



Richard  
**Mayhue**  
INCLUDES STUDY GUIDE

WHAT WOULD  
JESUS SAY  
ABOUT YOUR  
CHURCH?

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DEDICATION  
To my special friend  
John MacArthur  
whose love for Christ's church  
is exceeded only by that of  
the Chief Shepherd.





## 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  
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## 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.

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In each chapter, Scripture references are given to prove each point. It is important that you look up each reference. After you have read a chapter, I would urge you to spend time considering the relevant questions found in the study section at the end of the book.





## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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).



Paul told the Corinthian church, ‘For we are God’s fellow workers ...’ (1 Cor. 3:9). What a privilege to be partners with Christ in building His church. How comforting to know He built the church before we arrived and He will continue to build long after we’re gone. Christ’s participation proves indispensable in raising up His church.

#### *Hallmark 3*

‘I will build My church.’ This is no idle dream about what might be. Christ’s confident assertion guarantees that the church has a *positive expectation*. In times like these when the future of the church looks bleak and its condition uncertain, this powerful promise should buoy up our spirits. The church will be triumphant because Christ began building the church with the intention of completing her (Eph. 5:26-27).

#### *Hallmark 4*

Jesus claimed that His church will have a *powerful advance*. ‘I will build My church.’ The church experienced an explosive beginning with 3,000 members being added on the first day (Acts 2:41). ‘And the Lord was adding to their numbers day by day those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:47).

What is contained in one mere sentence in Matthew 16 mushrooms into an expansive reality by the time of John’s Revelation. Before the New Testament ends, churches existed across the face of the Roman Empire. They included locations like Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, Colossae, Laodicea, Ephesus, Galatia, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Jerusalem, Crete, Cyprus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Caesarea, Berea, and Joppa. His building efforts continue to this very hour, everywhere in the world, just as He intended (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

#### *Hallmark 5*

Christ bought the church with His own blood and therefore possesses the exclusive *paid-in-full ownership* of the church



(Acts 20:28). ‘I will build *My church*.’ Christ is Lord; we are His servants (2 Cor. 4:5). Paul writes to the believers in Rome, ‘All the churches of Christ greet you’ (Rom. 16:16). Make no mistake about this – we do not (corporately or individually) have any ownership claim to the church. The church belongs uniquely to its Redeemer (1 Cor. 3:23; 6:19-20). Christ is Head of the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23). The Chief Shepherd owns the flock that He leads (John 10:14-15).

#### *Hallmark 6*

‘I will build *My church*.’ For Christ, the church has a *people-centred priority*. The church comprises an assembly of people who have believed in Jesus Christ for eternal life (Acts 4:32). Jesus uses living stones –individual people –to build His church (1 Pet. 2:5). The mandate of evangelization is to take the gospel to all the nations (Luke 24:47). The goal of edification is to present everyone complete in Christ (Col. 1:28).

The Greek word translated ‘church’ literally means the congregation which has been called out. The New Testament pictures the church as made up of those who have been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). The Thessalonians had turned from idols to serve a true and living God (1 Thess. 1:9). The church has been called into fellowship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). Christ has called His redeemed out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

#### *Hallmark 7*

Jesus has *promised success* to the church. ‘I will build *My church*; and *the gates of Hades shall not overpower it*.’

How is this success to be understood? In the Old Testament ‘gates of’ is used with Sheol (Isa. 38:10) and death (Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18), both referring to physical death. ‘Death’ is really the only enemy that could ‘potentially’ overpower and defeat the church since she is comprised of people who shall live, even if they die (John 11:25).



The writer of Hebrews encourages us to know that through death Christ rendered powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil (2:14). Paul wrote this Christian victory song to the Corinthians:

But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

When Christ builds the church these seven features will be identifiable:

1. Christ as the permanent foundation.
2. Christ’s personal involvement.
3. Christ’s positive expectation.
4. Christ’s purpose of powerful advance.
5. Christ’s paid-in-full ownership.
6. Christ’s people-centred priority.
7. Christ’s promise of success.

Who could possibly want to build the church any other way?

### **Christ’s unfinished work**

Theologians often speak of Christ’s ‘finished work’ on the cross, referring to the work of redemption. Christ cried out on the cross, ‘It is finished!’ (John 19:30). Truly, Christ’s sacrifice need not be offered again (Heb. 7:27; 9:12). This is the finished work of Christ.

However, more is in view for the church than just Christ’s death and resurrection. Dr. Luke wrote his gospel concerning ‘all that Jesus began to do and teach’ (Acts 1:1). Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus told his disciples to be witnesses of Him to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8). Reaching the lost



with the gospel and then adding to the church daily until Christ returns is the unfinished work of building Christ's church.

What we are to be doing and how we are to do it in building Christ's church is the subject of this volume. By God-breathed, infallible revelation, Christ has communicated to us what He thinks about the church. The Scriptures particularize what He commends and specify what He condemns. No-one need ever be in doubt over how to go about the unfinished work of building Christ's church or what the outcome will be.

In the end, our work in building the church on behalf of Christ will be acclaimed as valuable – the allusion to gold, silver and precious stones – or worthless – the allusion to wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12). The *quality* of each man's work will be tested by Christ in the end (1 Cor. 3:13). Our eternal reward for service done on earth depends on building the church with biblical excellence in order to please Christ.

In the Academy Award-winning film *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell, famed Olympian and missionary to China, conversed with his sister Jenny on a Scottish moor about the timing of his return to missionary work. His response remains etched in my memory. 'I believe that God made me for a purpose – for China – but He also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.'

Nothing will bring Christ greater pleasure than the building of His church. So, aim your life at the bull's-eye mark of His pleasure and you will never miss the spiritual target. You'll not be disappointed, and neither will Christ. Your heart will be filled with a great sense of commitment, as expressed by the words below, to build Christ's church his way.

I rise up to worship, I stand to acclaim  
The King of all ages, Christ Jesus His name.  
I ask you, King Jesus, fulfill this desire,  
Ignite me and make me, a chariot of fire.  
Come rule all my life  
Lord Jesus Christ, be Master and King.  
Come rule all my life,  
Lord Jesus Christ, be my everything.