

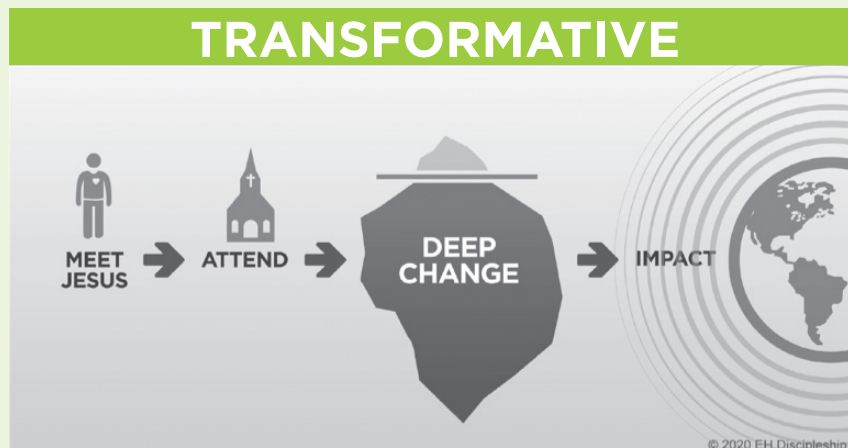


# I

## The Difficult Journey to Move Beyond Shallow Discipleship

### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- The spiritual life of leaders is reproduced in those they lead.
- The *traditional* model of discipleship expects people to mature spiritually as they connect in small groups, serve in various ministries, and give financially. The *transformative* model of discipleship expects people to mature spiritually as they experience deep and lasting change beneath the surface of their lives.



- Too often, the traditional approach to discipleship results in lives that have the appearance of spiritual maturity but remain largely unchanged beneath the surface.

## DISCUSSION

Before beginning, read aloud “Discussion Guidelines for the Group” (page 6).

1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on “The Difficult Journey to Move beyond Shallow Discipleship”?
2. The author shares many of the personal and leadership struggles that ultimately led him to a deeper discipleship. Which of the struggles listed below, if any, resonates most with you right now? Briefly explain why.
  - ☐ My ministry is growing but it feels like something is missing.
  - ☐ My heart is shrinking.
  - ☐ Leadership feels like a heavy burden.
  - ☐ I feel like I’m working hard for God but at the same time losing my soul.
  - ☐ I’m beginning to wonder if there is a disconnect between my discipleship and my spiritual growth.
  - ☐ I’m working hard in ministry, but my efforts rarely seem to bear long-term fruit in people’s lives.
  - ☐ I feel stuck. It’s been a long time since I experienced the power of God in my life or in my leadership.
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Cladding is a metaphor for discipleship that looks good on the surface but cannot endure severe storms or the test of time. Stone is a metaphor for discipleship that is load bearing but also time-consuming, challenging, and costly.
  - How do you respond to the statement, “Much of discipleship in the church today is the spiritual equivalent of cladding”? To what degree does it align or not align with your own experiences or observations?
  - It is often in the context of crisis, upheaval, or stress that discipleship is revealed for what it is—cladding or stone. What have your recent or current hardships revealed about your discipleship? For example, in what ways has it failed you or sustained you?
4. Becoming an emotionally healthy disciple is a process characterized as “raw, messy, and weighty.” It is also time-consuming, challenging, and costly.
  - In what ways, if any, has your experience of discipleship been characterized by these words?

- What three words would you use to characterize the current discipleship process at your church, or in your ministry?

**5.** Briefly recall the struggle you identified in question 2.

- What needs or desires might that struggle represent? For example, “My heart is shrinking,” might indicate a need for rest or a desire for change.
- If these needs or desires were met, how do you most hope your life, or your leadership, might be different?
- If it’s true that we lead out of who we are more than what we do or say, how might the struggle you identified be impacting your leadership?
- What, if anything, might change if you were to lead from this place of struggle—where you are being invited to transformation—rather than leading only from your perceived strengths?

## READING ASSIGNMENT



Before your next meeting, read Chapter 1, “The Four Failures that Undermine Deep Discipleship.” Between now and then, become an observer of what you consider spiritual maturity and immaturity. What examples do you notice in yourself and in others?

## GOING DEEPER

The goal of emotionally healthy discipleship is to experience deep change, both personally and organizationally. Set aside a block of time to prayerfully reflect on any ways you feel stuck or wish things were different—in your life, in your leadership, and in your organization. For each stuck point, write down a corresponding “I need” statement. For example, *I need a breakthrough. I need these mountains to move. I need hope.* Be specific, writing down as many statements as come to mind for each stuck point. Entrust your list to God in prayer, asking him meet you in your need.

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