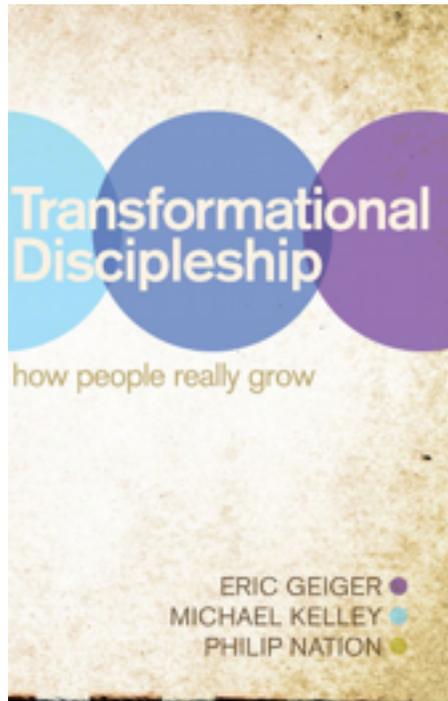


Transformational Discipleship, by Eric Geiger *et. al.* LifeWay Research.

Book review by Warwick Alcock, Director Strategic Operations.



When it comes to discipling, say the authors, the church must do better: there's a discipling deficiency in most churches resulting in a lack of transformation. Sadly, what is passed off as discipling is often little more than advice sharing, moralism, self-restraint, legalism, being good, avoiding the world's corruption, following holy principles, living by checklist, improving one's life — in short: behavior modification. No wonder many churches are in serious decline. Man-made discipling efforts are disastrous. There's confusion in churches about how people really grow, and there's no easy prescription, magic formula or church mantra to make it happen.

Yet discipling is the most important task of the church (Mt 28.19-20). Coming out of one of the largest research projects on church health ever completed, this LifeWay book on Transformational Discipleship is a *must read* for anyone called to be a disciple maker. Gospel internalization is of course, central to discipling, as we at Village Schools of the Bible strongly affirm. Some snippets from the book:

- The Gospel is Good News, not advice. It calls for a spiritual response, not moral behavior.
- Hearts are melted by the devastatingly refreshing truth of the Gospel.
- Jesus is our focal point: the imagination-capturing, awe-inspiring Son of God.
- Transformation occurs as we live in brokenness before God's grace and holiness.
- A repentant, transformed heart results in a changed life that displays the fruits of the Spirit.
- Transformational disciples place their lives willingly on a collision course with God's Word.
- Obedience is the result of heart-melting love.
- A transformed life is validated by obedience.

As the authors write in their introduction, this book offers a message of hope for the church. It crystallizes the results of extensive research with churches that have a growth-fostering culture, and individuals who are highly effective at making disciples. Disciples are of course made the same way they've always been made— by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the church, as people of God engage in the mission of God through the Spirit of God. But this doesn't just happen; it takes intentional effort. This book provides practical examples of fruitful discipling and shows what to avoid. It's helpful in describing how God shapes and forms believers into the kind of people described in Jeremiah 17: 7-8. The authors claim their work will revitalize your passion for seeing people grow in Christ, and that you'll find new hope for all God is doing in and through His people. They're right. Their findings are refreshing and inspiring!

This brief review hardly does justice to a work that is so well informed by solid research and Biblical depth. It has informed and enriched the way I approach discipleship. If you follow Christ you're a disciple-maker. This is an invaluable resource!