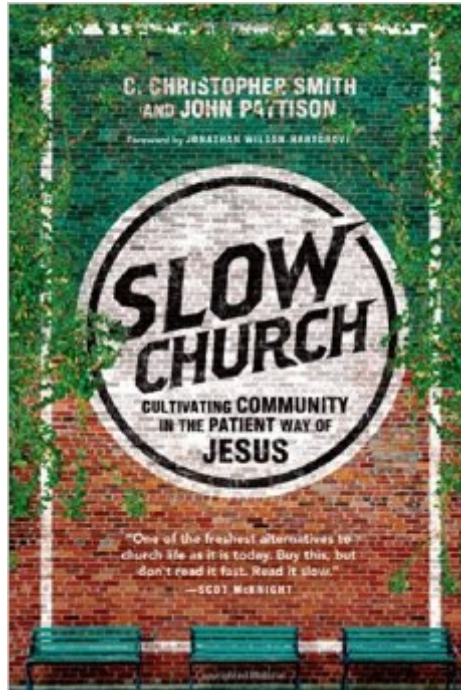


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Slow Church: Cultivating Community In The Patient Way Of Jesus



Synopsis

2014 Readers' Choice Award Winner 2014 Best Books About the Church from Byron Berger, Hearts and Minds Bookstore Fast food. Fast cars. Fast and furious. Fast forward. Fast . . . church? The church is often idealized (or demonized) as the last bastion of a bygone era, dragging our feet as we're pulled into new moralities and new spiritualities. We guard our doctrine and our piety with great vigilance. But we often fail to notice how quickly we're capitulating, in the structures and practices of our churches, to a culture of unreflective speed, dehumanizing efficiency and dis-integrating isolationism. In the beginning, the church ate together, traveled together and shared in all facets of life. Centered as they were on Jesus, these seemingly mundane activities took on their own significance in the mission of God. In *Slow Church*, Chris Smith and John Pattison invite us to leave franchise faith behind and enter into the ecology, economy and ethics of the kingdom of God, where people know each other well and love one another as Christ loved the church.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is tempting to assume from this book's title that someone co-opted another catchy phrase from pop culture--this time the "slow food" movement--and is using it to recycle the same pious Christian platitudes illustrated by a different set of churches and stories. Yet even though this book makes good metaphorical use of the "slow food" platform to stylize its language and frame its section headings, it is not grounded in that metaphor. As chapter one demonstrates, this book is grounded in a rich theological vision of who God is according to Scripture and what God is doing

through a people in this world. Israel's four hundred year hiatus in Egypt and six hundred year monarchical detour remind us that whatever God is up to in this world, he is in no rush to get there. Nor is God content to get there just any old way. How we get there is just as important as the fact that we do. If you are looking for a quick read that will give you fresh ideas for a new church growth program or perhaps a catchy theme for the next calendar year, don't read this book. It is a slow read and it will have you re-thinking your church's fundamental identity and overall vision of membership. If you are open to such transformation, read this book. If you are already in the process of such transformation, read this book. If you are new to the faith and want to wrap your head around what God is up to with this strange people called church, then read this book. It is a reliable guide that will help you along the way. In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul warns us, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (vv. 15-17).

Lest you think that their idea of Slow Church is simply a means to make church sound cool and hip to our culture, especially the middle and upper White Suburbia, enamored with all things local and slow, their vision of church is rooted in deep theological reflection. They reflect on such key themes as the drama of redemption, looking at how it improves and shapes our participation. Our God being a "remarkably patient yet radically immanent God" (24) is also foundational to Slow Church. They reflect deeply on humanity, not in some utopian way, but recognizing how deeply rebellious and sinful we all are, yet that we were created to move beyond this through the working of the Holy Spirit into deep rich fellowship and community. And finally, in everything they develop throughout the book, the authors continually remind us that the Christian life is first and foremost a deep joy in the resurrection life. "The primary work of Slow Church is not attracting people to our church buildings, but rather cultivating together the resurrection life of Christ, by deeply and selflessly loving our brothers and sisters, our neighbors and even our enemies" (33). Much of their reflection is centered around ridding the church of its McDonaldization (drawing on the work of George Ritzer and John Drane). McDonalds is driven by efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. While none of these four are evil or sinful in and of themselves, they are, for the most part, antithetical to the ethics, ecology and economy of God's Kingdom. The reason we have succumbed to the idol of McDonalds is the fragmentation that we are all plagued with as a result of sin. We know in our heads: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19), but is this how we truly live?

Slow Church is a wonderful book that I highly recommend! It is centered around the three themes of ethics, ecology and economy. There is a strong focus on the importance of embedding ourselves in the local context of our particular place. This is what the ethics of Slow Church is about. Chris and John talk about terroir as the combination of nonhuman factors (soil, water, slope, height above sea level, vegetation, micro-climate) and human ones (tradition, practice, cultivation) that gives a unique character to each small agricultural locality and the food grown, raised, made and cooked there. • This is what the slow food movement of Carlo Petrini is based on. Slow Church is rooted in the natural and human cultures of a particular place as well, as Chris and John have a strong emphasis on stability and patience to create a relational context of rich depth over time. They go on to talk about the ecology of Slow Church which is based on wholeness, work and sabbath. The economy of Slow Church is based on abundance, gratitude, hospitality and dinner table conversations. I particularly love the way Chris and John stress how a posture of hospitality to the other and eating together as we become liberated from a scarcity mindset will help us to live more authentically. They bring up how the virtue of conversation, work and rest need to be practiced and not separated from the particular place that we live. I love these themes and quotes from the book: • Deeply rooted and maturing in our particular places in order to bear fruit, to extend hospitality and to nurture a flourishing community, our faith communities must be deeply rooted and maturing in our particular places.

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