

5 THINGS TO DO UNTIL AN ORGANIC CHURCH COMES TO YOUR TOWN

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Let me take a quick poll. Does this describe you? (One point for each Yes answer).

1. Have you ordered/read 6 or more of the books on the CMA website? Y or N
2. Are you often the first to leave a comment on blog posts by people promoting simple church? Y or N
3. Do you check in regularly to the House2House "Find a Church" page? Y or N
4. Were you the first one on your block to get a copy of the new Frank Viola book? Y or N
5. Do you have a poster of Wolfgang Simson on your bedroom wall? Y or N (Three points for a yes on this question)
6. Now the money question: Every Sunday (or Saturday or Wednesday) do you walk out of that same old wood, stone or prefab metal building and sigh to yourself and say, "Yeah it was nice, but God there has to be more than this?! Why can't my town have that real and powerful Christian community that I only seem to read about?" Y or N

How did you score? Did you get a few points? Are you waiting for an organic church to come to your town?

I know you're out there because I was there too—in some ways I still am. I grew up in traditional denominational church, but by my early twenties I knew it wouldn't work for me. God was gracious and led me to some wonderful folks who believed in having church in their homes. They also believed in getting everyone to be able to read and understand the Bible on their own. Beautiful. I thrived. Soon I wanted to go and start little house churches too. Not so beautiful. I was spiritually weak and arrogant and easily tempted.

Now fast-forward 25 years. I pick up a copy of *Organic Church*. After the first chapter, I wrote in my journal; "this book will change the lives of my community and my family." I showed my wife what I had written, and she got that "Oh boy, here we go again" look on her face. But *Organic Church* was a concept I already understood in my heart. God had placed it there.

When reading the book I almost knew how every story he told would end. Every Scripture and illustrative analogy jumped out at me. Upon finishing I was convinced that organic church was the goal I needed to pursue. But alas, when I checked the yellow pages, or Googled the web, there were no organic churches in my little corner of the world.

So what's a brother to do? Maybe that is what you have been asking yourself too. Let me share just a little of what I have learned over the past couple of years. Before I start though, let's cut to the heart of it all. If you haven't figured it out by now, let me spell it out for you:

organic church is not coming to your town! God wants you to get it rolling! Has the light bulb over your head started flashing yet?

Okay, with out any further sarcasm here are five things you should be doing to pass the time:

1. **Pray.** No-brainer huh? But really, it's the one thing that will make all the difference. John Wesley said, "God does nothing except in response to believing prayer." So often our pride gets in the way of us doing the simple and obvious. Don't make that mistake. Start with prayer and lay your heart out there. God is faithful. Pray for everything and everybody. Then pay attention. The doors will start opening and you will need to be ready to walk through.
2. **Take Advantage of Resources.** One of the first things I did was to sign up for Greenhouse Intensive Training through CMA Resources. I was the only one from out-of-state but I was with friends. I compared it to the scene in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* where all these people from around the world end up in Wyoming and discover they have all been dreaming about the same rock formation. There was so much good stuff there that I have still only applied about 10% of what I learned that weekend.

There are great books out there too—you know what they are. Just one word of caution: *books don't plant churches, people do.* Another no-brainer right? I know it is but it can be so easy to get lost in theory and become fearful of practice.

3. **Stay Connected.** The first thing I did when I got back from the Greenhouse Training was to go and see my pastor and then my small group and tell them all that I would be leaving the church. Didn't know when but I assured them it would be soon. That was dumb, real dumb.

If you want to beat the drum for simple non-denominational church then the first thing you should realize is that institutional denominational churches are not the enemy. Satan is the enemy! When I told my friends I was leaving in that manner, I was a tool of Satan because I was acting out of pride and not love. That damaged relationships that had taken me years to build. We need each other.

That guy sitting in pew next to you every Sunday has a heart for your home church too. He just doesn't know it yet and he won't if you spend all your time telling him how he's worshiping a building instead of the real and living God.

4. **Resume Living.** Remember when you used to have a lot of cool friends and you did things together like go bowling or play darts at the local tavern on Sundays while the game was playing on the TV? You know, back before you felt guilty if you spent too much time with sinners and you started filling up all your free time with church stuff. Well get ready to party down my friend. If you want to do this whole organic church thing correctly, you will need to get out and start making some new friends. If you have substance abuse issues, sure, the tavern may not be the best hang out place, but think creatively and look for need in your community. The lost are right

down the street from you having a good time and yet most Christians act as if they will come down with a case of leprosy if they spend too much time with “them”. Start loving people again. Not so you can get them to come to your church, but because God loved you first.

- 5. Enjoy the Journey.** By now you are probably thinking “Wow Jeff, how many house churches are rockin’ in your town now – 10, 20?” A few less than that actually. If truth be told, maybe just one. That depressed me for a while, until I came to understand that we were doing the right thing. We were doing what God wanted us to do. He would bless it and use it for His purposes and His glory—not ours. I have had two Life Transformation Groups. One fizzled out when I realized I was the only one answering the accountability questions. But the other one resulted in my son being born again—praise God!

We left our old church, but we attend a new one. Why? Because there are certain things they offer that we can’t reproduce yet at home. And besides, this group gets it, in that they don’t feel threatened if we want to have church in our home too. And we do have a church in our home now. Some times there are only 3 or 4 of us, and sometimes more. Some folks have come and gone to we don’t know where. Some have come and gone on to greater things; not because of us, but because they got close enough to God to allow Him to really work on their hearts.

It’s a journey brothers and sisters, and God wants us to enjoy it. I’m praying that you do.