

such things, are not our attitudes toward them sometimes just that? Ask yourself this...do you spend more time talking about other people's doctrinal deficiencies than you do about building others up? If one of the popular theologian's or speaker's names comes up, what are you quick to do? Do you point out that you know all about their theological errors and latest blunders or are you quick to praise the good they have done and silently pray for them? Why do we so often get so much fulfillment out of the first?

Here's the challenge. Let's be discerning and knowledgeable. Let's never stop increasing in either as we read those familiar verses and let them continue to spur us on. But, let's read the whole verse. Let's go back to Philippians 1:9 once again, "And it is my prayer

that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment." You got that first part right. What is supposed to accompany knowledge and discernment? Love. Love that is abounding more and more. Let's be discerning but let's also be loving. That's Paul's prayer for them and

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us. I know these two things, love and discernment, take on different shades in different circumstances. And sometimes the loving thing is to be forceful with the truth. I get that. But that's probably the exception and not the rule. And just maybe far too often we are quick with the discernment and slow with the love.

One more passage that is often thrown into the conversation of being discerning and knowledgeable is 1 Peter 3:15:

"...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." We've got the 'prepared to make a defense' part down. Did you notice that last phrase, "...yet with gentleness and respect"? That's my hope and prayer for all of us. That's the challenge of this article. Let's be discerning. Let's be growing in our knowledge of the things of God. We must be on guard and feeding ourselves and those around us. But let's also live out the rest of the commands. Let's be loving and gentle and respectful in our disagreements and in our view of those who think differently from us. Paul gives us no pass for being rude and arrogant and mean-spirited. Let us be bulldogs for the truth, but let us have discernment accompanied with gentleness. That brings glory to God.

♦ Brian Murphy



Book Nook

Loving the Church
by John Crotts

just do all this over the internet? Why do you have to come at all?

The concept of the book *Loving the Church* – the subject

There are many who do not recognize the inherent value of the church, and others may have a bad taste in their mouths from bad church experiences.

Though not every professing Christian has this view of the church, the sad reality is that many people do not give the church its proper place in view of the Bible's teaching on the subject. There are many who do not recognize the inherent value of the church, and others may have a bad taste in their mouths from bad church experiences. The reality is that many people have a less-than-right view of the church. In

and title of this book – is as foreign to most today as the concept of loving going to the department of motor vehicles. It takes time away from other things you would rather be doing; there are people there you don't want to deal with (and who don't want to deal with you); it's boring; they just want your money; and besides, wouldn't it be easier if we could

fact, no one values the church as highly as it should be. This makes the material in *Loving the Church* so helpful for anyone who is willing to learn from it.

The framework for the book is a series of discussions by a group of fictitious people providentially brought together at a coffee shop. They have had various experiences with the church (mostly bad) but they decide to meet regularly to share what they are learning from the Bible on the subject of the church. Along with ease of reading, this framework is a helpful reminder of the importance of a right understanding of the church. When churches are not functioning properly, people who want to honor Christ are left wandering, like sheep without a shepherd. It is critical for pastoral leadership to make a church that is easily lovable by those who are truly born again.

The book is divided into two sections. They are “What is God’s Family?” and “How You Fit Into God’s Family.” The first deals with the nature and value of the church; the second deals specifically with practical elements of the church’s structure and function.

In the first section Crotts demonstrates that, contra to many people, the church is held in the highest esteem by God, whose house it is, and by Christ, who gave his life to purchase it. He makes one especially salient point concerning the place of the church in missions: “God has established churches to study, know, do, and proclaim his Word in the world. Christians who seek to serve the Lord outside the bounds of a church are missing out on their mission. They are also putting themselves on dangerous ground, beyond the boundaries of those who are established to guard God’s truth.” The gospel does not go forth or stay pure in isolation, but rather in the context of churches that are established or being established.

He also shows that a biblical church is a church that is submitted to Christ as head over the church, and that he rules every inch of the church through his word, the Bible. Thus, a church must be careful to subject all of

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its teaching and its practice to biblical standards. This comes as elders, deacons, and members perform their proper biblical roles to the building up of one another, resulting in a church that is built up into the fullness of its head, Jesus Christ.

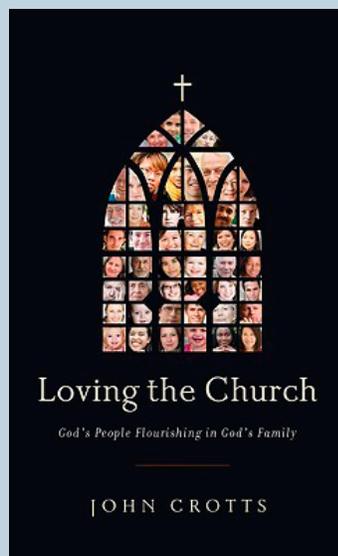
The second half of the book looks at how the church should be structured, arguing for the offices of elders and deacons and explaining what each is to do. He calls for believers to invest themselves in the church by living lives of personal holiness and by making time with the church – both corporately and elsewhere during the week – a priority on their calendars.

The book skillfully weaves these sections of explaining biblical texts on the church with words of exhortation to the reader. Though the author has clearly “done his homework” and much information is being conveyed to the reader, it is very obviously not a mere academic study. He constantly speaks to the reader of his need to follow in obedience to the principles and precepts described in Scripture concerning the church.

The author’s desire is clearly for churches that are everything that Christ desires them to be, both in what they state and what they practice. As that is being done, his goal is for Christians to learn both the supreme value of the church and how to function biblically within it. This book helps accomplish all

of these goals and then some. It will be of special value to those who are disenchanted by the church and who are really not sure what to do next. But, regardless of one’s prior knowledge of the church, and participation within it, it will be of great value to all who take the time to read it.

♦ Greg Pickle



*XL Ministry Training
February 6th and 7th, 2014*

We had a great time of fellowship and encouragement from the Word at this past February's XL Ministry Training, and we invite you to attend our upcoming sessions in February 2014. If you are a volunteer in ministry, an intern, or a leader in your church such as a pastor or elder, you will find these sessions and fellowship very rewarding.

The following issues will be addressed at the 2014 Training:

- ◆ Maintaining Priorities in Life and Ministry
- ◆ Ministry to Children and Families
- ◆ Current Theological Challenges Impacting Ministry
- ◆ Faithful Ministry in the Face of Discouragement and Frustration
- ◆ Vision and Planning for the Church



Be reminded that the Countryside Bible Church Essentials Conference will start Friday night, February 7th and will run through Sunday evening. We will have more information in the months ahead!

Congratulations to Eric Laudenslager upon the successful completion of the XL internship! Eric went through his mock ordination this past February at the XL training seminars and he did an excellent job. Eric has had a very intense and interesting couple of years. Along with completing all the requirements for the internship, Eric married Kelly in September of 2011 and they are expecting their first child (a girl) at the end of July! Eric's immediate ministry future is to continue to serve at Flatirons Baptist Church in Boulder as a youth and worship leader, teaching and leading the congregation along with the rest of the leadership team. As family responsibilities and delights allow, Eric would like to take some seminary classes locally in the Denver area or online. His eventual goal is to be involved in full-time pastoral ministry. Praise the Lord for Eric and Kelly and be praying for the soon arrival of their baby girl as well as God's leading of them into His will for ministry.

