



The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline (IX Marks)

By Jonathan Leeman

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When the world speaks of "love," it often means unconditional acceptance. Many churches have adopted this mind-set in their practice of membership and discipline-if they have not done away with such structures entirely. "Yet God's love and God's gospel are different than what the world expects," writes Jonathan Leeman. They're centered in his character, which draws a clear boundary between what is holy and what is not. It's this line that the local church should represent in its member practices, because the careful exercise of such authority "is God's means for guarding the gospel, marking off a people, and thereby defining his love for the world."

So how should churches receive and dismiss members? How should Christians view their submission to the church? Are there dangers in such submission? *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love* responds with biblical, theological, and practical guidance-from both corporate and individual perspectives. It's a resource that will help pastors and their congregations upend worldly conceptions and recover a biblical understanding and practice of church authority.

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Review

"What happens when you bring together one of the most misunderstood subjects (love) and one of the most ignored practices (church membership and discipline) in the church today? A book like this one. Unlike the generation raised on Mr. Spock's child-rearing advice, the Good Shepherd cares for his flock by loving discipline. There is a lot of talk these days about radical discipleship, but what we need more today is a lot more ordinary discipleship, where we realize not only in theory but in practice what it means to be conformed to Christ's image. This is the best book I've seen on this subject in a long time."

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California; author, *Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God's Story*

About the Author

Jonathan Leeman (PhD, University of Wales) is the editorial director for 9Marks and an elder at Capitol Hill Baptist in Washington, DC. He has written for a number of publications and is the author or editor of a number books. He is also an occasional lecturer at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and teaches adjunctively for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Jonathan lives with his wife and four daughters in a suburb of Washington, DC.

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