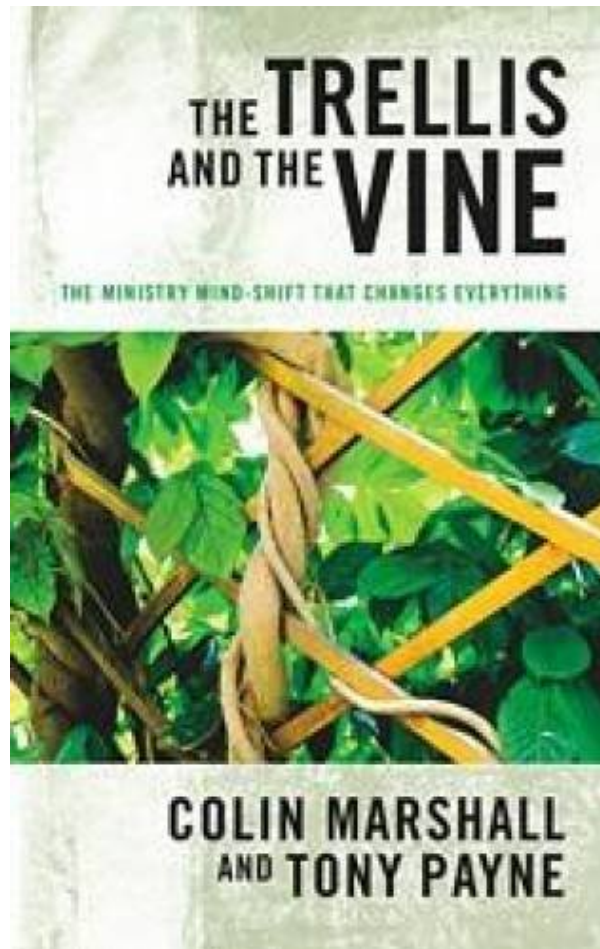


THE TRELLIS AND THE VINE BY COLIN MARSHALL, TONY PAYNE



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THE MINISTRY MIND-SHIFT THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING



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Review

What Col and Tony have described here is exactly what I have been trying to do in my own life and in our congregation for years. According to this book, Christians are to be disciple-making disciples and pastors are to be trainers. Superb! This is the best book I've read on the nature of church ministry. --Mark Dever-Senior Pastor Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington D.C.

The Trellis and the Vine comes from a ministry so deeply committed to the recovery of biblical truth and the cause of the gospel. Its wisdom is invaluable. My advice: Keep a good stack on hand at all times, and put this book to good use. --R.Albert Mohler-President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky

About the Author

Tony Payne has spent more than 25 years in Christian writing and editing as the Publishing Director at Matthias Media. He is the graduate of Moore Theological College and the author and co-author of many popular books and resources, including *2 Ways to live: the choice we all face*, *Fatherhood: What it is and what its for*, *Guidance and the Voice of God*, *The Course of your Life*, and *How to Walk into Church*. Colin Marshall has spent the past 30 years training men and women in the ministry of the gospel, both in university and local church contexts. He is a graduate of Moore Theological College and the author of *Growth Groups*, a training course for small group leaders, and *Passing the Baton*, a handbook for ministry. He is now the CEO of Vine Growers.

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All Christian ministry is a mixture of trellis and vine.

There is vine work: the prayerful preaching and teaching of the word of God to see people converted and grow to maturity as disciples of Christ. Vine work is the Great Commission.

And there is trellis work: creating and maintaining the physical and organizational structures and programs that support vine work and its growth.

What's the state of the trellis and the vine in your part of the world? Has trellis work taken over, as it has a habit of doing? Is the vine work being done by very few (perhaps only the pastor and only on Sundays)? And is the vine starting to wilt as a result?

The image of the trellis and the vine raises all the fundamental questions of Christian ministry:

- * What is the vine for?
- * How does the vine grow?
- * How does the vine relate to my church?
- * What is vine work and what is trellis work, and how can we tell the difference?
- * What part do different people play in growing the vine?
- * How can we get more people involved in vine work?

In *The Trellis and the Vine*, Colin Marshall and Tony Payne answer these urgent questions afresh. They dig back into the Bible's view of Christian ministry, and argue that a major mind-shift is required if we are to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ, and see the vine flourish again.

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Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

85 of 87 people found the following review helpful.

Finally - Biblical Solutions To The Problem

By A. Morgan

Mark Dever has put this book in the top ten reads of 2009. He says "This is the best book I've read on the nature of church ministry."

Possibly.

My first impression was "Welcome to the conversation - a little late, but welcome nonetheless." What Marshall and Payne have written about here has been written about many, many times in the past 10 years or so, mainly by Emergent type folk.

A lot of their suggestions and conclusions have already been suggested and concluded in various books about church ministry. What Marshall and Payne do here is articulate it through a very biblical framework - more so than other books - as well as offer a concrete way of doing church differently, and that is what makes the book good.

Their fundamental point is simple - yet transformational if churches understood it - Disciple making should be the normal agenda and priority of every church AND every Christian disciple.

EVERY Christian's focus should be to BE a disciple and to MAKE disciples and Churches and pastors are meant to be facilitating that process.

This requires a shift of focus for churches and ministries. Early on in the book they give 11 such shifts that must take place:

1. From running programs to building people
2. From running events to training people
3. From using people to growing people (huge shift away from church `volunteers')
4. From filling gaps to training new workers
5. From solving problems to helping people make progress
6. From clinging to ordained ministry to developing team leadership
7. From Focusing on Church polity to forging ministry partnerships
8. From relying on training institutions to establishing local training
9. From focusing on immediate pressures to aiming for longterm expansion
10. From engaging in management to engaging in ministry
11. From seeking church growth to desiring gospel growth.

This cannot be achieved through superficial change, or implementing small groups. In fact, for Marshall and Payne the issue goes far deeper than just starting small groups. In fact, they argue that small groups are not the issue. The small groups need to be TRAINING groups; trained on how to read the Bible, pray with each other, work on spiritual growth. Without this drive and focus small groups are useless. Even preaching is not sufficient. Yes, you heard that right; Tony Payne and Colin Marshall say on pg 102 that, Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient. Preaching is ONE form of the ministry of the word - not THE form.

It is always coming back to the issue of ongoing, continuous training and discipling of ALL members of the church.

One of the most interesting discussions in the book revolves around calling. How does one know that they are called to ministry, The current model is to wait for someone to say "I feel called to ministry" and then the process begins.

This is not a biblical approach for the authors. They say that pastors and elders should be talent scouts. Scripture suggests that people are called and set apart by others (see Timothy). Pastors should be actively recruiting suitable people within their churches and challenging them to expend their lives for the work of the gospel.

They write:

"When we try and discern what it is that makes that role special [the one called out for ministry] in the New Testament it's not full time verses part time or paid verses unpaid. It's not that some belong to a special priestly class and others don't. It's not even that some are gifted and others aren't because all have gifts to contribute to the building of Christ's congregation. The key thing seems to be that some are set apart or recognized or chosen, because of their convictions, character and competency and entrusted with the responsibility under God for particular ministries."

Their summary proposals are:

Summary Propositions

1. Our goal is to make disciples
2. Churches tend towards institutionalism as sparks fly upwards
3. The heart of disciple-making is prayerful teaching
4. The goal of all ministry - not just one-to-one work - is to nurture disciples
5. To be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker
6. Disciple-makers need to be trained and equipped in conviction, character and competence
7. There is only one class of disciples, regardless of different roles or responsibilities
8. The Great Commission, and its disciple-making imperative, needs to drive fresh thinking about our Sunday meetings and the place of training in congregational life
9. Training almost always starts small and grows by multiplying workers
10. We need to challenge and recruit the next generation of pastors, teachers and evangelists

As I have said, while the main content and issues have been raised many times, what makes this book special is the solutions and suggested models which the authors put forward as a way forward. Too many books in the past have raised the problems but have never given substantial proposals or suggestions for a way forward. This book gives a biblically focused framework to allow you to work through the 11 required shifts thus becoming a church which trains disciples to be disciple-making disciples.

40 of 43 people found the following review helpful.

Radically biblical, but not quite the full picture

By John Dekker

The Trellis and the Vine has two core ideas. The first is that programs and organisational activity in a church (the "trellis") often get in the way of the real gospel work ("the vine"). The second is that real gospel work involves discipling others.

Now, I need to say at the outset that I am in fundamental agreement with these two emphases. Yet, it must be said that they are emphases only. It is very easy for a discipleship system to become a new trellis. The book's discussion on discipleship, however, is sufficiently nuanced to make it broader than just 1:1 discipling.

There were two things I particularly appreciated about the book. Firstly, Marshall and Payne make the point that the aim of Christian ministry is to "make disciples who make other disciples, to the glory of God," and not, for example, to get more people into small groups. This is very important for me to remember, since I would dearly love to see more people in my congregation join a small group. But that is only a means to an end, and not an end in itself.

The second thing I appreciated in this book was the argument in chapter 9 for investing time in more mature Christians so that they would join in the "vine work". Although a pastor may be naturally inclined to spend time with those who are struggling or those who need to hear the gospel, this book recommends an approach to ministry that trains others to do this - and suggests that the pastor focuses on those who need either the equipping or the encouragement to join you in the work. This is radical and controversial - yet it is the way Jesus carried out ministry, focusing on twelve disciples who would (at a later time) teach and disciple others. This is very different to the way many people view pastors and ministers - yet it is biblical.

This book is therefore one that stimulates thought and provokes disagreement. I was fine with the controversial point mentioned above, but there were two things that I didn't like about the book. In the first place, there is more to Christian ministry than discipleship, while in the second place, there is more to discipleship than just discipling individuals.

The book contains a truly hideous chart on page 101, which contrasts the "pastor as clergyman," "pastor as CEO," and "pastor as trainer." Naturally, the table is skewed towards making the reader approve of the third column and disapprove of the first two. It reminded me of the chart that D. A. Carson included in his Exegetical Fallacies (p. 109 of the 2nd edition). Apparently, the "pastor as trainer" approach sees Sunday as a "gathering of worshipping disciples with their Lord," while the "pastor as clergyman" model views Sunday as a "service of worship," and the "pastor as CEO" looks at it as an "attractational meeting." But surely it is possible to view it as both a "gathering of worshipping disciples with their Lord" and a "service of worship."

Perhaps it would be helpful at this point to draw on a modified version of Mark Driscoll's model of the pastor being prophet, priest and king. Following John Frame, Driscoll has suggested that some pastors are gifted as prophets ("thinkers"), others as priests ("feelers"), and still others as kings ("doers"). The point being, of course, is that we need all three of these aspects in a well-rounded ministry, and we need all three types serving as pastors. Maybe there is something similar going on with the three approaches that Marshall and Payne discuss:

Pastor as clergyman - prophet - focusing on public teaching

Pastor as trainer - priest - getting alongside people

Pastor as CEO - king - focus on organisation

Now, this book upholds the biblical and strategic importance of preaching, and views discipleship as being much bigger than meeting with individuals, but even with the widest possible definition, we can still see more to pastoring and teaching than this.

The second concern I have is that there is more to discipleship than discipling individuals. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells his disciples to "make disciples of all the nations," (NASB). Marshall and Payne take the line that "full time Christian ministry" is worthwhile for all people, and that there is a distinction between "gospel work" and "other work." They dismiss the idea that people in secular work are contributing in some way to the growth of God's kingdom, and criticise those who say "we shouldn't call people out of their secular careers; we should encourage them to stay where they are for God's glory" (p. 139). They then assert, "We don't make disciples of Jesus by building better bridges, but by prayerfully bringing the word of God to people."

There are two problems with this idea. The first is that it views the Great Commission as replacing (rather than supplementing or expanding) the creation mandate. The second is that it fails to realise how big discipling the nations really is. To take one example - Bible translation is an important component of discipling a nation. But Bible translation presupposes an entire discipline of linguistics. Would Marshall and Payne also say that "We don't make disciples of Jesus by building better verb paradigms"? Someone involved in linguistics is part of the progress of God's kingdom in the world. The Kingdom of God is bigger than individual disciples - it's about the reformation and renewal of families, churches, societies and nations.

In conclusion, this is a stimulating book, that may well prove to be one of the most influential books of 21st century Reformed evangelicalism.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Intentional gospel living

By Mark Lamprecht

The Trellis and the Vine focuses on doing the hard work of gospel living. That is, Christians giving of themselves through personal discipleship creating gospel growth.

The trellis represents the structure of a church including "management, finances, infrastructure, organization, governance." The vine represents gospel growth that grows around the trellis such as "planting, watering, fertilizing, and tending." (8) Very often trellis work can take over vine work since it tends to be easier see and to figure out what needs to be done. Vine work can be tougher to discern just what needs to be done and exactly how to do it.

This book tackles the aspect of vine work. The reader is moved from thinking of the church as an institution into a personal, intentional and relational understanding. The barriers of trellis thinking are broached and broken down without being dismissed. The authors attempt to get the readers thinking about vine work.

The authors explain the reasons for vine work and gives examples of how it can be done. They explain what vine work training might look like and encourage every church member to be involved. A chart of "gospel growth stages" is given using seven example people that one might find in their church. Those stages consist of outreach, follow-up, growth and training. (86-87) This is an example of one of the tools offered.

A particularly interesting chapter is Why Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient. The authors lay out two stereotypes of church ministry - Pastor as clergyman and Pastor as CEO. (98) Every person will probably be able to see some aspect of these stereotypes in their churches. The authors offer a another way which is the pastor as trainer. (99) This is the position the authors have been pressing in the book. The

authors' position makes sense and is argued for biblically. This chapter could be a wake-up call for pastors and church members alike. Churches are challenged to evaluate a their programs, activities and structures against the gospel growth criteria presented. (108)

The book gives some very practical advice on growing a vine type of ministry in a church. The authors give examples of how it is done, where to start and some resources for training. Part of this is included in the three appendices including a helpful FAQ.

This book is a great ministry resources. It answers questions that pastoral staff may have as to how to get members intentionally involved each others lives for the gospel. Church members, both new and old, ask who are anxious to be involved in church life yet are unsure how will benefit. This book will guide them and help them ask the right questions of their pastor(s). Some long-time church members will be challenged if they are overly focused on particular programs, activities, etc. It may encroach on traditions for some though in a healthy, gospel-centered way.

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