

## **Loving the Church You Lead**

by David Hansen

David Hansen is a Baptist pastor in Ohio.  
This book is his story.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word PASTOR means shepherd.  
The picture for shepherd is all through the Bible.  
Abraham.  
David.  
Jesus.

And we see in the Bible, a shepherd loves his flock.

Our flock is the church.

Sometimes churches have problems and conflicts.  
Maybe they are all nice Christian people, and we love each one.  
But in that group, they have tension.  
They have disagreements that make blocks for fellowship and service.

Sometimes those nice Christian people have grudges against each other, that they hold forever.

One small church I served had a bad history.  
All their pastors stayed only a short time.  
One woman in the church told me a long story, complaining about those pastors.  
I told the woman, "I understand that some pastors are clueless. But do you think that your church also might have some fault, also?"

The woman answered. "No." She never thought about that.

That can happen.  
Nice Christian people working against each other, because they each have strong opinions.

And for a pastor, working with each person is fine.  
But working with the whole group - that's hard.  
And feeling love for the group can become really hard.  
And for those congregations, feeling love for their pastor can also be hard.  
And that can make a pastor feel like he has failed.

None of us deserve love.  
But God loves us,

and His gift of love shows through us.

## **CHAPTER 1**

One church I served was in a small town in Montana.  
The town and church were about 100 years old.

People in that town rejected anyone with a false face.  
If you don't know their culture, stay quiet and listen.

One time during church dinner, a group of men were talking about chain saws.

I joined the conversation and offered my opinion.

One man looked at me and laughed.

"Look at the preacher, talking about chain saws. Ha!"

I answered, "I cut three cords of wood to pay for my chain saw.  
And for the last three years, I cut wood to heat my home."

"Oh. So you really do know about chain saws. Okay."

He let me join the conversation. And he respected my opinion.

People came to church in their regular work clothes.

Teenage boys served the church, collecting the offering,  
wearing their football clothes,  
cut-off gym clothes,  
and cut-off tee shirt

People accepted that. No problem.

They all loved football.

Those boys' clothing fit that culture.

So, it happened, on Sunday morning, one mom approached me and said, "Last night, our boys arrived home from their game late. And this morning they woke up late. They did not have enough time to shower. Their hair is a mess. I hope you don't care that they wear their baseball hats in church."

Fine. No problem for me. I am happy those boys want to come to church.

So the boys wore their hats that Sunday.

And the next week Sunday.

And the next week Sunday.

After about a month, church members started to complain.

"I wish those boys would not wear their hats in church."

That's not polite.  
That's not nice."

People asked my opinion, and I told them.  
Those hats don't bother me.

During four months, tension grew.  
But I did not notice.

I wanted to protect that family, so I became blind to everyone else's feelings.

Then I Sunday, one man, who himself had long hair, and rode a motorcycle.  
He came to the front of the church and asked the boys.

Please take off your hats, for respecting God's house.

The boys refused.

The man asked again.

The boys refused again.

The boy's step father saw what was happening.  
He came in, sat down next to his boys, and put on his hat.  
Discussion finished.

No, not really.

That week, people's feelings exploded.

Some people supported the boys and their father.

Some people supported the motorcycle man.

Of course, I supported that family.

Actually, I was afraid of that family.

I wrote a letter to the church, that said, "Do we really want to establish a church dress code?  
We draw the line, where?  
Will we require women to wear dresses? and men wear suits and ties?"

God gives us responsibility to share the Good News about Jesus, and not fight about silly  
little things like baseball hats.

Some future day, maybe one kid in a baseball hat that comes to church wanting to learn about Jesus, may be your child, or your grand children."

People did not respond to my letter. They were quiet.  
Except one person in that family told me, "Thanks for standing on our side."  
That should have warned me about a deeper problem, that I overlooked.

That motorcycle man knew something that I did not understand.  
He knew that men show respect by taking off their hats.

In our town men kept their hats on in restaurants, in their homes, during music programs.

But when the American flag is presented, their hats come off.

During funeral grave side services, men had their hats on.  
Until the time for prayer.  
Then their hats came off.

Out in the world, they show their independence with their hats on.  
But in church, they show their respect for God, how? Hats off.  
That was a very deep part of the culture, and I did not understand that.

Those boys and their family knew that, but I didn't.  
Most members in our church said nothing.  
They did not agree with me, but they respected me, and they let me lead my own way.  
So they sat quiet.

But tension in our church increase, and increased.  
That tension interfered with our worship and fellowship.

I discussed the problem with that family.  
They refused to change.

I was stuck. I didn't know what to do.

I called two other pastors, my good friends, that I respected.  
I told them about our problem.  
They both said the same thing.  
"You need to save your church. Go to those boys privately and ask them to take off their hats.  
They will respect your authority."

I knew they were right.  
I faced a really hard question.  
Am I a pastor for only individual Christians?  
Or am I a pastor for the congregation?

I went to the boys during a time that I knew their parents were not home. And I asked them to please take their hats off for respect to the feelings of the church members. They said yes, and they felt relieved.

But, when their parents heard what I did, they exploded. They quit the church, and their whole family went with them. We lost about 15 percent of church attendance.

But in two weeks, their places were filled again with other people. And after that, we continued to grow.

The church council agreed with my decision. Then I understood that my first big mistake was trying to solve the problem myself. I acted like I was the hero.

Way back in the beginning, I should have taken the question about the baseball hats to the church council, and let them work through the problem. Because they understood their culture better than I did.

I was afraid to do that, why? Members of that family were on the church council. That didn't matter. They can work through the problem together.

My second mistake.

I needed to learn more about their culture.

We could figure out a way for those boys to express their freedom in Christ, without offending people around them.

My third mistake.

I let my concern for individuals cloud my concern for the congregation. I got mixed up in family connections that hurt, not helped, our church.

I learned that a pastor can love both the individual members, and the whole congregation.

The church has responsibility to shine Christ's love to the community.

No one member, no family, no pastor has any right to dim that light.

## **CHAPTER 2**

That experience about the hats taught me an important lesson about love.

I loved that family. And I felt hurt that they were angry against me, and decided to leave the church.

If you show love, and the people you love hurt you, then showing love again is hard.

We protect ourselves by closing our hearts.

We do our job for church work.

But we don't care about the people.

This chapter focuses on two words: **love** and **ambivalence**.

That word means:

don't care,  
have no feeling,  
can't decide.

Sometimes in my work, people ask me. "Pastor, how are you. Really?"

If I tell them honestly, often they answer.

"Stop complaining. My problems are worse than yours."

I feel hurt.

I promise myself that I will never tell them again.

If I break my promise, and show my feelings, I always get hurt again.

Showing love is really hard.

Often I become bitter --

bitter against people  
bitter against God.

Bitterness is bad.

But ambivalence is worse.

If you are bitter, you are facing your problem, and trying to manage it.

If you are ambivalent, you have no motivation. You have no love.

You can't progress.

You become open for sexual relationships.

Yes, pastoral work is hard. Pastoral work hurts.

Pastoral work always has conflicts.

And conflicts don't become resolved through love, and good sense.

Can we serve as pastors without love?

For many professions, they don't require love.

Are pastors the same?

If you have no love, You can still teach.

If you have no love, you can still preach.

If you have no love, you can still do religious things.

But if you have no love, you can't really serve

Loving is really hard.  
No. Loving is impossible.  
But Christ loves all people.  
And He shows His love, how?  
Through us.

Jesus said,

*You Remain in me, and I will remain in you.  
A branch cannot produce fruit alone but must remain in the vine.  
In the same way, you cannot grow fruit alone but must remain in me.  
I am the vine, and you are the branches.  
If you remain in me and I remain in you, you grow much fruit.  
But without me you can do nothing.*

A pastor's heart has two desires.  
First, a pastor desires fellowship with Christ.  
Second, a pastor desires to lead other people to Christ.

Our love for Christ is spiritual.  
And that love inspires us to physical action.

Jesus said.

*I loved you as the Father loved me. Now remain in my love. I have obeyed my Father's commands, and I remain in his love. In the same way, if you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have and so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy.*

*This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you. The greatest love a person can show is to give up his life his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Question:

Jesus said, "Remain in my love."  
Remain in His love, means what?

Jesus answer that question. He said,

*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love.*

And His command is, what? He said,

*This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.*

And Jesus explains what love means. He says,

*The greatest love a person can show is to give up his life for his friends.*

Give up your life.

One meaning for that is dying.  
And it maybe happen that we may die while saving someone. But we can only do that once.  
You know war stories.  
A hand grenade flies into the fox hole.  
On soldier jumps on it before it explodes.  
He dies. His friends are saved.  
But he can do that only once.

After we die, we are finished! No more 2nd, 3rd, 4th times.

But pastors offer their lives in service to people for a long time relationship.

Why? Because Jesus does that through us.

We resist love. Yes, we resist Christ.  
So Christ must first conquer us.

For 18 years He has be struggling with me.  
My heart is hard.  
So He must break my heart.  
He must break my apathy.  
He must teach me how to love.  
The next four chapters explains different kinds of love that Christ gives us for showing His love for the church.

### **CHAPTER 3**

Our first word for love is a Hebrew word.  
In English we spell that word, HESED.

That word has a smooth sound.

That word has several translations in the English Bible.

Love.  
Kindness.  
Mercy.

The central meaning is promise, staying with a friend.

In the KJV Bible, we see the translation word. "loving kindness."  
That's good.

NIV translates HESED only using the word, "love."  
That's right, but weak.

RSV translates that word, "strong staying love."



That's good.  
That communicates promise-keeping love.

In the story about Moses on the mountain, God said about Himself,  
*"The Lord is merciful and kind, slow becoming angry, having exceeding love, and faithful."*

Psalm 94 says,  
*"I thought that my feet are slipping. But Lord, Your strong staying love supports me."*

Psalm 51 says,  
*"Have mercy on me, O God. According to your strong staying love. According to your exceeding mercy. Remove my sins."*

Strong staying love, means stubborn love.  
That's God's love.  
God sacrificed His Son for us.  
He did not enjoy that sacrifice.  
But He loves that much.  
He everything necessary for keeping us in His love.

God's love unites Him to His people.

To Abraham.

To Israel.

To Paul, who said.

*I know that nothing can separate us from His love.  
Life can't. Death can't. Angels can't. Evil spiritual rulers can't.  
Things now, and things in the future can't.  
Things powerful can't.  
Things high, and things low can't.  
Nothing in the whole world can separate us from his love, in Christ Jesus our  
Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)*

That's HESED -- Love that will never separate.  
That's a pastor's love for his congregation.

We see that love in Moses.  
Sure, he complained a lot about the People of Israel.  
But when God said that He wanted to destroy them, Moses prayed.  
*Lord, you brought those people out from Egypt.  
We saw your strong power, your strong hand.  
If you destroy Israel, People in Egypt will say, quote.  
God led them out so He could destroy them.  
Lord, calm your anger.  
Remember your promise to Abraham. Isaac. and Jacob.  
You told them that their children will become a great nation.  
You promise to give them that land forever.*

Then God said he changed his plans, and did not destroy Israel.

That prayer of Moses shows God's strong staying love.  
We can pray to God for our people in the same way.  
That touches His heart.

Romans chapter 8 talks about prayer that is too deep, words can't express.  
But the Holy Spirit expresses those prayers that touch God's heart.  
Prayers that cry out, "Daddy! Abba!"

God's love for us stays strong through rough times.  
So also, a pastor's love for his congregation stays strong through rough times.

In my service to two small churches in Montana, their prior pastors all stayed a short time --  
average 3 and one half years.  
Old members remembered one really good pastor back in the 1950s. He stayed eight years.  
They had good memories about him. But all the other pastors? No.

One man told me. "Preacher, you won't stay here long."

Immediately, I answered, "You will be dead, before I leave."  
Well, when I later left, he was not dead.  
But he and his wife already moved out of town before me.

I think my answer made me determined that I will stay, no matter the hard times.

But church people had a hard time connecting with me.  
Previous pastors hurt them so many times.  
They expected the same from me.

A strange thing happened.  
People became very uncomfortable with me.  
They started criticizing me.  
But they also told my wife that that if we leave, they will be heart-broken.

Why was that happening?

They expected me to quit. They were used to that. They knew how to manage that situation.  
But I didn't quit. And they didn't know what to do.  
They were not comfortable, because that was new experience for them.

Their church stayed strong for 100 years, not because they had good pastors.  
The church stayed strong because the members had commitment.  
Yes, they were stubborn, in a good way.

Me, too.  
I decided that I will stay stubborn, too.

The old members, began remembering their favorite pastor back in the 1950s, connecting him to me.

He was good. He stayed.  
I also stayed.  
So, maybe I am good, too.

After that, members began to warm up, and open up.  
They began trusting me, and sharing their heart with me.  
And the church succeeded doing much.  
All because I showed them HESED -- strong, staying, love.

#### **CHAPTER 4**

When I graduated from seminary, I was young pastor. In my first church, one family had a grandmother near death. I never visited that family. Was I lazy? No. I was scared. I didn't know what do. I didn't understand that in that situation, doing something is not necessary.

Be there.  
That was important.  
But I didn't.

When the woman died, I felt so embarrassed, that I never visited them. I never phone them. They did not ask me to do the funeral.

Through the years, that family never said anything to me about that.  
I assume they did not blame me, because they knew I was a kid without a brain.

Now I understand why I failed.  
But I can never forget that I failed.

Now, when someone is sick in the hospital,  
my memory about my past failure urges me to go visit.

I admit that I am still not comfortable.  
But I go. Not because I have compassion..  
I go, because my conscience pesters me.

When I fail in my service to church members, they forgive and forget.  
But my conscience never forgets.

So I go. Not because I love.  
But when I arrive, I connect with those people. And love happens.

And God's Holy Spirit touches, and He gives us prayers for healing.

Strange. I go visiting people with problems, feeling upset because I am missing my football game on TV. But I come back home feeling blessed, and knowing God used me to bless those people.

Is that hypocritical?

No. That's human.

We read in the Bible how often people met Jesus, asking him to heal. Jesus saw their situation. He saw them. And He had compassion. That happens to us, also.

God's compassion for us sent Jesus to live among us, suffer and die for us. Now God's compassion spreads through us.

The Greek word for compassion is, SPLAGCHNA.

That word means,

Stomach.

Guts.

Feelings down deep inside.

That's the compassion Jesus showed to Mary and Martha, when their brother died. Martha wanted to discuss theology, so Jesus answer with theology -- connecting her brother's death with His own resurrection.

Mary cried, so Jesus answered with tears.

The Old Testament Hebrew word for compassion is RACHAM.

That word means, WOMB.

God's compassion is like a woman's love for the baby in her womb.

Psalms 103 says,

*As a father has compassion (racham) for his children.*

*so also the Lord has compassion (racham) for those who honor Him.*

*Because He remembers that we are only dust.*

God passes that compassion on to pastors.

Paul wrote, *"We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her children."*

Some church traditions name their pastors "Father" for a good reason.

In our work as pastors, people pour out their guts, their grief and confusion.

What do you do?

Have compassion. That's all.

One time I had a wedding for 16 year old girl. She was pretty and pregnant.

I tried to keep my head cool, but my last thought before the wedding was,  
"Do this wedding the same as I would for my own daughter."  
Ouch!

I notice several older couples there, knowing that their married life together, strong, began the same way.

The girl came down the aisle. She shone.  
Her husband smiled.  
Mom cried.  
Dad grimaced.

And I choked.

What do I do? Continue my work with a hard, cold heart, like a government judge, a JP?  
Or do I jump in with compassion?

I decided to have love, no matter the awkwardness.

Loving Compassion makes us vulnerable.  
Loving compassion helps people heal.  
Hospitals learned that, and nurses became nice people.

One time a young woman stayed after worship. She asked, "Can we talk? Now?"  
Sure.

We sat in the pew, and she poured out her story.  
"All through my growing up, my father and uncle both molested me,  
until I left home to join the army.  
How can God let that happen?"

Then she cried.

Then she waited for my answer.

"I don't know."

She was stunned. "What do you mean, you don't know?"

I told her, "The reason I said, I don't know, is because, really, I don't know why things like that happen. Why does anything bad happen? God doesn't tell me."

Loving Compassion forced me to become honest.

If I answered her question with a theological right answer, that won't help heal her pain.  
If I say, God had nothing to do with what happened to you,  
that is like saying, "God does not exist."

As a Pastor serving hurting people, I have two choices.  
Either, I can play God.  
Or I can bring God.

Playing God means, I fix problems. I have answers.  
Bringing God means, I have loving compassion.

The word, COMPASSION comes from two Latin words, meaning, "suffer together."

After we talked a while, that woman said, "I have a problem in church. When we say the Lord's prayer? I can't say, Our Father. I can't."

I answered, "That's okay. God understands."

She said, "Do you mean that God won't strike me dead?"

I said, "No. But don't be surprised that some day you will feel comfortable enough to tell Him, 'Our Father.' That may take time. There's no hurry."

God's Compassion, His womb feelings, His guts pour out --  
That gives people hope.  
That gives people healing.

What makes people doubt God? Because they see evil in the world.  
Right answers won't give them faith. But compassion will.

So I continue going to visit sick people in the hospital, because that's my duty.  
But in my obedience, God shows compassion. People see that God loves them.

## **CHAPTER 5**

Our church had one old member name Mr. Jones. He had been a rough hard working farmer, and he had rough personality. He had a nurse caring for him full time. She brought him to church regularly.

Mr. Jones was almost blind and almost deaf. During worship he would talk very loudly to his nurse. Often he cursed and said about me, "Who is he?"

During my sermons, he would curse again, and ask his nurse, "Isn't he finished yet?"

Our members were patient with Mr. Jones. They understood his rough ways.

But I was afraid that visitors often did not return, because of Mr. Jones.

But when Mr. Jones' health became worse and he eventually died, our church attendance did not increase.

Strange. Our church accepted Mr. Jones cursing loudly during worship. But they couldn't accept young people in baseball caps.

Question: Can I like that situation?

When I first began my ministry, I didn't think I needed to like my church. I was wrong.

Every church has something hard to love.

My church had one group of people who like to sit quietly in church before worship, and the other group who liked to sit in the pews and chat before worship.

One group wanted prayer and meditation. That was good.

The other group wanted fellowship. That was good.

People from each group came to me, the pastor, and wanted me to act like a policeman, to make the other people change.

They were all nice people who loved God. But the situation? I didn't like it.

The Greek word for "like" is PHILOS.

Question: Did Jesus like the people that he help?

We know the Greek word AGAPE.

That word means love. God's love.

Contrast that with human love.

Philos

Like

Friend

But the religious leaders did not crucify Jesus because loved the wrong people.

They crucified him because he liked them. He befriended them.

Remember that the accused him, "He is a friend with sinners."

*PHILOS*. "And he eats and drinks with sinners."

The way Jesus showed *agape* love was to like, befriend, those people that He loved.

John the baptizer preached to sinners.

But Jesus loved them. He loved them with *philos*.

Translate that to Pastors and churches.

Any pastor can preach to a church.  
But the church needs their pastor's love.  
They need him to like them, same as Jesus did.

Jesus calls us to show His *agape* love.  
But we show that *agape* love, how?  
In real human *philos*.

[The book has a long quotation from Proverbs chapter 8.]  
Verse 31 says,

*I, wisdom, was His delight.  
Rejoicing before him always.  
Rejoicing in His world, among people.  
Delighting with people.*

If I, a pastor, cannot delight with people, I cannot serve as a real pastor.  
If I have no sense of humor, that will kill my service.  
We cannot lead people to God.  
*Agape* shows *philos*.

If we learn how to like that church that we serve,  
we learn how to love people for the church's benefit.

If we focus on the church first, our friendships in the church stay balanced.  
Really important is proper friendship with women in the church.

But some churches are grouchy. Loving them is hard.

Every church is strong for something good.  
That church that loved old Mister Jones, no matter all his cursing.  
Their strength was staying love for each other.

But I have learned that a church's strength is also they biggest problem.

My church loved Mr. Jones.  
But they blew up about baseball caps.

Churches that have doctrine for the strength. They fight and split, for what? Doctrine.  
Churches that have fellowship for the strength. They fight and split, for what? Fellowship.  
Churches that have mission for the strength. They fight and split, for what? Mission.

That church's strength, we call that their "genius."



Pastors must understand, accept, and like their church's strength.

Sometimes that means pastors must teach and discipline their church for the strength.

Proverbs has many verses that explain how friends challenge each other.

If People that we don't know criticize us, we don't care.  
But if our friends criticize us, we pay attention.  
Maybe their criticism hurts, but it also helps.

Only pastors who like their church can successfully discipline them.

We notice that in Jesus words to two churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3.

Jesus told the church in Laodicea,  
*I warn you.*  
*and I discipline those people that I love. Philo.*  
*Pay attention, and repent.*

Jesus told the church in Ephesus.  
*I know that you endure suffering for my name.*  
*You stay strong.*  
*But I have one thing against you.*  
*In the past you had strong love.*  
*But now you are cold.*

If we look in the Bible, we see a difference between prophets, and shepherds (pastor).

Prophets can preach judgment.  
Prophets don't need to like those people.

But only a shepherd can discipline.

That role for a pastor is not comfortable.  
But role requires love.

## **CHAPTER 6**

So far we have studied about three kinds of love that a pastor must have for his congregation.

HESED -- strong staying love.  
RACHAM -- compassion, love mercy.  
PHILOS -- like, friendship.

Now, fourth, we look at the most important love. AGAPE.

The first three loves are pleasurable.

The fourth love is hard and rough.

The fourth love expresses real sacrifice.

We know AGAPE. Love, how?

John 3, 16.

*God loved [AGAPE] so much, that He gave His only Son [sacrifice].  
Everyone believing in Him, will not perish, but will have life forever.*

Christ's death on the cross, His sacrifice for us. That's AGAPE.

Every moment in that story in His suffering, we see AGAPE working.

Paul also shows us that AGAPE love is not easy for us.

First Corinthians, chapter 13.

*Maybe I give all my earthly things and money to poor people, and offer my life.*

*But if I have no love, I earn nothing.*

*True love is patient.*

*Love is kind.*

*Love is-not jealous*

*Love doesn't boast [brag: I-I-I]*

*Love is-not proud.*

*Love is not rude.*

*Love is not selfish.*

*Love doesn't anger quickly.*

*Love doesn't keep a list of wrong things other people do.*

*Love is not happy about evil.*

*Love is happy about TRUTH.*

*Love never gives-up,*

*never stops believing,*

*never lets hope dissolve.*

*True love remains and remains.*

*Love never ends.*

Paul takes away our favorite sins.

Then he says AGAPE love never gives up, never stops believing, never losing hope.

Those words "never" are a problem for me.

AGAPE hurts.

AGAPE makes me worn out.

Jesus said,

*My commandment is that you love [agape] one another, same as I love you.  
No greater love is this, giving your life for your friend.*

We know what love means, because Jesus gave His life for us.

Christ calls us to love our congregations.  
We don't die on the cross for them. Christ's sacrifice is enough.

But we follow Christ.

He continues loving our church through us.

He shows *agape* love in us, through all three of those other kinds of love.

Agape love does not happen from feeling.  
Agape love happens from decision.  
His decision and our obedience.

Many professions can do that work without love.  
But pastors cannot become shepherds without love.

We cannot really become Christ's shepherds for people that we don't like.  
We must learn to love them.

Sometimes AGAPE love means we stay in a hard situation, so people can experience His love,  
while we offer Him our lives.

But sometimes AGAPE love means that God wants us to leave.

Some churches really destroy their pastors.  
We must leave them.

The decision is His. And we must stay sensitive for His leading.

The church quite simply is the body of believers all around the world who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In a world that is often very dark, and in times that we know the end is drawing nearer, may we be found faithfully praying for one another until Christ's return. Here are 10 powerful prayers for the church. Jesus gave us the best example as He prayed for those who followed Him. Paul also left us prayers written for the churches he had visited over time. The truth that rings through all is this: "Keep on praying" (Matthew 7:7), "Pray at all times" (Ephesians 6:18), "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It's that important. So, if we're called to pray for the "church," what is the church, exactly? Loving the Church You Serve with Carl Kuhl. Thanks for joining us for this week's unSeminary podcast. Today we're talking with church planter and lead pastor Carl Kuhl from Mosaic Christian Church in Maryland. Mosaic was planted in the fall of 2008, launching first in a movie theater, and has become one of the fastest growing churches in the country. When planting a new church, many leaders are tempted to copy culture from other churches and then create systems of their own. In the main, these are people who love the church and ache for it to be better, and standing up against the LDS behemoth can be heart-breaking. Expelling, shunning and villifying those who ache for the church to better fulfill its promise of goodness and kindness, justice and grace, community amidst diversity, inclusivity, tolerance and charity, honesty and transparency "is nothing short of Orwellian. Excommunication is a crude and medieval response to heresy and dissidence." Church discipline as a consequence of activism, questioning, and critique is futile because it will only lead to an explosion of dissatisfaction and yet another wave of our friends and family choosing to leave. I could not have designed a more successful bad publicity campaign for the church myself. Love the Church With Your Mind. Your thoughts (mind) reveal your heart, and your heart determines your thoughts. In that way you can self-diagnose: If you are not sure how much you love your church (heart), examine your thoughts (mind) about your church. What do you think about your church? What you think about your church will reveal the depth of love you have for your church. Jesus said it this way in Luke 6:45, "Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Rick Thomas leads a training network for Christians to assist them in becoming more effective soul care providers. RickThomas.Net reaches people around the world through consulting, training, podcasting, writing, counseling, and speaking. In 1990 he earned a BA in Theology, and in 1991 he received a BS in Education.