

DIGGING DEEPER



STUDY GUIDES

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9 Marks of a Healthy Church

by Mark Dever

The Deliberate Church

by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

The Purpose of Digging Deeper Study Guides

Digging Deeper Study Guides are designed to help readers get the most out of their reading by focusing attention on understanding the main message of each book studied. Readers are then challenged to wrestle with that message—do they agree or disagree and why—and then ponder, reflect and apply what they are learning.

Individuals and groups will benefit from these study guides, but the best way to get the most out of any book is by doing both. Start by reading and answering the questions alone and then find a friend or two to gather regularly to discuss what each person is learning. The informed and lively discussion by a group of committed readers will take you places that you cannot go alone. This is the great benefit of learning theology within a community.

Why a Study Guide for *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever

God is using Mark Dever, the congregation of *Capital Hill Baptist Church*, and the ministry of *9 Marks* to encourage pastors to gospel faithfulness around the world. In *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, Dever describes each of these marks of church health, grounds them in the Scriptures, and then argues persuasively as to why each is necessary if reformation is to come again to the church. There are many reading choices in the “Church Growth” genre, but this is one of the best—if not the best—on the subject.

Why a Study Guide for *The Deliberate Church* by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

The Deliberate Church is a perfect companion book for someone who is reading *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* and wanting to see what it would look like to apply these marks in a local church setting. The point of focusing on one church’s practice is not to duplicate *Capital Hill Baptist Church* in your own locale (as if you could), but to observe one way in which a congregation is seeking to make the gospel the functional center of its life together. If you would travel to observe the ministry of CHBC, these are the copious notes you would take from your journey, along with the philosophy behind the ministry. It is a great practical resource for pastors wanting to build churches on the gospel and worth reading along with *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*.

Format of the Study Guide for *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* and *The Deliberate Church*

Page numbers in parenthesis are where suggested answers can be found. This Digging Deeper Study Guide is indexed to the Crossway Books copy of *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, published in 2004, and Crossway Book’s copy of *The Deliberate Church*, published in 2005. The Study Guide follows the structure of *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* and includes chapters from *The Deliberate Church* where relevant to the subject matter at hand.

A 5-Week Reading Schedule

This reading schedule was used to help members learn more about our church's philosophy of ministry. The final 1/3 of *The Deliberate Church*, which is heavily focused on eldership, is not covered in the schedule below, but would need to be if these two books are being used to train pastors, elders or others who simply want to know more about church leadership.

Week	<i>9 Marks of a Healthy Church</i>	<i>The Deliberate Church</i>
1	Preface & Introduction Mark 1 (Preaching)	Foreword & Introduction Chapter 1
2	Mark 2 (Biblical Theology) Mark 3 (The Gospel)	Chapters 6-7
3	Mark 4 (Conversion) Mark 5 (Evangelism)	Chapters 2-3
4	Mark 6 (Membership) Mark 7 (Discipline)	Chapters 4-5 Chapters 10
5	Mark 8 (Discipleship) Mark 9 (Leadership)	Chapter 11-9, 12-14

Dedication

To Mark Dever, Matt Schmucker, the congregation of *Capital Hill Baptist Church* and the ministry of 9 Marks, all of whom teach and model church health and gospel faithfulness for fellow churches, pastors and Christian disciples.

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Preface

1. Dever writes: “Unhealthy churches cause few problems for the healthiest Christians; but they are cruel taxes on the growth of the youngest and weakest Christians. They prey on those who don’t understand Scripture well. They mislead spiritual children. They even take the curious hopes of non-Christians that there might be another way to live, and seem to deny it. Bad churches are terribly effective anti-missionary forces.” (13) Do you agree or disagree? Have you ever experienced this or observed this firsthand?
2. What drove Dever to conclude that healthy churches are worth all the attention he was giving it? Take time to read Ephesians 2-3, Acts 9:4 and Acts 20:28. Do you see how these texts support this conviction? (14)
3. Are these nine marks exhaustive when it comes to church health? (16) If not, why does Dever choose to focus on these nine marks in particular? (17)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Introduction

1. What are the three marks of a true church? (22-23)
2. Which mark became “the mark” of the true church during the Reformation? (22)
3. What is the purpose of this book? (24)
4. What is the assumption that both liberal, traditional and seeker-sensitive churches hold in common? (27)
5. Why is this a faulty (and dangerous) assumption? (27)
6. What is a more biblical definition of “successful ministry?” (28)

The Deliberate Church: Foreword

1. Dever’s model for “church growth” is “the Word building the church.” For purposes of “truth in advertising,” what three things does Dever say “the Word building the church” is not? (20)
2. When it comes to growing a church numerically, today’s temptations—e.g. presentism (“new is better than old”) and pragmatism (“it must be right since it works”)--are a symptom of what greater problem? (21)
3. What is the number one priority of any church? (21-22)
4. Have you ever read a book on the topic of “church growth?” If so, what did you learn from that book, good or bad? What did it convey as the number one priority of any church?
5. Is “the deliberate church” model replicable? If so, why? (23)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 1 (Expositional Preaching)

1. Why does Dever believe that Expositional Preaching is the most important mark of a church? (39)
2. What is the difference between topical sermons and expositional sermons? (40)
3. What is God's chosen instrument for bringing us life and sanctifying us? (43)
4. Ponder: "The phrase 'the word of the LORD came' or its equivalent occurs more than 3,800 times in the Old Testament." (45)
5. Why is God's Word the central instrument in creating faith? (45)
6. Of the biblical passages Dever cited to support his thesis, which most stood out to you? (43-52)
7. Since events alone are not self-interpreting (even God's acts like the crucifixion, the exodus, and so forth), why are we not left in the dark? (48)
8. If God creating us is his first grace, what is his second? (49)
8. What is the most important thing to look for when looking for a local church to join? (52)
9. What is the pastor's great imperative? What verses support this? (53)

Deliberate Church: Chapter 1 (The Four P's)

1. What is true evidence of a member's spiritual maturity? (38)
2. Read and apply one of the "Think Tank" suggestions on page 41.

9 Marks: Mark 2 (Biblical Theology)

1. What's the relationship between the first and second marks of a healthy church? (59-60)
2. How is the Bible (and particularly the Old Testament) more than simply God's resume? (61)
3. What is one of the challenges of studying the Bible and growing in one's biblical theology? (62) What sort of attitude can help you avoid this pitfall?
4. What are several things that differentiate the God of the Bible from the gods of other religions when it comes to the issue of sacrifice? (63-66)
5. To whom or to what is God ultimately most faithful? (66-68)
6. How is God's love demonstrated in the Bible? (69)
7. Why is important to teach (and not avoid) the topic of God's sovereignty? (70-73)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 6 (Understanding the Regulative Principle)

1. Distinguish between the Regulative Principle and Normative Principle? (77)
2. How does Dever argue for the Regulative Principle? (78-79)
3. Where might you argue, from the New Testament, that God not only cares *that* we worship Him, but also *how* we worship Him? (79)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 7 (Applying the Regulative Principle)

1. Of the five elements mentioned in this chapter, where is your home church doing well? Where is it weak? If you are a pastor/elder, how can you gently and patiently help shore up these weaknesses? If you are a church member, how can you prayerfully and humbly seek to bring about change? (81-86)
2. What do you think of Dever's position on "multiple services?" Are there strengths to having multiple services? Weaknesses? (86)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 3 (The Gospel)

1. What's the deeper issue behind disobedience to God? (81)
2. Why is the "bad news" so important in understanding and believing the "good news" of the gospel? (83)
3. Why is "God is love" an insufficient understanding of the Christian God? (84-86)
4. What are various ways the Bible speaks of the meaning of Christ's death? (88)
5. Does Christ's death save us or *merely* make our salvation possible? In other words, how does the Bible speak of his atoning death? (88-89)
6. What is the biblical response required of the gospel message? (89-90)
7. What does it mean that the Gospel has a specific, cognitive content? (92)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 4 (Conversion)

1. What is the meaning of the term "repent?" (102)
2. What did Spurgeon mean when he told the drunkard, "you must be one of [my converts]; you're certainly not one of the Lord's"? (104)
3. Does man do anything in conversion? If so, what? (107)
4. Does this mean that man does it all? (108)
5. How does God bring life (regeneration) to someone? How does the metaphor of being "born again" reflect the reality of God's salvation? (110-113)

6. A.W. Tozer's wrote: "Human nature, as we know it, is in a formative state. It is being changed into the image of the thing it loves." What does this mean in your own words? What are the implications for you life? (116)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 5 (Evangelism)

1. How can churches foster the belief that every member, not just the pastors and staff, are to be about evangelism? Moreover, how can churches cultivate a heart for and practice of evangelism? What will you do to help? (122)
2. In your opinion, which of the six biblical guidelines mentioned on pages 126-128 is least emphasized today?
3. Dever encourages us to present coming to Christ in repentance and faith as something that is "costly," "urgent" and "worth it." What does he mean by each of these phrases? Do these terms characterize your evangelism? (126-129)
4. Explain why evangelism is not an imposition, a personal testimony, social action, apologetics or the results of sharing the gospel? (133)
5. In your own words, why should you be involved in evangelism? (138)
6. Is belief in "election" inconsistent with a passion for evangelism? If not, why not? What passage does Dever cite to support this? (143)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 2 (Beginning the Work)

1. Why do professing Christians need to hear the gospel? (43)
2. Dever writes: "What you win them *with* is likely what you'll win them *to*." What does this mean? Have you observed this in evangelicalism? How can churches and Christians avoid this mistake? (44)
3. What are the dangers of "meaningless membership?" (47-48)
4. What's another way to clarify the gospel besides gospel preaching? (49)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 3 (Doing Responsible Evangelism)

1. In your own, explain the logic behind the first paragraph on page 51.
2. What four words does Dever use to help remember the essence of the gospel message? Consider memorizing these four words as a gospel outline so you will be ready to speak of Christ to someone else. (51-52)
3. Why should we be concerned about how we encourage people to respond to the Gospel? (53-54)
4. Why is entertainment almost always problematic for proclaiming the gospel? (55)
5. Explain what is meant by God-centered evangelism? (56)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 6 (Church Membership)

1. What tendencies make our culture hostile to Christianity and, especially, church membership? (147-148) How have you seen this in your own life?
2. Dever describes a church as a body of professing Christians, in a local area, who give evidence of being saved, and who are freely committed to one another by a covenant. Based upon the Scriptures, would you add or delete something from this understanding of the term “church?” (149-150)
3. What reasons does Dever give for joining a church? Which is most compelling to you? Which is the most difficult for you to embrace? (150-152)
4. How often have you been taught that one of the main goals of your Christian life is to “build the church?” (157-158)
5. How do members of Capital Hill Baptist Church exhibit a life of repentance and belief in the gospel? (159-60)
5. What are the expectations/responsibilities of church membership at CHBC? (161)
6. What are the ramifications of having members who are uninvolved in the life of the church? (163)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 4 (Taking in New Members)

1. What passages would you cite in order to demonstrate that local church membership is a Biblical reality? (60-61)
2. What steps does Capital Hill Baptist take to receive new members? (61-65)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 5 (Doing Church Discipline)

1. How is “formative discipline” different from “corrective discipline?” What are some examples of formative discipline? (67)
2. What are examples of corrective discipline? (67-68)
3. Is all or most corrective discipline public? (68)
4. What context must exist within a local church for corrective discipline to be practiced in a healthy way? What analogy does Paul use to describe this? (69)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 7 (Biblical Church Discipline)

1. Dever writes: “What we actually need to do is to close the front door and open the back door!” What does he mean? What practical steps would your church have to take to move in this direction? (170)
2. What does Paul assume in writing 1 Corinthians 5:9-10? (171)

3. As you read through the passages on church discipline referenced on pages 172-178, what stands out to you about God? Sin's serious? The church's role?
4. How has the church's lack of discipline affected evangelism? (179)
5. Does church discipline contradict Jesus' command not to judge others? (187; *see also* 169-170)
6. Ponder the practical reasons a church should practice church discipline (188-192). Did any of these reasons surprise you? If so, which one? Why?

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 10 (Role of Ordinances)

1. What is happening in "baptism?" (105)
2. What is its primary function? (105)
3. What is the value of doing adult baptism versus infant/child baptism? (106)
4. What are the spiritual prerequisites for participation in the Lord's Table? (107)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 8 (Discipleship)

1. What are two ways a congregation can "grow?" (199-204)
2. Is numerical growth necessarily good? (201-02)
3. What biblical texts might you cite to argue that true church growth is about believers deepening in their faith? (202-204)
4. On pages 205-213, Dever summarizes the other eight marks of a healthy church. How do these other marks help a congregation grow?
5. Why is "Christian growth" not really optional? (214)
6. According to Jonathan Edwards, what is the only certain observable sign of true Christian growth? (215)
7. How does Dever understand the idea of "carnal Christians?" (217)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 9 (Roles of Different Gatherings)

1. At CHBC, what is the purpose of the "adult education hour?" (97)
2. At CHBC, what is the purpose of the "Sunday Morning Service?" (98)
3. Does any evangelism happen on Sunday morning? If so, why? (98-99)
4. At CHBC, what is the purpose of the "Sunday Evening Service?" (99)
5. At CHBC, what is the purpose of the "Wednesday Evening Service?" (100)

6. At CHBC, what is the purpose of the “Members’ Meetings?” (102)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 11 (Loving Each Other)

1. What’s the purpose of gathering the church? (108)
2. Explain the covenantal aspect of a local church community. Why is this crucial to forming any community in the New Testament sense of what it means to be a church? (110)
3. What would a church’s life together look like if everything that was done served “the functional centrality of the Gospel?” (110)
4. Why is the “corporate life” of the congregation so important? (110-111)
5. Explain the cross-cultural aspect of a local church community? (111)
6. How is a church to be cross-generational? (110)
7. Dever writes that “the *church itself* is God’s evangelism program.” Do you agree? What verse does Dever use to support his claim? What is the significance of the church’s corporate witness? (112)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 12 (Music)

1. What are some values of congregational singing? (116-117)
2. Explain the three guidelines Dever gives about congregational singing? (117-120)

9 Marks of a Healthy Church: Mark 9 (Leadership)

1. How does Dever demonstrate that a “congregational” form of church government (polity) is biblical? (221-23)
2. Within a plurality of elders, is there a role for a Senior Pastor? If so, what is it? (228-230)
3. How has secularization affected the church? What is the remedy for this problem? (231)
4. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (233; *cf.* 157-158)
5. If this is true, what should you do to help build up the body? How should you live with your fellow church members? What relationships should you initiate?

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 8 (The Role of the Pastor)

1. What are the two primary responsibilities of the pastor? (89-90)
2. Dever/Alexander write: “Teaching is everything. . . . What I mean is that everything that happens up front in a corporate worship gathering is part of the teaching ministry of the church. Everything teaches, whether you intend it or not?” What are the implications of this statement? (90; *see also* 83)
3. Pastoral ministry boils down to what three obligations? (94-95)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 13 (The Importance of Elders)

1. What is *the one* qualification difference between an elder and a deacon? (132)
2. What characteristics of an elder are shared with those of the congregation? (132)
3. What are the advantage of having a plurality of elders? Have you witnessed these benefits in your years as a church member? (133-134)

The Deliberate Church: Chapter 14 (Looking for a Few Good Men)

1. Do you *make* elders? (137)
2. Negatively, what is an elder “not?” (138-40)
3. Positively, what is an elder? (140)
4. Whether it is written down or not, your church has criteria for choosing its leaders. If you were to fill out a “Qualification Quadrant” for your church’s leaders, what things would you include? Think through all four areas. (141)