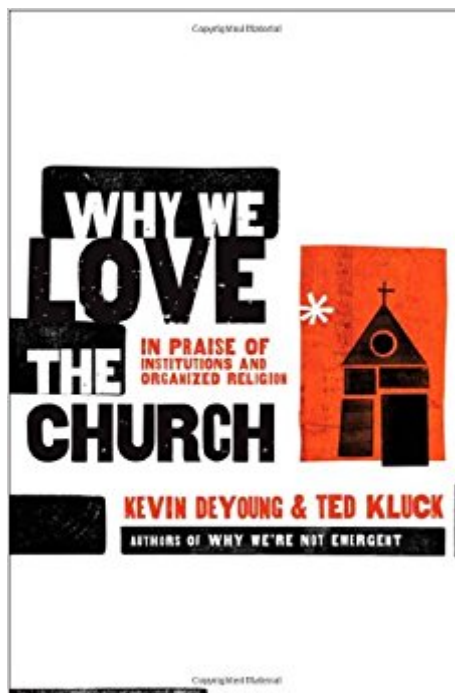




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Why We Love The Church: In Praise Of Institutions And Organized Religion



Synopsis

This book presents the case for loving the local church. It paints a picture of the local church in all its biblical and real life guts, gaffes, and glory in an effort to edify local congregations and entice the disaffected back to the fold. It also provides a solid biblical mandate to love and be part of the body of Christ and counteract the "leave church" books that trumpet rebellion and individual felt needs. Why We Love the Church is written for four kinds of people – the Committed, the Disgruntled, the Waffling, and the Disconnected.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Moody Publishers; New Edition edition (July 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802458378

ISBN-13: 978-0802458377

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 67 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #65,460 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Ecclesiology #32 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Institutions & Organizations #35 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Growth

Customer Reviews

If you've written off the church, I dare you to read this book. -Joshua Harris, author of Stop Dating the Church
Jesus loves the church. Yes, the church is imperfect, and we have made mistakes. But if we love Jesus, then we will love what Jesus loves. This book moves us to a thrilling portrait and future of what the church that Jesus loves and builds can look like and the hope we can bring to the world. -Dan Kimball, author of They Like Jesus But Not the Church
Well, they've done it again. The two guys who should be emergent, but aren't, have followed up their first best seller with what I hope and pray will be a second. In Why We Love the Church DeYoung and Kluck have given us a penetrating critique of church-less Christianity and a theologically rigorous, thoroughly biblical, occasionally hilarious, but equally serious defense of the centrality of the church in God's redemptive purpose. In spite of her obvious flaws, DeYoung and Kluck really do love the church, because they love the Christ whose body it is. You don't

have to agree with everything they say to appreciate and profit from this superbly written and carefully constructed book. This is a great read and I recommend it with unbridled enthusiasm.

-Sam Storms, senior pastor, Bridgway Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
If you're looking for reality, authenticity, and honesty, you've found it in this book. Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, shrewd observers and faithful practitioners, have once again written a book that is like the best of foods--good tasting and good for you. Their style is easy, creative, and funny. They are theologically faithful, fresh, and insightful. They are sympathetic with many concerns and even objections to much in the church today, yet are finally defensive, in the best sense of the word. They are careful critics of the too-popular critics of the church. They are lovers of Christ and His church. I pray this book will help you love Christ's church better, too.

-Mark Dever, author of 9 Marks of a Healthy Church
Two young men, a pastor and a layman, here critique the criticisms of the institutional church that are fashionable today. Bible-centered, God-centered, and demonstrably mature, they win the argument hands down. As I read, I wanted to stand up and cheer.

-J. I.

Packer, professor of theology, Regent College
If Jesus thought the church was worth dying for, it may just be worth living in. While not ignoring the sins of the church, DeYoung and Kluck remind us why church bashing is often shallow, and why the institutional church remains the most authentic place to encounter the good news of Jesus Christ.

-Mark Galli, senior managing editor, Christianity Today
An attitude of indifference to the church has become tragically common within American Christianity. As a result, many people fail to make a solid commitment to congregational life and responsibility. The New Testament is clear--to love Christ is to love the church. Kevin and Ted provide a powerful word of correction, offering compelling arguments and a vision of church life that is not only convincing, but inspirational. This book will deepen your love of the church--and for Christ.

-R. Albert Mohler, President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

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Kevin De Young and Ted Kluck argue that Christians should not give up on the church but in fact learn to love and serve and thrive in their local churches. They attempt to speak to four kinds of people: 1) the committed and involved Christian who can speak to the disenchanted former church-goers who are now "church-leavers" 2) the disgruntled churchgoers who are committed to the church but frustrated by the corporate failings of their church 3) the waffling churchgoers who are on their way out as they start to see church as optional and 4)

the disconnected also known as the un-churched Christian who have left the church in their quest for God. To accomplish this goal the duo divides the chapters where Kluck sympathizes with the arguments of the unchurched while De Young provides the historical and theological groundwork for God's design for the church.

Strengths/Weaknesses

The major strength of the book is its accessibility and edgy style. I have never read a book with such an informal and personal tone. The book is winsome for its main audience which is the disgruntled churchgoer disenchanted by the institutionalized Christian religion. Kevin De Young's chapters on the historical: one holy catholic church was very helpful and substantive. He shows that a Christian without a church is outside the scope of historic biblical teaching. In fact the Christian's participation and membership in the local church is normative. De Young's attempt to define the church was also a very thoughtful exercise in carefully thinking through what church is and what church does. Should there be order in the church? What about worship services? What about house churches? Is the term church just the plural term for Christian? De Young shows that a church that desires to be free from any kind of order or liturgy is both unrealistic and untenable. It may feel free for the first several meetings but at some point order must be established and therefore defeats the desire for order. He gives the helpful illustration of a home where there are chores, curfews, fixed meal times, bed times, rules required for decision making. Furthermore the Bible does not have a leaderless church. Another strength of the book was its argument for church membership. De Young leans heavily on John Stott who said, "the Lord didn't add them to the church without saving them, and he didn't save them without adding them to the church. Salvation and church membership went together; they still do."

One weakness of the book is that it made me feel very uncool. A lot of name dropping of events, names, songs, or shows that I just don't know or can't relate to. Another distraction I found was all the references to their former work, *Why we're not emergent*. I wasn't sure if the previous book was required but it felt like a covert sales pitch for me to buy yet another book from them. De Young's section on the importance of preaching was refreshing to read. The argument made by the unchurched Christian is a sermon is boring and unnecessary. Community should be emphasized over preaching. Again Stott becomes a valuable ally to show that preaching is indispensable to Christianity as he traces a sermon thread from Jesus to the apostles through Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Eusebius; through the preaching of John Chrysostom, the Friars, the Dominicans, through the Reformers, the Puritans, the Methodists, all the way down to contemporary evangelicals. Of the three reasons he gives for the necessity of preaching point three

is the best: preaching is proclamation. The preacher *kerux* is not the word for teacher or apostle but for a herald. He shows that, *“he is not a leader of an inductive Bible study.. he is not engaged in give-and-take dialogue.. he is not simply to give testimony to what the Lord is doing in his life.. he is a herald declaring the message for the King.”* De Young concludes that the solution to bad preaching is not no preaching but better preaching, *“preaching full of meat and marrow; preaching that manifestly comes out of the Scriptures and leads us back to them week after week; preaching that is unquestionably soaked in godliness and the presence of God; preaching delivered with passion and humility as from a dying man to dying men.”* I found the last chapter very helpful as they try to show the mission of the church is not social justice but the glory of God. Kevin De Young shows that we need to learn contentment in our churches and grow patient with our leaders. In fact what causes us to abandon churches is not a failure to understand ecclesiology but hamartiology. The nature of sin is strong and causes the church to deviate from her mission. People will always be sinners and the problem of sin is always relevant meanwhile the salvation of Christ is always available. I would recommend this book for the younger crowd who are unfamiliar with classical definitions of the church. The tone of the book is a good mix of informal conversation (Kluck) with more technical and theological explanations (DeYoung).

There was a time when I simply didn't want the accountability or community that an organized church offered. Many of arguments went along the normal lines: "I can worship Jesus just fine by myself", "Churches are full of hypocrites", and the simple "It's not for me". A lot of that was due to the fact I was looking inward--I didn't want anyone telling me what to do, including God's Word, and so it was easier to go it alone. But when I turned my life around, I knew that there was more to worship than telling someone "God bless you" at a Starbucks on a Sunday. I needed church, as imperfect and frustrating as it might be. Truth be told, I'm imperfect and frustrating myself. Many books have been written as to why church isn't a "must" for the Christian; moreover, many of these books cite the idea of an organized church as antiquated, divisive, or even sinister. What Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck do, with a remarkable sense of understanding and insight, is to why the church is a Biblical, helpful model, and why "worshiping" by playing golf or going to an Eminem concert (I wish I were joking) can't take the place of the type of community the Bible call us to be. Both authors admit churches (and church itself) can have issues, but they're also quick to point out how an evangelical, visible church, warts and all, is the body of Christ. A group of believers dissipating to golf courses and coffee shops on Sunday are not a visible church. DeYoung and Kluck, just as they aren't afraid

to admit that church won't be an idyllic experience, also go after the reckless, often groundless idealism that populates the work of many in the anti-church movement. Gently, but firmly and with with, they refute many of the common things we see people suggesting in lieu of church--and how these models are often wholly inadequate in terms of leadership, communion, support, ability to proclaim and teach the Gospel, and the structure visible from the days of Christ onward. If you've struggled with the "why" of church, or just put down some book suggesting you go talk about how pretty mountains are instead of praise God, learn His Word, and fellowship with our fellow imperfect sinners, this is a book you'll want to read. Sometimes, it's the church you're in, sometimes it's where you are in your life, and sometimes it's simply a rebellious or overly idealistic spirit. I'm telling you, I've been there. Pray for discernment, pray for wisdom, and realize that church isn't about your entertainment or pet social justice issue. It's about proclaiming the Gospel and doing life together. Also, recognize that although the church can disappoint, we are called to gather in a specific way, well beyond the oft-repeated assertion that "Church" just means "every Christian everywhere" (the difference, and why that usage does not negate the call for the local church, are also excellent parts of this book. The church exists in a fallen world, and is populated by people who are going to fail and disappoint. But that shouldn't stop us from worshiping, from gathering, from supporting, and for being a visible light to the world. This is a realistic, smart, often funny, and Bible-driven look at why we should indeed love the church.

This book is a refreshing response to Barna, Viola and others who are encouraging people to leave the organized church. The true mark of wisdom is not the accumulation of facts but the attaining of perspective. DeYoung and Kluck present the Biblical and historical perspective on the treasure of Christ's bride - the organized church. If you are truly part of the body of Christ, this book will increase your love for the church. If your thoughts are wavering regarding the church or if you are becoming bored attending church, then I highly recommend this book to you. You will not be disappointed.

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