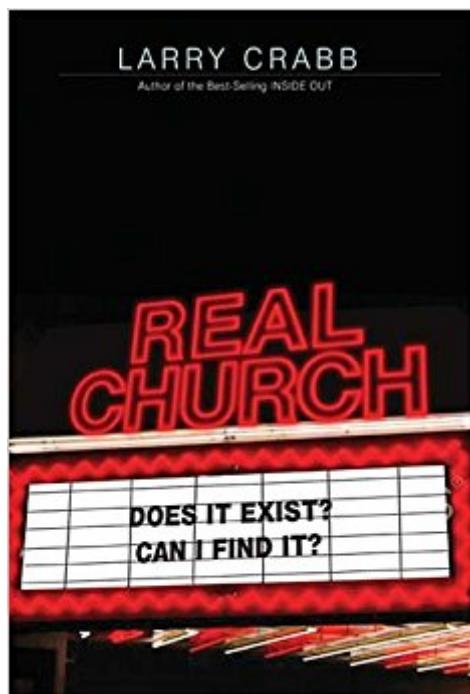


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# Real Church: Does It Exist? Can I Find It?



## **Synopsis**

"Church as I know it usually leaves deep parts of me dormant, unawakened, and untouched. I don't much like going. So, what now?" What's happening to the Church? Why are so many people who for decades have been faithful, steady churchgoers (and others who want to start going to church but can't seem to find one that meets their needs) losing interest in even attending church, let alone getting involved? What is fundamentally wrong with the "types" of churches (Seeker, Bible, Emergent, Liberal, Evangelical) that dot the religious landscape? Larry Crabb believes it is time to rethink the entire foundation and focus of what we know today as church -- everything we're doing and are wanting to see happen. In his most honest and vulnerable book to date, the author reveals his own struggles in this area and then offers a compelling vision of why God designed us to live in community with Him and others, and what the church he wants to be a part of looks like.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Dr. Larry Crabb is a well-known psychologist, conference and seminary speaker, Bible teacher, popular author, and founder/director of NewWay Ministries. He is currently Scholar in Residence at Colorado Christian University in Denver and Visiting Professor of Spiritual Formation for Richmont Graduate University in Atlanta. Dr. Crabb and his wife of forty-six years, Rachael, live in the Denver, Colorado area. For additional information please visit [www.newwayministries.org](http://www.newwayministries.org)

Sometimes, after we have made it through the first few pages or chapters of a book, the only thing

that keeps us going is the reputation of the author. For me, *Real Church: Does It Exist? Can I Find It?* (2009, Thomas Nelson) by Larry Crabb was just such a book. I have read nearly all of Dr Crabb's books and had the honor of receiving spiritual direction from him. It would not be too much to say that he has been one of the most important influences upon my thinking about church, relationships, and life. But when I began *Real Church*, I found myself uncomfortable. In the early pages of the book, he boldly claims that he has essentially grown tired of church and really doesn't want to go church. When I read his words, several different things stirred in me. I still like going to church. Every week, so I have a hard time relating when he says he doesn't want to be there. I also found myself pondering the more general question, "is he allowed to say that and still call himself a Christian? I mean, is it okay?" (Dr Crabb has a way of writing things honestly that most people are reluctant to voice). I have to admit, if this book was written by a different author, I don't know that I would have continued beyond the first few chapters. But this was Larry, a man whose wisdom I have come to value. I am glad I persisted. After writing about what makes him uncomfortable with the modern church, he sets out to explore what church could be, a community of honest believers, sharing in one another's struggles over the long haul, all while giving glory to God. The picture he paints would be radical to most churchgoers; for example, he proposes spending ten minutes at the opening of church with everyone journaling about where they are at in the moment (their red dot) and then inviting people to share. Radical, but refreshing. I suspect if you are accustomed to the American status quo, this book may unsettle you, but give it a chance. What Dr Crabb is envisioning could be transformative.

Title: *Real Church: Does it exist? Can I find it?* by Larry Crabb  
Pages: 160.  
Time spent on the "to read" shelf: About two months.  
Days spent reading it: A week.  
Why I read it: The senior pastor at my church recommended reading this book, and he also is preaching through a series based on some ideas in this book. I figured I'd get off to a good start and read what he was thinking through.  
Brief review: *Real Church* is the attempt by Larry Crabb to respond to the charge that church is not worth getting up for on Sunday mornings. People are usually alright following Jesus, but don't particularly care for his bride. Crabb gives three (unfulfilling) reasons why people tend to say they go to church. Going to church will make my life better. Going to church will show you how Jesus wants you to change the world. Going to church is all about saving lost souls and helping the already saved to be visibly moral. These are alright reasons, but they still leave us wanting more. Crabb then goes on to give 4 marks of a church that are helpful (to Crabb at least). I'll paraphrase. 1. Hungers for truth. 2. Desires spiritual formation (and recognizes we are all in need of spiritual formation). 3.

Community-centered. 4. Engaged with those outside the church.I thought this book was alright. My criticism is that Crabb is basing what Church should look like based on his felt need as a broken human. I love that Crabb is open about our brokenness (a good theology is man is based on the fact that we are sinful). But I don't think what the church should look like or feel like to us today should be based on our felt needs. I wish Crabb would have gone back to the Bible and worked from that superior source material to point us to what church should actually look like.Not that Crabb is wrong, or has bad ideas, or anything like that. He is surrounded by a biblical worldview, and I actually resonate with a number of his ideas. But the solution to the fact that (post)modern people do not care for church should not be based on how we feel or what we think we need. Instead it should be based on what God actually intended for the church to be.This book could have been a great discussion on what the church should be based on what God wants it to be. Instead it's a discussion on what church should be like based on what Larry Crabb (and many others who feel the same way as Crabb) wants it to be. Then again, I know this is not meant to be a theological discussion on the church. It is simply a discussion about the church based on years of discontent.Does a church that I want to be a part of exist out there? Absolutely! I've been there. I've belonged to a church that completely modeled Acts 2:42-47. But I also recognize that was not the norm for churches. So I completely sympathize with people who are frustrated with the same old-same old church. There is something more out there for people stuck in that church. It can be found. Keep examining the New Testament and the (very broken) church it depicts and realize that God intends for something more, but he also works with what we have. He takes broken churches and still uses them to accomplish his work in this world. All you have to do is look through Romans or Corinthians to recognize that the early church was not picturesque even in the early days.Alright, enough rambling. Real Church was an alright book, but I wanted it to be great. Kind of like the church Crabb describes.Favorite quote: "I long to be a part of a church that somehow connects what we do when we meet together to who I am when I'm alone. And I want that connection to release the power that can transform me into a lover of God and a lover of others."Stars: 3 out of 5.Final Word: Honest.

Very relative to today's church.

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