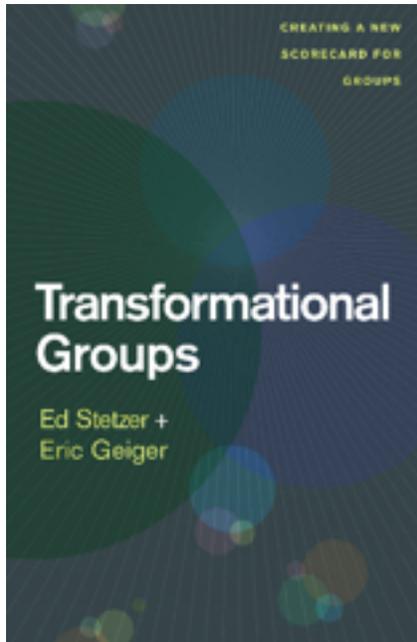


Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups, by Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger. (2014). Book review by Warwick Alcock, Director Strategic Operations.



In a world that pushes people into isolation and superficial interaction, say the authors, the church must push for deep, authentic community. We must keep the values of the world out of the church body. The world's values are not the values of the people of God. On the contrary, followers of Jesus are expected to be salt and light shining out into the world. (Mt 5:13-14). What makes for the authentic Christian community that Jesus intended?

This book helps answer that question. The authors, who speak from personal experience as small group leaders, church pastors and church planters, researched countless small groups across multiple denominations over three years as part of LifeWay's Transformational Discipleship and Transformational Groups projects. In addition, they write from a thoroughly biblical perspective, so for small group leaders and strategists, this is a great resource. Listed below, to give a flavor of the book, are just a few of their many conclusions. Transformational groups:

- Have leaders and co-leaders who intentionally invest in the spiritual transformation of others.
- Enable deep, authentic, mutually encouraging and supporting Christian community.
- Are transformational — used by God to mature and sanctify His people.
- Make disciples who make disciples.
- Multiply often in order to expand into the community.

To be effective in making disciples and reaching their communities, Church leaders should:

- Prioritize scattering over gathering — have more of a “Let's go” strategy that takes the church out into the community than an “Everyone come” mentality that tries to bring unbelievers into the gathered church.
- Equip God's people to be released as witnesses in their everyday lives, and for works of service for the building up of the body of Christ.
- Empower and train selected small groups to function like small congregations or pre-church plants.

The authors' approach to small groups remind one of the Pauline approach to church planting in the New Testament. Paul planted household-based small church communities which multiplied rapidly throughout the Roman Empire. This is much more effective than a static, inward focused control strategy that tries to grow the main gathering exclusively on the church campus.

This book, being packed with practical examples, shows how to make small-group community a dynamic reality in church, how to help groups make more and deeper disciples, and how to multiply the church into the community at large. For those developing small group strategies, or leading groups at church or in the workplace, this book is a tremendous asset!