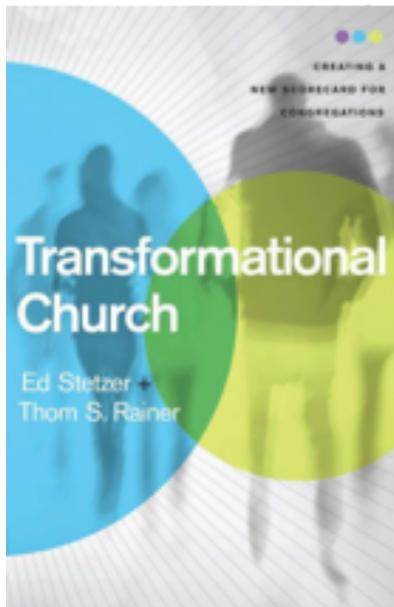


Transformational Church by Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer.

A book review by Warwick Alcock, Director Strategic Operations.

The church in America is in serious decline. Projections show that by 2020, only 14% of the North American population will be in a worship gathering on any given Sunday. There's no end to the downward trend, which is why LifeWay's *Transformational Church* book, distilled from research involving 7,000 pastors and 20,000 church members across 123 denominations, is so important.

In this study, 'transformational' churches were ranked highly according to the following scorecard:



1. Percent growth in worship attendance.
2. Percent of worship attendance involved in a small group or Sunday School class.
3. New commitments to Christ per attendee per year who became active in the life of the church.
4. Percent of new commitments to Christ who became active in the life of the church in the last year.
5. Percent of adults who attend church at least monthly who have regular responsibilities at church.
6. Percent adults who attend church monthly and serve people in the community.
7. Level of agreement that "We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church."

As you can see from the above criteria, the focus was on lives changed, churches growing, and communities being served and changed. Having identified and ranked transformational churches, LifeWay then determined the kind of things transformational churches do in contrast with churches that are not transformational (i.e. that score low on the scorecard.)

So what's the difference between the two kinds of churches? In brief, transformational churches are thoroughly Biblical and 'non-transformational' churches are not. A non-transformation church is likely to have a CEO-style top-down leadership style relying on human strengths and ingenuity, an inward- focused 'come-and-see' brick-and-mortar evangelistic style, a 'pay, pray and stay out of the way' relationship with church members, professionally-led stage-driven worship, and a metrics focus on 'bodies, budget and building.'

Transformational churches on the other hand, are characterized by servant leaders who see Scripture as the supreme source of authority, reliance on the Holy Spirit-empowered gospel to transform individuals, communities and the world, unconditional love for all members in the church, long-term discipling relationships, worship resulting in maximum participation for all, a passion for lost people in the community and the world, go-and-tell evangelism, and metrics that drive transformation, disciple-making and outward focused mission.

The contrast couldn't be more stark. LifeWay research reminds one of David's men of Issachar who understood the times and knew what to do (1 Chr. 12.32). This is an enlightening book — a *must* for every church leader.