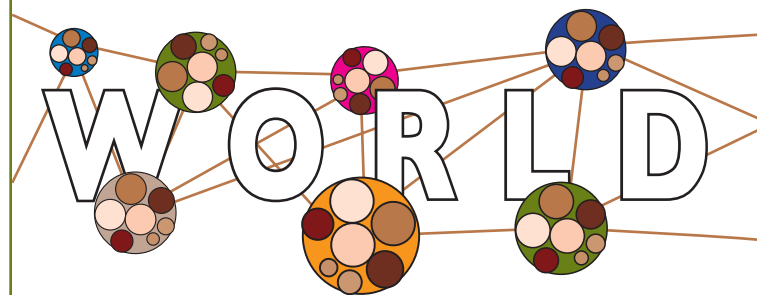
Trinitarian shaped → Christ-centered-set → aggressively and culturally missional (telling and living the Story) → relationally reflexible and inclusive → humbly, joyfully marginal (where they do their best work) → organizationally simple.

### ATTRACTIVE, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES



- Traditional or contemporary
- Place-centered/structures
- Book-based, "Truth"
- Attractive, "come"
- Propositional, "tell"
- Confrontational, right/wrong
- Bible as text, principles to apply
- Verbal (with images)
- Presentation to the world
- Us / them, exclusion
- Convince/argue
- In, but "out" of the world
- Top down (control)
- Exceptional leaders-driven
- Not easily reproducible
- Take God to people
- Sin = moral failures
- Salvation = sins forgiven
- Heaven later
- Financially costly
- Maintenance mode (over time)

### INCARNATIONAL, MISSIONAL STRUCTURES



- Incarnational (situational)
- People/communities
- Relationship-based, "Life"
- Incarnational, "with"
- Relational, "show"
- Invitational, "explore"
- Bible as Story, live into
- Visual/incarnational (with story)
- Penetration of the world
- God / us, inclusion
- Invite/dialogue
- In, but not "of" the world
- Bottom up (serve)
- Ordinary people-driven
- More easily reproducible
- Discover God at work among people
- Sin = relational breakdown
- Salvation = relationships restored
- "Kingdom of God" now
- Financially free or inexpensive
- Missional always