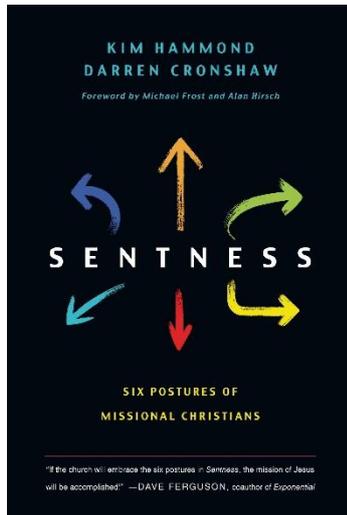


Kim Hammond and Darren Cronshaw, *Sentness: Six Postures of Missional Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 208 pages

Darren Cronshaw and Kim Hammond have been 'sent' and want other ordinary followers of Jesus to share the experience of being 'sent'. Being 'sent' has historically been associated with going overseas with a missionary society. Cronshaw and Hammond, however, add to the growing pile of books that happily dispel this particular myth. Instead they insist that 'sent' should be the foundational experience of every follower of Jesus, wherever they live or work.



Friends describe the two authors as guides, leading by example and not simply urging us on from the side-lines. They are on the journey from the experience of consumer-driven churches to fruitfulness in mission and their understanding of themselves as 'sent' is central to this shift in thinking and practice. Had they been theorists, keen to avoid being labelled 'pragmatists', they would not have told the stories of innovative Christian communities that have made the shift from being consumer-driven to 'producer'-centre. Neither would they have run the risk of sounding optimistic about the possibility of several megachurches managing to retain the best of the attractional model of church whilst re-framing it with reference to 'sentness'. Through careful attention to both theoretical and practical concerns, Cronshaw and Hammond lay a solid foundation for their account of 'sentness'.

'Sentness' is described in this book with reference to six missional 'postures'. They choose their language carefully and avoid the use of the alternative term 'practices'. In doing so they want us to understand that their six elements of being sent are every bit as much about what the church *is* as much as it is about what the church *does*. What that looks like is illustrated superbly throughout the six chapters that describe the missional postures.

Through their reading of David Bosch, Darrell Guder, and others in the Gospel and Culture Network, the authors struggle with the central question facing the contemporary church; a question of its identity. Quite simply, they ask, 'Does the church understand itself as 'sent' to fulfil God's mission; wherever and whenever it is located?' They point to at least one instance where an entire church congregation relocated premises in order to live out more effectively its calling as 'sent'. Hammond and Cronshaw certainly cannot be accused of being too individualistic in their understanding of who the 'sent' ones are!

As they flesh out each of the six postures, stories of missional church, observations of contemporary culture and biblical reflection, are placed side by side, creating the impression that this is a book filled with faithful imagination. It is wonderfully optimistic; a series of portraits of what could be. But it is also remarkably grounded. Both authors confess, for example, to the challenge of following Jesus in the midst of their suburban, middle-class preoccupations.

Biblical themes that feature prominently in this book will not be a surprise to readers familiar with missional literature. In each case, themes such as *shalom*, incarnational, sanctuary, and community are explored within the framework of the six missional postures. Accompanying these postures is a series of ways in which the church, individually and corporately, can engage with others in the community in ways that invite reflection on faith and God. The practice of asking questions is recommended as are some simple observations about being more missionally engaged in the suburbs.

The two authors write with a keen awareness of the missional initiatives that are emerging around them and accurately convey the missional flavour of much of what they are privileged to see. That is a strength of the book but also one of its weaknesses. Readers looking for a more robust theological articulation of missional ecclesiology, for example, will need to look elsewhere. This book does not set

out to re-frame a theological understanding of the church and its mission. Where this has been done by others, Cronshaw and Hammond helpfully point us to the appropriate places.

Instead, their book is a call to rediscover the vocation of 'sentness'. It deserves to be read widely by every follower of Jesus concerned about moving beyond the experience of being a consumer of church in order to be missionally faithful and missionally fruitful. Pastors and church leaders, the most likely audience for this book, should ensure that they each buy at least two copies, one for themselves and another for a member of their church.

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