

[MJTM 23 (2021–2022)]

#### BOOK REVIEW

Collin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman. *Rediscover Church: Why the Body of Christ Is Essential*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021. 158 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1433579561. \$9.42.

In an ever-changing global context of the church, change is inevitable. In the book *Rediscover Church: Why the Body of Christ Is Essential*, Hansen and Leeman argue, with the intent to convince the reader, that everyone must learn to rediscover church (13). The writers make this proposition as a counter to those who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, racial unrest, and the recent election in America. In an already declining and seemingly deficient church pre-pandemic, Hansen and Leeman argue that the pandemic, racial unrest, and the election have expedited the process of a mass exodus within the church. If people are leaving the church in droves, the question that remains is: What is the future of the church? This is where rediscovering church can truly open the eyes of those who have been impacted by the cultural storm of chaos. This cultural storm of chaos has entered into our very churches, bringing division and disunity among the body of Christ. Division and disunity were not Jesus' focus when he was praying for all believers in John 17. John records, "I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity" (17:23a). If we are going to rediscover church, we must be unified under the purpose of the gospel. This is the heart of Hansen and Leeman. To demonstrate this further, Hansen and Leeman write, "You have many reasons not to rediscover church and one reason why you must: because through these people you don't like much, God wants to show his love to you" (18). This love is strong enough to bring unity to the church and restore the body of believers into a unifying worship experience.

Hansen and Leeman spend the rest of their book trying to unpack this by asking specific questions, which are then answered through their chapters. Their questions are: “What is the church?”; “Who can belong to a Church?”; “Do we really need to gather?”; “Why are preaching and teaching central?”; “Is joining necessary?”; “Is church discipline really loving?”; “How do I love members who are different?”; “How do we love outsiders?”; “Who leads?” They conclude with stating that you do not get the church you want, but something better (139). This is accomplished through a perspective that Hansen and Leeman use throughout the book. They say, “a church is a group of Christians, who assemble as an earthly embassy of Christ’s heavenly kingdom, to proclaim the good news and commands of Christ the King; and to display God’s own holiness and love through a united and diverse people in all the world, following the teaching and example of elders” (124).

The authors do a great job addressing the issue that the church has divided for many reasons—especially in recent years. They give a pastoral plea for believers to come back to church, understanding the importance of community and fellowship with other believers. Furthermore, the authors give reasoning to the importance of community by highlighting the value and power of physical gatherings. The gathering of people is revolutionary. They argue that gatherings are powerful because of the physical presence of people (46). In addition, Leeman writes, “Gathering offers a visible testimony for the whole world to see. It tells the world we are citizens of heaven” (47). This argument from Hansen and Leeman is a valid one. It is biblical. Although, a reliance on gathering for the whole world to see that Christians are citizens of heaven, is not necessarily the primary means of expressing this citizenship. Being a visible light in the world goes beyond just a gathering. Loving our neighbors well, caring for the poor, welcoming the sojourner—just to name a few—are examples of our citizenship in heaven being demonstrated apart from gathering. It is through the process of an active sanctification, that the world will see something different about Christians.

Gathering together is certainly the end goal—which is biblical—but life circumstances can alter the practicality of this reali-

ty. When the world is suffering through a global pandemic, affecting every individual, the plea to gather with an urgency may not be as effective as it seems. Rather, a posture of the heart towards Jesus is where we must begin. We cannot predict what this world will bring our way. And when we face uncontrollable realities, perhaps not given the opportunity to gather together, the church must learn to express their faith while living on mission, rather than directing all of the focus towards solely gathering.

*Rediscover Church* is an overall well-written book that engages the modern-day issues of church. Specifically, it addresses the brokenness of the Christian church due to the pandemic, racial unrest, and political turmoil. The idea of rediscovering church is profound and must be implemented as culture and society shift. Christians ought to rediscover church on a regular basis, not only according to cultural and societal shifts, but to evaluate our posture towards God and others. I would recommend *Rediscover Church* as a starting point for deeper conversation, but I would not suggest it as a primary resource to make decisions on where the church is headed.

Hansen and Leeman touch on a variety of crucial subject matters when accessing the modern church and the state in which the church may find itself. They do a great job surveying the issues in the church while calling people back to church so the gospel can continue to press forth. In doing so, the mission of the church will continue to play its role in history. The hope is that leaders in the church, as well as laypersons, would think critically about church, gathering at church, joining the church, and loving both the church and unchurched demographic.

Due to the state of the church today, this resource just does not give enough substance to the issues that are addressed. It is a great beginner's course to where the church must go, but it does not elaborate upon these issues to the degree that would promote holistic strides towards unity and reconciliation. *Rediscover Church* would truly help the church accelerate a heart for the gospel if alternatives to a traditional church gathering were given. Believers can express, live out, and shed light in this world outside of meeting in a building for spiritual formation and worship. These measures would allow for Hansen and Leeman's

Review: HANSEN & LEEMAN *Rediscover Church* R31

work to demonstrate thoughtful innovation, while facing the challenges of this world.

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