

Study Identifies Eight Measures of Personal Discipleship

How do you recognize a maturing believer? A new LifeWay Research study offers some keen insights for five-fold ministers looking for growth among their disciples.

In 2008, LifeWay Research surveyed 7,000 churches to discover the principles involved with healthy congregations. Last year, LifeWay's researchers went back into the field to focus not on the church, but on the individual believer, asking more than 4,000 people about their spiritual lives and level of maturity.

The project has identified eight Biblical factors that consistently show up in the life of a maturing believer. Those "attributes of discipleship" are:

- Bible engagement
- Obeying God and denying self
- Serving God and others
- Sharing Christ
- Exercising faith
- Seeking God
- Building relationships
- Unashamed transparency

"Jesus called us to make disciples of all nations, so we wanted to discover the common traits for those maturing in their faith," said Ed Stetzer, LifeWay Research president.

"We have collected and analyzed a huge amount of data about how each of these attributes leads to transformational discipleship in an individual believer, and will begin releasing the information about each factor this summer,"

Stetzer said. "Due to the sheer volume of material, it will take several months to complete our analysis and release."

Stetzer said the project's purpose is to assist church leaders in discovering how to help their members grow, because "spiritual growth does not happen by accident."

"God shapes congregations through the shaping of the individual members' lives," said Stetzer. "This shaping doesn't just happen; it's through intentional effort on the part of both leaders and church members."

To help **pastors**, churches and individuals measure their **spiritual development**, LifeWay Research used the survey data to develop a questionnaire for believers. The Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA), which is available online, results in a report on **spiritual maturity** using the eight attributes of biblical discipleship. The TDA also provides helpful and practical suggestions for individuals to take the next steps in their spiritual development.

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, said the new assessment tool zooms in to the personal level.

"The Transformational Discipleship Assessment helps people see how they are doing with those eight attributes. It answers, 'Are you growing? Are you consistently **following Christ?**'" McConnell explained. "It also helps leaders know where to focus sermons, Bible studies, events and other **disciple-building** activities."

McConnell said the research was conducted in three phases. First recognized discipleship experts were interviewed. Their input was used to revise a set of questions that have been effective in measuring dozens of specific biblical principles that may be reflected in a believers actions, attitudes or beliefs. Then 1,000 Protestant **pastors** in the United States were polled. In the final phase, more than 4,000 Protestants from both the U.S. and Canada were surveyed in three

languages, English, Spanish and French.

The transformational **discipleship** project is the next phase in LifeWay's long-term research project called the *Transformational Initiative* focused on discovering common traits of churches experiencing transformation in the lives of individuals, the church and the community.

The first findings were compiled in the book *Transformational Church*, released in June 2010 by B&H Publishing Group, and provides a big picture scorecard for the church. Transformational discipleship examines the details at the individual disciple level.

To learn more about the transformational discipleship research visit [. The TDA is available at .](#)