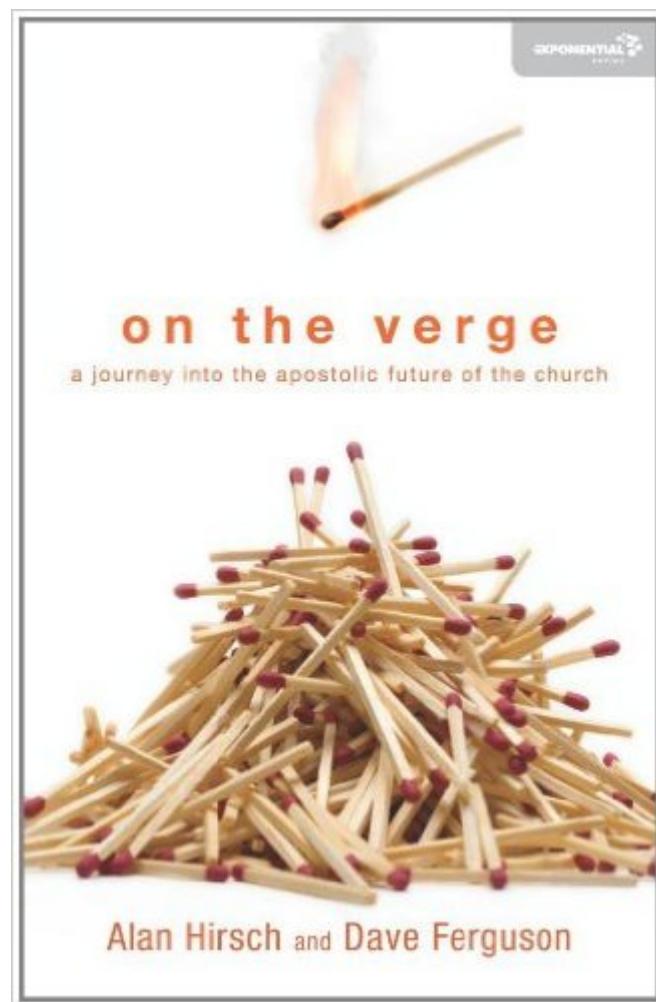


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On The Verge: A Journey Into The Apostolic Future Of The Church (Exponential Series)



Synopsis

The church is on the verge of massive, category shifting, change. Contemporary church growth, despite its many blessings, has failed to stem the decline of Christianity in the West. We are now facing the fact that more of the same will not produce different results. Our times require a different kind of churchâ •an apostolic, reproducing, movement where every person is living a mission-sent life. Many of the best and brightest leaders in the contemporary church are now making the shift in the way they think, lead, and organize. Motivated partly by a vision of the church as ancient as it is new, and with a driving desire to see Biblical Christianity establish itself in Western cultural contexts, we are indeed seeing a new form of the church emerge in our day. Hirsch and Ferguson call this â œapostolic movementâ • because it is more resonant with the form of church that we witness in the pages of the New Testament and in the great missional movements of history. In this book, Hirsch and Ferguson share a rich array of theology, theory, and best practices, along with inspiring stories about leaders who have rightly diagnosed their churchesâ ™ failure to embrace a biblical model of mission and have moved toward a fuller expression of the gospel. *On the Verge* will help church leaders discover how these forerunners and their insights are launching a new apostolic movementâ •and how any church can get involved.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The church needs to recover her most ancient, potent and beautiful form, that of the apostolic

movement, according to Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson in this book. The book represents an attempt by the authors to articulate a dynamic learning journey called Future Travelers which is being undertaken by a group of large US churches that are reframing themselves as high-impact exponentially reproducing missional movements. Readers who are not familiar with Alan's previous books will quickly discover that there is a whole new vocabulary to learn. The new paradigm of apostolic movements arises from the convergence of church growth theory, exponential thinking, and incarnational missiology. The new paradigm, which is referred to as "Apostolic Genius", encompasses mDNA which has six elements:^{*} Jesus is Lord^{*} Disciple-making^{*} Apostolic environment^{*} Missional-incarnational impulse^{*} Organic systems^{*} Communitas Alan's perspective as a missional strategist and apostolic theologian is communicated in chapters 2 to 6, with Dave providing a short response to each chapter, and then Dave's perspective as an apostolic practitioner is communicated in chapters 7 to 10, with Alan providing a short response to each chapter. The two authors have distinctly different writing styles, but it is helpful to get the interposed theoretical and practical perspectives. Most readers will find this a challenging book to read, partly because of the new vocabulary and partly because many of the ideas raised are likely to be unfamiliar to the typical church leader. However, in my view the book is well worth the struggle because of the importance of considering and thinking through the issues raised.

I wanted to like the book *On the Verge* by Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, I really did. (My first clue should have been the cutesy capitalization of their book cover, they are not e.e. cummings.) The ideas in the book, whatever they are, might transform churches. But until the authors learn to abandon jargon, no one will be able to figure out what they are saying. Is it really that bad you might ask? Here is an example from page 43: So when exponential/viral/networked thinking informs church growth savvy, which in turn is being reframed around missional-incarnational theology, then history is in the making. This may be true, whatever it means. The Venn diagram that followed this jargon fest was somewhat helpful, but if the terms remain undefined, communication is lacking. If I really wanted a church like this, I would just join Amway. The authors reference a lot of interesting books. I am reading one right now that they praise--*Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath. If they had understood the book they praise they would have written a book without jargon. *Stick's* main point that I have gotten so far is to NOT "bury your lead." Wikipedia describes burying your lead this way: In journalism, the failure to mention the most interesting or attention grabbing elements of a story in the first paragraph is sometimes called "burying the lead." In other words, make what you are saying crystal clear right from the start. *On the Verge* miserably fails this standard. If they do not

understand one of the books they praise, I have to wonder if they also do not understand the other books they talk about. Mega Churches have a big problem trying to form a community. Most of the attendees do not become active in the congregation.

A few things struck me when I first started reading. There is a recurring theme of hope, especially for the future of the church, in the comments from the pastors and authors who lend their recommendation to the book (see the first 3 pages). This probably reveals as much about the state of the minds and hearts of many North American pastors as it does about the content of the book. Interest, excitement, commitment, and growth are declining in the Western church as we know it and we are not sure why. My second observation is that Hirsch and Ferguson have done their homework. Hirsch has spent a good deal of time developing and researching the theoretical content and Ferguson is an experienced practitioner. Their voices together lend authority and integrity to what they have to say. Hirsch and Ferguson are clear in identifying their audience (the Western church) and stating their purpose: recovering the ancient, powerful, and beautiful apostolic movement. They propose that this can be done through four basic steps: 1. engaging missional imagination, 2. making a shift in our paradigms of church, 3. innovating and incorporating change, and 4. becoming a movement that actually moves. In general, they are not skimpy with their development. Hirsch draws on a number of noted experts from business as well as practical theology to inform his contribution in the first two sections. Likewise, Ferguson (church planter turned megachurch pastor) has examples from his own experience as well as stories from other growing missional churches to illustrate and support his more practical chapters on innovation and movement.

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