

Richard
Mayhue

INCLUDES STUDY GUIDE

'My thanks and yours should be to Richard Mayhue for taking us back to hear the audible voice of the saviour' **JOHN MACARTHUR**

**WHAT WOULD
JESUS SAY
ABOUT YOUR
CHURCH?**



Mayhue's blend of scholarship with user friendliness makes this book valuable for pastors and laity.

Moody Monthly

Here is a timely reminder that Christ is the sovereign Lord of his church. This book is worth reading.

Evangelical Times

This book would be a useful tool for Bible Study groups. It might also be helpful for ministers and officebearers together to place their church under the microscope of God's Word in order to find out their deficiencies and how to remedy them.

Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland

Richard Mayhue, Th.D. serves as Executive Vice President of The Master's College and Seminary in Sun Valley, California, USA. He has simultaneously been involved with both pastoring and training pastors for most of his over twenty years in ministry. Dr Mayhue has authored or edited many books including *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* and *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*. For Christian Focus he has written five books: *The Healing Promise*, a commentary on *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, *Seeking God*, *Fight the Good Fight*, and *What Would Jesus Say About Your Church?*

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**WHAT WOULD
JESUS SAY
ABOUT YOUR
CHURCH?**

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Foreword

Pastors, like me, have spent the years of their ministry giving messages to the church. Sunday after Sunday in their own congregation and month after month in churches around the world, they have stood in the place of an undershepherd, and called the people of God to sound doctrine and practice. They have written books, sent out radio broadcasts and made tapes geared to confront and instruct the church. Certainly, my ministry has had that relentless focus of endeavouring to impact the church to honour her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. The messages I have brought have sometimes been wholeheartedly heeded, sometimes rejected, often tolerated and even treated with smiling indifference.

The church has brought the highs and lows of my life. It has been the source of my joys and sorrows. But what I have given a life to say to the church with conviction and concern can't begin to approach the 'concern for the churches' expressed by the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 11:28). His was a passionate devotion for which he sacrificed everything, including his life. For him, the church was the source of honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, sorrow and joy (see 2 Cor. 6:8, 10). But even his passion for the church bows in abject humility before the One who supremely loves the church – our Lord Jesus Christ. He said, 'I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it' (Matt. 16:18). It is His church because He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

In spite of such noble concern by Paul and faithfulness by our Lord, the church has done exactly what Paul prayed it would not do and has been repeatedly 'led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:3). The body has wandered in deception and has both disobeyed and dishonoured her Lord. It seems preachers have exhausted their appeals with only modest success.

It is time for the church to listen directly to her Lord and He has spoken clearly, confrontively and compassionately. My thanks and yours should be to Richard Mayhue for taking us back to hear the audible voice of the Saviour as He pleads with His beloved.

John MacArthur
Pastor – Teacher
Grace Community Church
Sun Valley, California

PREFACE

Sir Christopher Wren, the great architect of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, reportedly arrived at the construction site one day and inquired of three different workmen, 'What are you doing?' The first replied, 'I'm earning a meagre living to support my family.' The second said he was merely constructing another building.

The third had a grander view. 'I'm part of a magnificent project to build the world's most beautiful cathedral to the glory of God.' Unless we have the third worker's perspective, sooner or later we will lose our zeal for Christ's first love – the church. By neglect she will then fall into disrepair.

Even worse, another contemporary pitfall looms larger; it is possible to have a zeal for the church which is tragically misguided by the ways of the world rather than directed by Scripture. This danger finds modernity more appealing than God's Word when seeking solutions for contemporary problems that face the church. The church that is built this way will later be condemned by Christ, not commended.

When it comes to the early twenty-first century evangelical church as a whole, techniques have unfortunately replaced truth, style has supplanted substance, convenience outdistances consecration, and modern church growth principles receive more attention than biblical church growth truth. Scripturally speaking, this is not Christ's intended state of affairs for His lovely bride – the church. This man-centred approach to the church spells out a gloomy future for what ought to be as bright as Christ's glory.

But what can be done to remedy this sad state of affairs? I join Isaiah in shouting, 'To the law and to the testimony' (Isa. 8:20). Evangelicals desperately need to repent of their worldly approach to the church and return to the Scriptures. The church requires

a fresh glimpse of her majestic Lord – Jesus Christ; and she needs to be re-acquainted with His revealed plan and purpose for the church as outlined in the Bible. She needs to be reminded that Christ will build His church His way.

Can you imagine Christ writing a letter directly to your church as He did to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3)? What would Christ say about twenty-first century churches in light of what we know He wrote about first century churches? These studies are designed to help you know Christ's mind concerning the church in general and your church in particular.

Christ's thinking about the church has not changed from what was originally written in Scripture. Therefore, if the church is to regain her former glory, it must be through radical transformation by taking the church back to the basics as outlined in Scripture. Then we must all roll up our sleeves to engage in the hard work of restoring the church to her original beauty according to the biblical blueprint.

What Would Jesus Say About Your Church? starts with an assumed orthodox systematic ecclesiology. These studies quickly push beyond to the immediacy of 'applied' theology which can provide a biblical standard to determine how well or how terribly the church is being built.

I have written with pastors and lay people in mind, dealing in broad principles rather than trying to touch on every microscopic detail. The value of this study rests in its solid biblical content with the intent of knowing what Christ thinks about His churches. This volume goes forth with the author's prayer that Christ will use His Word to revitalize the church.

Now, before you begin, let me acknowledge the contributions of those without whose labours this book would not have been completed. Thank you to my wife 'B' and son Wade for sacrificially serving as computer whiz kids; to my son-in-law Michael Carson, a computer cartographer by profession, who contributed the maps; to my daughter Lee Carson and daughter-in-law Tracy Mayhue who kept the household running; to Dennis Swanson, librarian at The Master's Seminary, for help

in acquiring hard to obtain books and journal articles; to Drs. Irv Busenitz and Al Potter, colleagues at The Master's Seminary, who read the manuscript and made helpful improvements; to my grandson Iain who kept me young through the writing process; and to my great-grandfather Galbraith of Scottish ancestry whose prayers were answered by God in my conversion and call to ministry.

Richard Mayhue, Th.D.
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INTRODUCTION

'I Will Build My Church!'

'And also I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it' (Matt. 16:18).

'Crossroads.' 'Transition.' 'Crisis.' 'Uncertainty.' 'Restlessness.' These unsettling words express the perception of many evangelicals regarding the immediate status of the church. Few would disagree that a call for redirection has come to the drifting evangelical church as she enters the twenty-first century. However, there is no current consensus on which route the church should take to get back on track.

Today's dilemma

In order to appreciate the confusion, consider John Seel's 1992 survey of twenty-five prominent evangelical leaders.¹ The leaders expressed their views on the general state of evangelicalism at the end of the twentieth century. Eight dominant themes emerged from their less-than-optimistic responses:

1. Uncertain identity – A widespread confusion over what defines an evangelical.
2. Institutional disenchantment – A perceived ministry ineffectiveness and irrelevance.
3. Lack of leadership – A lament over the paucity of spiritual leadership in the church.
4. Pessimistic about the future – A belief that evangelicalism's future hangs in the balance.

5. Growth up, impact down – A confusing paradox without immediate clear explanations.
6. Cultural isolation – A complete arrival of the post-Christian era.
7. Pragmatic response to problems – A drift toward unbiblical approaches to ministry.
8. Shift from truth-orientation ministry to market-response driven ministry – A redirection away from the eternal toward the temporal in order to be viewed as relevant.

For certain, the decisions made in this decade will reshape the evangelical church for much of the century to come. Thus, the future direction of the contemporary church is a pre-eminent concern. Unquestionably, the early twenty-first century church faces a defining moment. The real contrast in competing ministry models should not be the 'traditional' versus the 'contemporary' as commonly claimed, but rather the scriptural compared to the unscriptural.

'Re-engineering the Church' was the theme of a prominent 1994 pastoral leadership conference on how to prepare the church for the twenty-first century. As I read the conference brochure, my initial response was, 'Why re-engineer the church when God designed it perfectly in the beginning? Shouldn't we inspect the church first and replace only the defective portions? Wouldn't it be best to rebuild the demolished part according to the Builder's original plan? Who can improve on God's engineering?' I concluded that the solution is not re-engineering, but *restoration* to the perfect, original specifications of the divine Designer. The goal of any changes should be a return to the church's biblical roots.

An inspection of the existing church for areas of needed restoration should include such biblically oriented questions as:

Have we consulted the *Owner* (1 Cor. 3:9)?

Do we have the permission of the *Investing Partner* (Acts 20:28)?

- Are we dealing with the *original Builder* (Matt. 16:18)?
Does the church still rest on the *beginning Foundation* (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20)?
Is the *first Cornerstone* still in place (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-8)?
Are we using *approved building materials* (1 Pet. 2:5)?
Do we employ the right *labourers* (1 Cor. 3:9)?
Have we utilized the *appropriate supervisors* (Eph. 4:11-13)?
Are the initial *standards of quality control* still in place (Eph. 4:13-16)?
Are we continuing to work from the *original blueprint* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

Yesterday's promise

Before wildly plunging ahead to restore the church, we would do well by first looking back twenty centuries – to the beginning – at the greatest promise ever made on the church's behalf. The Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2), also known as the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25), boldly asserted, '... I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it' (Matt. 16:18).

We might be persuaded to assume that a two thousand year old organization, such as the church, would be settled in her identity and purpose by now. However, this is an unwarranted assumption. Unless each succeeding generation returns to Christ's promise in Matthew 16 and to the New Testament building instructions, the church surely will deviate from God's original plan as has been proven conclusively over twenty centuries of church history.

If you seriously reflect on Christ's promise, a number of significant questions should arise:

To whom do we look when the church is in disrepair – Christ or man?

Who knows more about the current needs of the church – Christ or man?

Who can provide better for the church – Christ or man?

From whom did the original idea of the church come – Christ or man?

In whom rests the church's future hope – Christ or man?

Who built the church up until now – Christ or man?

Whom do we trust for future direction – Christ or man?

Who owns and sustains the church – Christ or man?

For whose glory does the church exist – Christ or man?

Who is the head of the church – Christ or man?

Because 'Christ' is the correct answer to each of these questions, we turn to Matthew 16:18 where Jesus delivers at least seven hallmark principles for building the church. No one should launch out in planning a new church or take on the risk of revitalizing a worn-out church until the defining truths of this Scripture have gripped one's heart and mind.

Tomorrow's hope

Hallmark 1

The initial characteristic involves a *permanent foundation*. Christ passionately pursued the lasting fruit of eternity. In His promise, He explicitly looked to an everlasting legacy. Jesus did not have in mind the temporary, the faddish, or the 'here today, gone tomorrow'. He pointed to the church as having a 'forever' relevance.

'I also say that you are Peter, and *upon this rock* I will build My church.' The foundation wasn't Peter, because Christ here distinguishes between a moveable rock/detached boulder (the basic meaning of Cephas and Peter) and the unshakeable, immovable foundation suitable for the church. The word Christ used for 'rock' means bedrock or mass of rock as used by the wise builder (Matt. 7:24-25).

What or who then is the rock? The Old Testament pictures God as a rock in whom we find strength and refuge:

There is no-one holy like the LORD,
Indeed, there is no-one besides Thee,
Nor is there any rock like our God (1 Sam. 2:2).

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge ... (Ps. 18:2).

For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God? (Ps. 18:31).

Paul identifies Christ as the rock in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:4). Earlier in 1 Corinthians (3:11), the Apostle wrote, 'For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus'.

Interestingly, one verse earlier Paul had claimed, 'I laid a foundation ...'. How did Paul 'lay' Christ as the foundation? Obviously, it had to be in his preaching of Christ (1 Cor. 2:1-2). Now, if Paul's testimony of Christ is the foundation that no one else can lay, then it seems best to understand the 'bedrock foundation' of the church to be Peter's testimony of Christ, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:16). Remember, Peter's declaration prompted Jesus' promise.

Since it is virtually impossible to separate the testimony of Christ from the reality of Christ, we can identify the 'rock' as Christ Himself in the fullness of His deity, His role as redeemer, and His headship in the church. Christ alone is the rock of redemption upon which the church is being built (Acts 4:11-12).

Hallmark 2

Secondly, Christ promised His *personal involvement*. 'I will build My church.' We have not been left to the task alone. Christ is in us (Col. 1:27), with us (Matt. 28:20), and amongst His church constantly (Rev. 1:12-13, 20).

'If the church is to regain her former glory, it must be through radical transformation by taking the church back to the basics as outlined in Scripture. Mayhue's blend of scholarship with user friendliness makes this book valuable for everyone.'

Moody Magazine

Is your church growing?

The question can be answered in two ways - is it growing numerically or growing spiritually? A church can do the former without the latter, sometimes even the latter without the former! Surely what we want, though, is both.



Richard Mayhue, the Dean of The Master's Seminary in California, investigates the good and bad points about the churches mentioned in the Bible: The seven churches of Asia, the four Greek churches and the church in Jerusalem. Using the helpful study guide section and questionnaire you can see where your church needs to change.

Many churches today are embarking on an increasingly pragmatic approach 'If it works - then do it!' But in the long term what will 'selling the gospel' do if it replaces evangelism? Richard shows us a clear pathway for us to follow. There is more than enough guidance here to turn the world upside down - just as the early church did!

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