



Confessions of a Reformation Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church

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This is the story of the birth and growth of Seattle's innovative Mars Hill Church, one of America's fastest growing churches located in one of America's toughest mission fields. It's also the story of the growth of a pastor, the mistakes he's made along the way, and God's grace and work in spite of those mistakes. Mark Driscoll's emerging, missional church took a rocky road from its start in a hot, upstairs youth room with gold shag carpet to its current weekly attendance of thousands. With engaging humor, humility, and candor, Driscoll shares the failures, frustrations, and just plain messiness of trying to build a church that is faithful to the gospel of Christ in a highly post-Christian culture. In the telling, he's not afraid to skewer some sacred cows of traditional, contemporary, and emerging churches. Each chapter discusses not only the hard lessons learned but also the principles and practices that worked and that can inform your church's ministry, no matter its present size. The book includes discussion questions and appendix resources. "After reading a book like this, you can never go back to being an inwardly focused church without a mission. Even if you disagree with Mark about some of the things he says, you cannot help but be convicted to the inner core about what it means to have a heart for those who don't know Jesus."—Dan Kimball, author, *The Emerging Church* "... will make you laugh, cry, and get mad ... school you, shape you, and mold you into the right kind of priorities to lead the church in today's messy world."—Robert Webber, Northern Seminary

Confessions of a Reformation Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church Details

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Gordon says

I heard Mark Driscoll speak about four months ago, and I found him to be an incredibly engaging and entertaining. When he says that he preaches b/n an hour and a hour and a half each Sunday, I believe it. BTW, I listened to one of his sermons the other day. It was incredibly informative and thought-provoking and also could have been edited by at least fifteen minutes, but I digress.

"Confessions of a Reformation Rev" is his book detailing the genesis of his Mars Hills Church in Seattle, WA. At first read his style is simultaneously funny and offensive, but the book's most compelling aspect is Marks' willingness to admit his mistakes. As a fellow church-planter, I know it is hard to say, "I should have done that differently," but one of the reason's that Mark's church has thrived is that he has been willing to address his mistakes (and avoid quiet a few) early on.

At the 1,200 attendee stage, Mark wrote a ten point manifesto about what would be necessary for his church to become what it needed to be. Mark felt Mars Hill needed to be 3,000 strong to effectively reach its community (it is now well over 10,000), and the only way to do it was to change the structure of everything. That also means that Mark risked everything as well. The chronicling of those changes is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in new-convert church growth.

I find Mark to be the emerging (notice the little "e" and not the big "E" of Emergent) church's John MacArthur. Mark is reformed in his soteriology, and he is also attractively arrogant about his opinions. Interestingly enough, JonnyMac has praised Mars Hill's doctrine but criticized their methodology. Either way, Mark is not going anywhere any time soon. Just like JonnyMac, he is beginning to publish at a fever pitch. He has six books being released this year alone. "Confessions" is a good intro to who he is.

Phil Whittall says

Confessions of a Reformation Rev is an interesting book, didn't take me too long to read (less than a week) of yet another mega-church in an American city, this time Seattle. Ok Seattle is the most unchurched in America with only 8% evangelical but I dream of 8% of any kind of Christian. For the UK to get up to 8% in any place would be an achievement. In my area if we get up to 8% most people would think revival has broken out. In my area if the church growth is spread out evenly among all the churches my church would have to double in size three times.

So I started off thinking 8% is pretty good what's he complaining about? So having got my complaint out of the way if you want the down to earth warts and all story of how a church grew from nothing to 4000+ in America then read this, otherwise don't bother. Driscoll shoots from the hip. A lot. If you're looking for thoughtful considered balanced language, if you're looking for dialogue and conversation this isn't the book for you. This young (ish) pastor with a young (ish) church into all the technology and music, is a straight down the line unapologetic Calvinist, Biblical literalist. If you don't like it, don't read it or lump it.

However Driscoll is well read, he is down to earth, he has given thought (lots of it) to how to lead and build his church, there are good insights and the man has earned his stripes. He's taken the hits and punches of

building the church and kept plugging away. There is much to learn and the honesty and humour keep you turning the pages.

At the end of the day though, that's the US and the UK is a different place and only some of the lessons I believe will cross the sea. Still I enjoyed it, glad I read it and would read more of his stuff. I learnt, was given food for thought and it probably helped me as a leader who is at the beginning of the journey.

Ryan Daniel says

The honesty and transparency that Driscoll shows in this book was quite surprising. The story of Mars Hill growing from house church to megachurch was a good read. Though it is said to say there are parts in the book that are red flags of things to come and show up in his "downfall."

Rob Markley says

He might have fallen out of favour but this is a stark and insightful view of the rise of Mars Hill church in Seattle. There is much to reflect on, if not perhaps as much that is practical to apply

Douglas Wilson says

I really enjoyed this book. Good food for thought. If a person knows how to distinguish between principles and methods, a lot here can transfer from one cultural setting to another.

Daniel Markin says

A fun read. Nobody said it like Driscoll used to.

Exodus Books says

Before it was a Seattle megachurch with 4000 regular attendees, Mars Hill Church was nothing. That should go without saying, but so should a lot of other things that most people don't think about, like the fact that starting a church is difficult business and often messy, or that it's actually right for people to leave your church if they aren't helpful or are causing division.

Mark Driscoll didn't really know anything about starting a church when he first began hosting meetings in his rented house. But he learned, and a lot of what he learned he includes in Confessions of a Reformation Rev. which is as much about the things he did (and continues to do) wrong as it is about the progress and successes of Mars Hill.

Part autobiography, part history of a local congregation, part ecclesiology and Christology, part manual for

those looking to start their own assembly, the common theme that runs through Confessions is that, to really be successful, a church must be utterly devoted to Christ. The title emphasizes this—Driscoll's account is full of admission to sins he's committed in the development of the church.

Each chapter (except Chapter Zero) looks at Mars Hill in its various incarnations as measured by Sunday attendance. (Chapter One covers 0-45 attendees, Chapter Two 45-75, etc.) Tracking numbers this way isn't arrogant, it's simply a way of categorizing the difficulties inherent in successive stages of church growth....though Driscoll admits to struggling with arrogance more than once.

Ultimately it is his candor that makes this book a success. Driscoll is equally open concerning mistakes and good choices—which is consistent with the purpose of this book. Not simply a chronicle, Confessions of a Reformission Rev. is for those starting or developing churches (it comes complete with discussion questions), though it is compelling and convicting reading for any Christian. This is a must-read for Christian leaders, regardless of denomination, church size or ministry style.

Josh Robinson says

What a ride. Only a church planter could read this book, and come away feeling like Driscoll is telling their own story, but in a different city and context. I was sort of creeped out at how many of these same things our church plant has struggled with. I appreciate Driscoll's transparency, and willingness to confess his personal sins during these seasons of Mars Hill. I also love Driscoll's writing style. There's only two pastors who's books I can pick up and not put down once I begin reading: That's Doug Wilson, and Mark Driscoll. Both are wordsmiths, and fun to read.

If you're a church planter, read this book, and hold on to your seat.

Andy says

It's like sitting down with Mark and having a conversation about everything he learned starting his church - Mars Hill. There's some great information in here and it was very eye opening to read about the things he encountered during the early years of his church. Anyone looking to start a church plant would probably benefit from his stories - at least in giving perspective...it's a mess.

An update would be super interesting given how much has happened since this book was published. He resigned, Mars Hill split into individual churches and he's already planted a new church Trinity Church in Scottsdale.

Sarah says

At the time I read this, I liked this book more than I do now. However, I've changed since then, and thus find some of Driscoll's opinions to be less appealing or valid than I did in March. It is a fascinating story of the beginning of a church that started out small and grew very large. VERY large. One of his main points (that I

actually remember months later) was that the "Church" should be large and that small churches just aren't as good. Meh. Statements such as that one and others like it don't resonate well for long after reading.

Sean says

This is an account of how 25-year-old Mark Driscoll started a Bible study in his living room with a few couples in 1996 and ended up the pastor of a 5000-person megachurch ten years later. Driscoll is rather controversial in and out of the Evangelical community for his somewhat hot-headed approach to ministry, but he tells a good story, and presents an insightful account of the struggles experienced while building a successful church. Driscoll also makes it clear that the job of a pastor is often a brutal, demanding and thankless job, and the only way to survive as one is through constant prayer and a complete reliance on Jesus Christ.

Finally, whatever his failings are, Driscoll has one thing going for him over many contemporary Christian pastors and teachers - he's really funny. One chapter is titled, "Jesus, If Someone Calls My House Again at 3 AM, I Will Be Seeing You Real Soon", and describes a scene from his church's early days this way: "We had one woman show up from a Pentecostal church nearby who felt the Holy Spirit would call her to jump on stage with [Mars Hill Church's punk rock worship band] and shake a tambourine and 'praise flag' everywhere....whenever she did this I would sit in the front row with my head in my hands, begging Jesus to rapture her before the end of the set."

Rod says

This book would make alot of Christians angry...therefore its a good book. It makes you think and challenge everything you've ever know about running a successful Church.

It didn't give me the answers I was hoping for, but it wasn't supposed to. It was supposed to show you the answers Mark was looking for when building HIS church.

A very enjoyable read.

Toby says

Again, this is really somewhere between a 3 and a 4, but there are a number of really helpful things in this book, especially for pastors and church planters. I have my quibbles, and he certainly doesn't cover all of the areas of church life and church planting. But there's a lot of good stuff here.

Andrew Fox says

The captivating theme of Confessions of a Reformissional Rev. compels the reader to grasp the concept of a Missional Church, not in theory, but throughout a practical journey of painful and delightful growth. The seven stages of church growth embrace both character and competence, in that order, without appearing to end the learning process. The preamble of ten questions provokes the reader to evaluate what type of church they pastor: traditional, contemporary or missional. Further still, the reader is challenged to personally

examine the expression of their church: liberal, fundamental or missional. The parallel of personal life with professional work opened a window of rare opportunity to see the life of Mars Hill Church. From its basic structural foundations as a Ministry Matrix, all the way through to the present day, Mars Hill has an ongoing recognition and release of elders, and it does not lose sight of the DNA that drives the leadership - Missional Ministry. Authentic perspectives of personal character came through strong with imaginative resemblance to the animal kingdom. This metaphor was useful in recognizing future leaders by anticipating their limitations and influence.

The importance placed on masculinity and its place within the home and church was obvious. It was clear throughout the learning curve of each growth stage that masculinity was a priority when choosing leaders. This was reflected in who Mark allows access to his personal life and to the structure around him. The constant theme of 'why' the church exists maintained, and even grew in its clarity through the cycle of a Creative Phase. This was either forced upon the church or consciously chosen by the leadership to maintain the focus of being missional. Throughout each stage of growth traditional forms of ministry were challenged. From the church service(s) to 'who does the ministry,' he aligns a missional focus by maintaining a conservative theology and holding firmly to fundamental truths of scripture. This created a refreshing and pleasantly troubling thought process. The result was a definite clarity to why, how and where we do church.

Who Jesus is, church structure, mission and ministry were the key strategy points that everything else flowed from, and did not change as the church grew. Mark's well thought out process of developing and implementing the Missional Matrix holds up when examined by scripture. (1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Luke 15:2; Exodus 4:2) Again, the parallel of theory and practice were presented, not in hindsight, but constantly in the present moment.

The humor and narrative was open and honest, but I found myself in disagreement with a character issue. (Ephesians 5:4; 1 Timothy 4:12) I am unsure what Mark means by 'cussing' at people. He does not clarify if that was literal, imagined or inferred, although he is mentioned in Donald Miller's book as a 'cussing' pastor. With an outstanding body of written work and a church model in practice, my hope would be the promotion of Christ by reputation and not by worldly dialogue.

The book is a perfect fit for an ongoing narrative about church and culture. Its approach is an excellent tool for individuals wanting to plant a church, those who already pastor a church and want to plant out from the church, those who work on a team, and a congregation who wants to understand more about their leaders. It is far broader in its appeal than one man's narrow perspective.

If the vernacular Mark uses can be filtered with common sense and humor, his excellent and Biblical approach to a Missional church is both commanding and authentic. No doubt, various trends of subjective Christianity will be challenged and even offended, as Mark points out himself, by reading this book or by attending Mars Hill church. However, with the absence of political overtones or hidden denominational agenda's, this body of work is challenging and soundly written for all levels of church leadership and emerging leaders to form or reform a strong missional church that thinks generationally.

Brett McNeill says

Mark Driscoll presents his vision for the Emerging Church. While this the Emerging movement is far better than the Emergent, the problem remains that this is basically a SaddleBack ecclesiology geared toward twenty-something-urbanites rather than Mercedes driving baby-boomer-suburbanites. The goal is basically

'find out what people want and give it to them and drop anyone who slows you down.' So far from the biblical image of pastor as shepherd, this book drives the pastor into celebrity styled seclusion.
