



The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel

Mark Dever , Paul Alexander

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Dever and Alexander propose a model of complete reliance and submission to the gospel when building a healthy church. Great resource for pastors, elders, and others interested in the vitality of their church.

The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel Details

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From Reader Review The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel for online ebook

Brian Watson says

This book is a good complement to Dever's Nine Marks of a Healthy Church. While that more famous book describes those nine marks, this book prescribes how to make those nine marks a reality in a church that is coming from a less-than-healthy condition. Therefore, this book is quite practical. The general advice is to make changes deliberately. The changes that are suggested are not gimmicks, nor are they changes for change's sake. They are changes that will make a church more aligned with Scripture.

[Finished reading on April 5, 2016.]

Courtney Mosier Warren says

Overall the idea was average (3 stars) but the writing made it below average. I found it to be dry and often scattered. It felt like a very long description on how Mark Denver organizes things and less about how to make deliberate choices to help people grow in the Gospel.

Michael says

Good book with lots of good advice. Sometimes he comes across as saying that his way is the only way. I don't necessarily agree with everything but it is still a good book.

Shaun Marksbury says

Great followup to his other books on the church. This one gives some nuts-and-bolts and practical scenarios. Recommended.

Danny says

Some of my favorite quotes:

The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

Ours is a ministry of magnification—making God's glory appear to the eyes of the world as big as it really is by bringing it into closer view and sharper focus in the form of the local church.

The Word builds the Church. Our power is not in having small groups, or meeting the felt needs of our target audience, or using the right evangelism program, or having funny skits, or providing plentiful parking, or targeting our ministries to postmoderns. Our power is in our unique message—the Gospel (Greek,

euangelion)—not in our innovations.

Do you measure success by results, or by faithfulness to God's Word?

only one thing that's biblically necessary for building the church, and that's the preached Word of God.

One of the most practical things you can do for your own personal prayer life, and for the prayer lives of other church members, is to assemble a church membership directory (with pictures, if possible) so that everyone in the church can be praying through it a page a day.

Members need to know that spiritual maturity is not simply about their quiet times, but about their love for other believers, and their concrete expressions of that love.

The best way to lose your place of influence as a pastor is to be in a hurry, forcing radical (even if biblical) change before people are ready to follow you and own it.

But if you define success in terms of faithfulness, then you are in a position to persevere, because you are released from the demand of immediately observable results, freeing you for faithfulness to the Gospel's message and methods, leaving numbers to the Lord.

when we assume the Gospel instead of clarifying it, people who profess Christianity but don't understand or obey the Gospel are cordially allowed to presume their own conversion without examining themselves for evidence of it—which may amount to nothing more than a blissful damnation.

Three of the most important ways you can cultivate trust in your leadership among the congregation are expositional preaching, personal relationships, and humility.

That is the nature of the church—it is a godly web of mutually sanctifying familial relationships.

The Gospel is inherently and irreducibly confrontational. It cuts against our perceived righteousness and self-sufficiency, demanding that we forsake cherished sin and trust in someone else to justify us.

Requiring people to sign a church covenant lets them know that they will be expected not only to believe the statement of faith, but to live it out.

we want to ensure that they understand both the Gospel and the church biblically, and that they develop a track record of faithfulness in church attendance and Gospel application before we give them formal or public entrée into the spiritual lives of other members.

think about the biblical reasons for allowing Scripture alone to evaluate and structure our corporate worship gatherings.

Carving out time in our Sunday morning services to read Scripture aloud, without comment, every week, makes a statement about the value we place on God's Word.

five elements of worship (read, preach, pray, sing, and see the Word)

There is actually much wisdom and edification in employing a variety of musical styles so that people's musical tastes broaden over time with wider exposure to different musical genres and time periods.

Edification—building people up—happens when people are encouraged to understand and apply the Gospel more biblically, not necessarily when they are led into an emotional experience or encouraged to identify temporary emotional expressiveness

The best of the hymns and the best of the more modern worship choruses are those that direct our focus away from ourselves and onto the character and Gospel of God.

Everything teaches, whether you intend it to or not.

Sunday morning service - this is where we read, preach, pray, sing, and see the Word of God together every week.

Member meetings - Another important measure to take is to distribute the agenda a week in advance so that people can look it over, pray through it, and even air their concerns with you or the chairman in private so that the public meeting is not peppered with thoughtless, divisive, or combative questions.

When we have baptisms at our church, we place them at the end of the morning service because that is when the maximum number of members and visitors will be present to observe.

The ultimate goal of building this kind of community—one built on distinctively Christian love that flows from the distinctively Christian Gospel—is to display God’s glory throughout our surrounding neighborhoods, our cities, and ultimately the world.

The covenantal, careful, corporate, cross-cultural, and cross-generational love that is to characterize the church and glorify God is at the same time intended to evangelize the world.

A steady diet of performances by soloists or even choirs can have the unintended effect of undermining the corporate, participative nature of our musical worship.

Fewer instruments on stage or even off to the side means fewer things in front of us competing for our attention and applause.

the absence of a fully wired worship band will help prevent the smog of performance from clouding the atmosphere of worship.

We use a piano, a guitar, and four vocalists, all positioned off to the side so that our attention isn’t

drawn to them, and all lightly amplified so that they don’t drown out the voices of the congregation.

Our leading vocalists simply stand to the side and sing into a moderately amplified microphone so that there is a strong lead for the congregation to follow.

variety in worship songs and styles helps prevent people from becoming militantly entrenched in a certain style or period of music. Best of all, musical variety teaches us to glean spiritual profit from many different kinds of songs.

Under a more general paradigm of ministry, all the pastors share all the ministry. Cultivating this healthy sense of shared ownership is good. But the fragmentation that specialized ministries introduce often leads pastors to become possessive over their particular area of service.

retaining a more general paradigm of ministry cultivates unity among the pastoral staff, reduces the chance of ministry being perceived as a professional career, and minimizes the splintering of ministries, pastoral teams, and congregations. But it seems that specialized ministry is almost all there is out there.

some staff will also be elders in most situations—at the very minimum, the senior pastor will be an elder, and so will an associate pastor

The elders decide on the destination. The staff drive the bus. The deacons make sure we've got enough gas to get there.

If we want the unity of our church to be fundamentally built on the Word, then the unity of our elders must be built on the Word.

each elder will pray a one- or two-sentence prayer of praise. This is part of how the elders are being intentional about devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).

Praying for the sheep together as a gathered group of under-shepherds is an excellent way to promote the spiritual health of the congregation, to keep each other as elders accountable to faithfulness in prayer for the congregation, and to lead by example.

Encourage your elders over the coming weeks to memorize Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:16-19; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. Lead by example, and pray that these qualities and habits would be characteristic and increasing in the corporate life and testimony of your church.

Read Ephesians 3:16-19. What makes this such a good prayer to pray for a local church?

Read Colossians 1:9-14. Try to memorize this passage by reciting it and praying it once a day for three weeks. Memorize another prayer passage each week for a month.

As we carry out this commitment to the Word and prayer among the gathered elders, we will be encouraging them to trust not in programs or personalities, not in advertisements or physical amenities, but rather in the powerful Word of God and in the promise of His life-giving Spirit.

Prepare and distribute elder packets a week in advance. This will require all the elders to have any memos written a week ahead of time as well,

Our practice is to put the losses, additions, and care list all on a single sheet of paper, along with a note regarding total membership prior to additions and potential membership should all additions pass.

It will also be helpful on this front to revise the church membership directory monthly, or at least quarterly, depending on how much your membership changes.

The elders will also meet with the deacons in leadership meetings, which happen one week before the members' meeting. This way, whether a member asks an elder or a deacon, all the officers of the church are on the same page, and everyone will be more likely to give the same answers and present a united front to the congregation.

The healthiest way for a pastor to view himself in the elders' meetings is as a sort of first among equals.

If we are to be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1), then our churches will reflect something of that same outward-looking focus. Part of being a healthy church means not being satisfied with self-absorption. Yes, we are right to show concern for the purity and corporate testimony of our churches. But being outward-looking—looking for opportunities to be a blessing to other individuals, other churches, and other countries—is part of corporate maturity as a church body.

If God decides to bless your church with spiritual maturity and numerical growth, work among your own congregation to cultivate a culture in which helping other churches is a priority.

We need to be teaching people that a biblical church is about much more than simply meeting our felt needs for purpose, significance, fellowship, and mutual understanding. It is about the glory of God in the Gospel of Christ.

Wallace Vieira says

Livro bom sobre o modo de ser igreja. É praticamente um relato de como a igreja americana situada na capital do EUA funciona, dentro de um contexto conservador Batista. O livro tem sua utilidade, é interessante ver como os "presbíteros" conduzem a igreja. Assuntos como evangelização, receber novos membros, a disciplina eclesiástica, as ordenanças são bastantes interessantes. As duas primeiras sessões do livro pode servir a qualquer contexto da igreja Brasileira, salvo alguns casos. As sessões três e quatro o autor traz uma nova modalidade de lideres para dentro da igreja, os "presbíteros", e aqui neste ponto ele começa a explicar como escolher esses presbíteros entre outros fatores relacionados com o presbitério.

Enfim, no que diz respeito ao modo operante da igreja o livro é bom, pode ser um bom guia ou parâmetro para quem deseja começar um trabalho de plantação de igreja ou revitalizar um trabalho, ou até mesmo direcionar um ministério que já esteja funcionando.

Vincent Ng says

This is an excellent book on church ministry that wonderfully combines both theology and practical applications. It emphasizes the importance of church being grounded Scripturally in practice, keeping a biblical basis for the things that are done. Alexander and Dever share practical examples from their own church, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, and will serve to be a blessing to those who pick up the book. In a society that is so filled with creating the right program or the right niche through entertainment, self-centered, crowd pleasingness, this books grounds the work of the church in pleasing God, and the church functioning to display God's wisdom and glory to the world. Questions are provided after sections to stimulate deeper thought after certain topics are addressed. Would highly recommend this book!

Michael Abraham says

Paul Alexander and Mark Dever share practical ideas to build a church on the gospel. After decades of testing these ideas at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in D.C., they provide this book as an attempt to share what they've learned. This works well as a reference book.

Matt Tyler says

This book is for all those who benefited from Nine Marks of a Healthy Church and then set it down asking, "now what?" This book was Connie Dever's idea because she realized that Mark was being asked the same questions again and again by pastors.

Amazingly, there isn't anything necessarily profound in this book. But there are "tips" for living out a biblical ecclesiology. The reason I gave this book 5 stars is because if you are anything like me, you will probably read this book and think, "Hey, I can do that!" This book provides the encouragement needed to begin implementing the 9 Marks in your church. This book does not provide pastors with a program or a quick fix. It's not a "how to" guide in the sense that if you just implement the suggestions in this book you will see immediate results. Instead, it's a call to be intentional about the things your church is doing. The authors say that the book is "just an attempt to be deliberate about treating the biblical Gospel as that which feeds the church's growth, drives its progress, and governs every aspect of the church's corporate life and leadership" (20)

This book, I believe, offers a scriptural and plain "model" of being "Gospel driven and Gospel governed in everything you do" (23). If you are a pastor or elder, I think you will greatly appreciate this book!

Jo Ksly says

Un "manuel" pratique (parfois peut-être trop: j'entends par là que l'auteur passe parfois trop rapidement, à mon goût, sur les fondements doctrinaux, par exemple pour la question des ordonnances) qui délivre une vision globale d'un fonctionnement d'église sain.

Jeff Jones says

The topic of church organization and polity all too often lends itself to dry, technical treatments. It was therefore a pleasant surprise to read Mark Dever and Paul Alexander's book *The Deliberate Church*. This work is written not just for pastors and seminarians, but also for the average Christian who is interested in fostering the growth of a healthy church.

In a realm seemingly dominated by pragmatism and tradition, *The Deliberate Church* carries a refreshing emphasis on the centrality of Scripture and the Gospel. Not everyone will agree with everything in this book, but for everything they might dispute, they have to deal with a biblical argument. Christ is the Lord of his Church – and surely this fact has implications for how that Church organizes itself and conducts its business. Dever and Alexander have written an entire book that seeks to reflect this perspective.

WHAT IS A "DELIBERATE CHURCH"?

Dever and Alexander begin with the observation that when one starts to erect a building, is it necessary to

know what kind of building is being built. Therefore, the process of building is going to be different, depending on the kind of building. So – when it comes to building an organization or institution, such as the church, it must be asked: “What is this that we are building?”

From this question comes Dever and Alexander’s answer:

A church is not a Fortune 500 company. It’s not simply another nonprofit organization, nor is it a social club. In fact, a healthy church is unlike any organization that man has ever devised, because man didn’t devise it. It only makes sense, then, to revisit God’s Word to figure out what exactly he wants us to be building.

“Deliberate” was the word the authors chose to describe the resulting approach to church methodology, founded on four principles. *First, theology drives method* – one’s conception of the Gospel will have practical implications for how one shares it. *Second, God’s methods determine ours* – if the Gospel is God’s appointed means to build his church, the methods by which it is planted, watered, and cultivated must similarly take their authority from God’s direction. *Third, the Gospel both enables and informs our participation in God’s purposes* – not only must the Gospel first do its work in a person for them to even be able to enter the Kingdom, it provides the framework and parameters for service in that Kingdom. *Fourth, faithfulness to the Gospel must be our measure of success, not results* – only God can give growth and create, and so Christians are called to successfully deliver the message and not to ensure results by their own power.

GUARD THE FRONT DOOR

Many Christians today see neither need nor any biblical support for having a formal membership in the church. To some, it seems like an importation of secular practice. To others, it seems unduly restrictive and insular for an institution that seeks to be open to newcomers. They will often point to the lack of any explicit reference to a church “membership list” for biblical support in denying formal membership.

Against this prevailing trend, the authors make a compelling case for formal church membership. This argument was, personally, one of the most useful elements of the book, and one that I hope someday to put to practical use in a church context. They point to the case of church discipline recorded in 1 Cor. 5, where a sexually immoral man was to be expelled from among the congregation. This implies a visible demarcation between the congregation and the world – there had to be something from which this man could be expelled! This implication is made all the more clear in Paul’s second letter, where he refers to the punishment inflicted by the “majority” (2 Cor. 2:6, NIV) as having been adequate. For the term “majority” to have any meaning, there has to have been a defined number from which those who acted formed the greater part. Elsewhere, Paul refers to a list of widows (1 Tim. 5:9), and Christ keeps a book of all His people in heaven (Rev. 21:27). Furthermore, though Dever and Alexander do not make use of this example, God’s repeated commands to Moses to conduct censuses of Israel (Exod. 30:12; Num. 1:2; 26:2) shows that God has mandated numbering his people in the past, as a means of setting them apart from the world around them and organizing them for service.

The need for membership underlines a very important point: if the church is to be separate and distinct from the world, there must exist an enforcement mechanism to hold its members accountable. That mechanism is church discipline, a topic which is itself a key emphasis of the book. Dever and Alexander devote an entire chapter to this necessary function, and in so doing they make an interesting point – that discipline, to be effective, must contain both “formative” and “corrective” elements. Teaching, preaching, accountability relationships, pastoral ministry and visitation all contribute to the spiritual health of the church, and like good diet and exercise to a physical body can prevent many later diseases and problems. This needs to be

understood as being church discipline. There is also a need, however, for corrective discipline in those cases where formative discipline is insufficient. For the sake of the church's health, and the purity of its witness before an unbelieving world, Dever and Alexander stress that sometimes a person must be disciplined by the church for their behavior. Moreover, though this is not discussed in the book, a body whose mission is to reflect a holy God in an unholy world must regard its purity and holiness as a simple matter of obedience and faithfulness to God – and tolerance of evil in its midst as being a sinful affront to his character.

How does this relate to formal church membership? The highest penalty of church discipline, that of excommunication, assumes a clear and defined body from which an offender may be excluded. A formal membership list would be the most straightforward practical measure to make this possible. Furthermore, pastors and elders will one day be held accountable for those under their care (Heb. 13:17). How responsible is it, then, for a pastor to allow his congregation to be some amorphous, undefined group whose makeup and composition he may or may not actually understand? A good pastor knows which sheep are actually his, and church membership is a practical means to make this possible.

BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

Dever and Alexander's entire concept is built on the foundation of a particular kind of ecclesiological polity – one that could be succinctly described as a plural-elder-led congregational model of church government. Understanding this polity is crucial for understanding *The Deliberate Church*. Fully nine of twenty-one chapters in the book are devoted to explaining and practically working out this form of leadership.

Dever and Alexander's concept of eldership seems to borrow heavily from a Presbyterian view of local church government, but differs in two key respects: they do not accept the Presbyterian concept of a ruling body over local churches composed of all the church elders meeting in assembly, and they deny the common Presbyterian distinction between "teaching elders" and "ruling elders." Instead, Dever and Alexander stress the necessity of the church elder(s) identifying, training, and nominating potential elders, all of whom must be able to teach, and all to be approved by congregational vote. These elders are then, as a body, held accountable by the congregation as a whole rather than by a denominational governing body.

It must be understood that in Dever and Alexander's thinking, the terms "elder," "pastor," "bishop," and "overseer" are interchangeable, at most referring to different aspects of the same position of church leadership. They point to the interchangeable use of these terms in Acts for justification of this concept. An elder is a pastor, and vice versa. Furthermore, it is to be understood that these elders are plural – though a single pastor/elder is often a reality, it is not the biblical ideal, and so a key part of pastoral ministry is thus identifying and raising up potential elders in the congregation. Elders differ from the other biblical church officers – the deacons – in that they are called to be able to perform the teaching ministry and exercise spiritual leadership of the church. Deacons administer the practical and material needs of the church; elders administer the spiritual needs, those being the ministries of teaching and preaching and pastoral care.

Seminary education is not a prerequisite for elders. Indeed, the authors advocate for the involvement of lay ("non-staff") elders, preferably as a majority among the eldership. These elders might be called "lay pastors" in other ecclesial or denominational contexts.

There are many outstanding advantages to this model. First, and most important, the Bible does appear to support the idea of a plurality of elders in every church. Second, having multiple elders spreads responsibility and provides mutual support and accountability. Third, having lay elders avoids the problem of a "professional" ministry leading the church, as many of the "pastors" are in fact laymen. Fourth, it brings a wide variety of skills and gifts into the pastoral leadership of the church that an individual alone simply

cannot provide.

One potential drawback of the model – division and disunity among the leadership – is clearly recognized and addressed strongly in the book. Dever and Alexander stress the vital importance of the character qualifications for potential elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9). They also give considerable attention to the method for carrying out elders' meetings, with an eye toward promoting unity – even going so far as to suggest circulating memos in advance of meetings to bring non-staff elders up to speed on issues that the staff elders are already acquainted with.

WHAT ABOUT THE DEACONS?

The book's only major weakness can thus be seen in light of this attention to elders. Dever and Alexander make a careful case for plural eldership and lay out a very practical method for making the concept work in the local congregation. By contrast, the ministry of deacons seems neglected. There are a few pages devoted to them and their ministry, but many questions are left unresolved. Is the church administrator, mentioned several times in the book, one of the elders, or a deacon? If the elders and deacons collectively pass the budget back and forth to work out details, who handles the "deconfliction" between the two bodies? Is there a head deacon? If so, is he also an elder? Does one of the elders sit in on diaconal meetings and provide spiritual direction? Since Dever and Alexander take the position that the Bible restricts eldership to men only, what is their view on women as deacons (deaconesses)? These tantalizing questions are not addressed or answered.

Dever and Alexander are right to address the all-too-common scene of the deacons of a Baptist church acting as a de facto board of "elders," and clarifying the differences between the two offices is an emphasis badly needed in Baptist circles today. Yet the diaconal office as it functions in practice seems lost in this realignment. Given that the care of the church's administrative and practical needs can grow to a point which threatens the gospel ministry of the elders (cf. Acts 6:1-7), and the bewildering array of material challenges faced by a church in the modern world, the diaconate deserved much more space than it received. While this did not detract from the overall value of this very useful book, it was an opportunity lost.

CONCLUSION

Healthy churches do not just happen. Church health, when defined biblically in terms of faithfulness to God's Word and character, is integrally tied to church organization and administration. Dever and Alexander recognize this truth, and weave it throughout every part of the book.

What is so interesting when reading *The Deliberate Church* is the stark difference between its paradigm and the wisdom of the unbelieving world. Secular business strives to specialize and stovepipe areas of expertise. A "deliberate church" seeks to develop a body of elders who are generalists, collectively responsible for ministry and able to assume one another's place. The world values compromise and tolerance as the key to peace, prosperity, and unity. Dever and Alexander point to an uncompromising Christ and the dividing line of God's Word as the only true basis of a united and peaceful church.

The Deliberate Church forces the reader to rethink their presuppositions and assumptions about how to "do" church. It drives the reader to the Bible to ask, "Does the Bible actually have something to say about this?" This fact alone is worth the reading of the book.

This book is highly recommended for any Christian, but for those in pastoral ministry (as pastors/elders, missionaries, or church planters) as well as those in administrative leadership positions in the church (such as

deacons), this is an absolute must-read.

Jeff Short says

This is a practical, ground-up look at a healthy church. Elements of church structure and operation may not seem the most interesting concepts to read about, but they are vital to the health of a local church. I highly recommend "9 Marks of a Healthy Church," and this book is a perfect companion to it. The first communicates the vision and direction and the second helps see how to get there.

Pastors are responsible to care and watch for all the flock they serve. At the very least, this book will help pastors identify holes in their pastoral care and give some practical advice on how to fill them in.

David Velasquez says

La iglesia deliberante es un libro que nos hace recordar que la Palabra de Dios y el evangelio son suficientes para crear el pueblo de Dios (la iglesia), edificarlo, informar sus métodos, y expandir su obra por el mundo. No es un libro innovador. Los autores describen su intención al escribir este libro de esta manera: “nuestra meta es tomar la iglesia hacia el futuro recordándole como debería ser originalmente. Pensamos que la iglesia será catapultada hacia el futuro solo cuando la cosa más notable, acerca de su vida congregacional, sea su gobierno cuidadoso y poderosa conducción dirigidos por la antiquísima y probada Palabra de Dios.”

El libro es extremadamente práctico, especialmente para aquellos que han leído el otro libro de Mark Dever 'Las nueve marcas de una iglesia saludable' y quieren saber cómo implementar lo aprendido en sus iglesias. Ante todo es un libro que anima al lector (se presume que sería un pastor o líder) que piense de forma deliberante o intencional acerca de cada aspecto de la vida de la iglesia para conformarlo a la Escritura con el fin de glorificar a Dios. Esto incluye cómo se reciben y se despiden miembros, cómo se enseñan y practican las ordenanzas, cómo se llevan y organizan los diferentes cultos y reuniones, y cómo se reconocen ancianos y cómo estos desarrollan sus funciones bíblicas, etc...

Algunos leerán este libro y no estarán de acuerdo con algunas de las prácticas o conclusiones de los autores, pero sin duda este libro hará que todos piensen como nunca antes en porqué hacen lo que hacen en sus respectivas iglesias. Hará que vuelvan a las Escrituras y qué consideren cómo el evangelio puede modelarse y comunicarse de mejor manera en el contexto de la iglesia local. No hay nada que perder y mucho que ganar al leer este libro.

Jimmy says

Both authors Mark Dever and Paul Alexander have written a helpful book for pastors and church leaders on doing church ministry according to the Bible and centered on the Gospel. As the book states on page 28, “The Gospel alone shapes and evaluate must both shape and evaluate any ministry method we use.” This is a great antidote to the seeker sensitive church method or other marketing gimmick that is driven more by man-centered pragmatism instead of the Word of God. I love how this book is both biblical and practical since I believe there is a real need of resources on practical ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). Too often one find two kinds of extreme: practical works without it being biblical or biblical works on the church without a

deeper practical picture of what does it look like. Dever and Alexander writes from being biblically informed and years of wisdom and experience which through their 9 Marks ministry have greatly helped many other local churches including the one I minister at.

The work begins with a very encouraging introduction. The main body of the book is divided into four section with each containing about a half a dozen chapters. Section 1 is on gathering the church while section 2 is on when the church gathers with section 3 on gathering elders and finally section 4 is on when the elders gather. The book ends with an encouraging conclusion that is fitting to be a chapter in its own right followed by an appendix on church membership interview form.

Perhaps the section of the book that I benefited the most from is section 4 on elders' meeting. I wished I read this book much earlier in the beginning of my ministry as that would have made me think more consciously of what a leadership meeting would be like. But then I also believe in the sovereignty of God that it is meant to be that I read this book the time I did and would have benefited the most at this moment in time than I would probably have appreciated what I was reading during the beginning of my ministry. Dever gave a good advice of emailing the leadership agenda a week in advance and also giving packets with sealed envelope with elder's name on it to reinforce the seriousness and confidentiality of the meeting. I also appreciated Dever's point of having a time of Bible and prayers before the business of the meeting. I thought it was helpful to see the meeting organized in Dever's church in the order of membership, administration, ministry, missions, communication with deacons and between elders, etc. I thought it was good for Dever to say that the meeting ought to be encouraging and the suggestion of having a board to write down what elders were encouraged with at the church; it was a good advice for me to hear as ministry can easily become critical in a ungodly way since we are dealing with sin and sinners.

There were many other precious insights from this book. For instance I enjoyed chapter 9's discussion of the roles of different gatherings. It was extremely helpful to hear how Mark Dever's church Capitol Hill Baptist Church go about doing there various gatherings throughout the week and the purpose of each one. Also as an expository preacher I take a long time in preparing my sermon and I often wonder if I'm taking too much time studying. Yet as a pastor I also meet a lot with our people and sometimes it feels like I'm burning both ends of the candle. Here I was encouraged with Mark Dever writing that young pastors spending about twenty five hours a week studying and prepping for Sunday Sermon is normal. That greatly encouraged me. Section three of the book on raising elders was very helpful especially with Dever's point that "recognize before training" elders is a better model than just trying to train one up from scratch. I'll admit I have made this mistake in ministry and while I have always gone slow to recognize people for offices nevertheless the training from scratch approach I used to do drained a lot of time, money and my own personal pain. The qualification quadrants on page 141 was also helpful.

I went through this book as part of a discipling tool with one of our deacons as preparation for him to serve our church. It was immensely beneficial for both of us and we learned things together. I recommend this work for pastors, elders, deacons, other church leaders and church interns. If you are not any of the above this work would also be edifying to read as well as being given as a gift to those in church leadership who have a desire to lead the church according to God's Word.

PD says

9Marks books are always helpful to skim and this book is no different. If you share the same Church polity,

then it might have more to offer, but for me it is just edifying to learn from people outside my particular tradition and structures.
