

Why Are People Not Growing Deeper in Their Relationship With God?

Why are so many people not growing deeper in their relationship with God?

The Bible tells us that we should be conscious of ourselves and of our teaching. Paul instructs Timothy, “Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Tim. 4:15). In other words, it matters how *you* are growing and how *you’re leading* your people to grow.

I believe that we would see more fruitful discipleship in our churches if we were to start by questioning our own spiritual formation before we question the development of those we lead and disciple. Are we seeking God in prayer, spending time in His Word, and surrounding ourselves with people who will challenge us to grow in our spiritual lives? Transformational discipleship involves moving from being in proximity to one another to being in community with one another. And it starts with you and with me.

When Eric Geiger and I were writing our book *Transformational Groups*, we did a study of 2,300 churches sponsored by 15 denominations. Less than half of those churches said they had any plan in place for discipling people, and only 60 percent had anyone responsible for any level of spiritual formation among children, students, and adults.

Soon afterward, we did a discipleship study called the Transformational Discipleship Assessment that studied over 4,000 Protestant churchgoers and asked them about spiritual formation. Over the past few years, we’ve learned that:

- 54 percent of American Protestant churchgoers say they set aside time daily to a few times a week for private worship, praise or thanksgiving to God (prayer not included).
- 42 percent of American Protestant churchgoers intentionally spend time with other believers in order to help them grow in their faith.
- 41 percent of American Protestant churchgoers do not attend small classes or groups from their churches.
- 25 percent of American Protestant churchgoers say they have shared their faith once or twice; 14 percent have shared three or more times over the last six months.
- 19 percent of American Protestant churchgoers read the Bible every day.

Based on the results of the study, we were able to identify eight “attributes of discipleship” that consistently show up in the life of a maturing Christian: Bible engagement, obeying God and denying self, serving God and others, sharing Christ, exercising faith, seeking God, building relationships, and unashamed transparency.

And our conclusion: God shapes congregations through the shaping of the individual lives of people. And this shaping doesn’t just happen randomly. God grows us as we *place ourselves in a position of obedience to receive that growth*.

Today, there is a “discipleship deficit” in the church. Upon hearing about this, more than one concerned leader has asked us, “What should we do?” “How should we do it?” These leaders want to know the best ways to turn this deficit into a culture of robust discipleship.

That’s where a book like *Rediscovering Discipleship* comes in. In his book, Robby Gallaty writes about how the Great Commission must impact the way we discuss and engage in discipleship in our churches.

In part one Robby outlines the need to know the man, Jesus, before you go on his mission. This is *crucial*. Too many of us are so focused on what we're supposed to do for Jesus that we lose focus on Jesus himself. Robby spends a great team of time and energy outlining Jesus and his methods so that we do not forget about the Man who sends us on the mission. In the second half of the book, Robby dives deep into specific methods of discipleship, showing how the Church can effectively make disciples in order to live on the mission Christ has for us.

Robby is a great thinker, and he lays out helpful, practical, and realistic strategies that local churches can implement to multiply disciples that live on mission in their every day lives.

Today, we need to once again rediscover discipleship—and Robby points us in the direction to do that in the way Jesus modeled and directed for us.

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