

9 Marks of a Healthy Church, by Mark Dever, in 10 Questions

1. Would you Recommend this Book?

I think every Christian should read this book.

2. What is the Main Point?

Dever is actually just laying out simple biblical ecclesiology, what the church is clearly supposed to be in the Bible. This book is in many ways a response to what modern evangelicalism has become, consumer driven and always looking for novelty; Dever calls the church back to feeding the sheep and away from novelty. Dever argues that church health really has very little to do with how many come through the door on a Sunday, and much more with the church being faithful to what God has called the church to be. The 9 marks have been updated over the years, the most recent 9 marks are Expository Preaching, Gospel Doctrine, A Biblical Understanding of Conversion and Evangelism, A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership, Biblical Church Discipline, Biblical Church Leadership, A Biblical Understanding and Practice of Prayer, and A Biblical Understanding and Practice of Missions.

3. Which Parts should I read if I'm short on Time?

Read it all, but if short on time, the chapters that stand most sharply against the modern church would probably be chapter 1 on Expository Preaching, chapter 4 on Church Membership, chapter 5 on Church Discipline, and chapter 7 on Church Leadership.

4. Why does this book Matter?

Ephesians 3:10

so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

It is through the church, which Paul calls the pillar and buttress of the truth, that God intends to make his wisdom known to the cosmos, the Local church is God's plan for your growth and sanctification, the Local church is meant to be one of God's greatest blessings to you, but that will only happen if it is what Christ means for it to be. The stakes are high with this topic. There is no more fertile ground for your growth and the growth of your family, no safer place, no holier place, no more God-glorifying entity on the face of the earth than the local church that follows God's design.

5. Is this Book an "Easy-Read?" (Include Length)

Yes. Dever is really producing nothing groundbreaking, but rather laying out in simple terms that which the Bible calls the church to be.

6. Who is this Author and what did you think of their writing?

Mark Dever may have impacted my life more than any other author. He is the Senior Pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C., and the president of 9Marks. He is extremely well educated through Oxford and Cambridge, but His writing is easy to understand, maintaining simplicity in its robustness.

7. What is One Key Take-Away or Application for my life?

The local church is more important than you think it is, it is the place where the ethereal reality of being part of God's family puts on flesh and becomes our actual reality; one of the main ways God intends for you to give yourself to Him is by giving yourself to a local church.

8. What was One point of Disagreement?

If anything, the clear emphasis on reformed doctrine as one of the marks may be a bit strong for me, though I am reformed myself; I do not think a church has to be reformed to be healthy.

9. What are any other things that stood out to You?

This book changed my life. Well, technically, the first one I read that was so paradigm shifting for me was The Deliberate Church (now called How to Build a Healthy Church), which is the uber-practical sequel to this book; however, the principles of this book which I read directly after were the game changer. I remember thinking, "Why has no one ever shown me these things," and I set out a path to read every ecclesiological book I could get my hands on and to slowly revitalize the church where I was preaching based largely on these marks.

10. Have you read any books similar to this one that you would recommend one to read first to help with this one?

This is a great first book in this realm. A ministry called 9Marks spawned from this book's success, and they have written very short mini-books on each of these topics and more, so I would encourage you after reading this book to look into which of those peak your interest. If you want to see practical application of these things, read How to Build a Healthy Church, which is the updated version of The Deliberate Church, the sequel to 9 Marks.