

Book Review - December 2009

A review of Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Matthias Media).

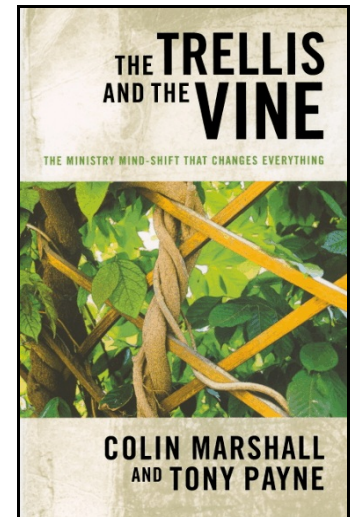
by Tim Chester (www.timchester.wordpress.com)

Vine work is about the ministry of the Word of God, by the power of the Spirit. It is the ministry that sees people converted, changed, and made mature in Christ. Trellis work is all the other things we do in our churches that hopefully support that vine work, but which actually aren't vine work in themselves.' The authors of this book don't dismiss 'trellis work' – all the institutional and structural stuff of church. But they argue we need a refocus onto 'vine work' – making disciples.

There's a lot of good stuff in this book. I particularly love the key principles elaborated of chapters 2 and 12:

Ministry mind-shifts

1. From running programs to building people
2. From running events to training people
3. From using people to growing people
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 long-term expansion
10. From engaging in management to engaging in ministry
11. From seeking church growth to desiring gospel growth



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

Making a start

Step 1: Set the agenda on Sundays

Step 2: Work closely with your elders or parish council

Step 3: Start building a new team of co-workers

Step 4: Work out with you co-workers how disciple-making is going to grow in your context

Step 5: Run some training programs

Step 6: Keep an eye out for 'people worth watching'

According to the publicity material, 'every few years there's a book which creates a lot of excitement among church leaders and this is one of them!' I'm not really sure if its message is that radical or new. Indeed the book has a tendency towards structural and programmatic solutions to help shift churches towards more 'vine work'. This, however, may make it useful tool to help traditional churches become more missional.



About the author:

Tim Chester writes on his blog page(www.timchester.wordpress.com):

I am a writer, Bible teacher and church planter. I am married to Helen and have two daughters, Katie and Hannah.

I am a leader in [The Crowded House](#) – an international family of church planting networks – and within TCH I lead [The Edge Network](#) in Sheffield, UK. Most of our congregations meet in homes. We emphasise sharing our lives together rather than programmes and structures. 'Ordinary life with gospel intentionality' is one of our catchphrases. The Crowded House is often described by other people as part of the emerging church movement. It is true that we have a different approach to church to that of most traditional churches. But we are also different from many in the emerging church movement – we are Reformed and evangelical with a strong emphasis the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel word. See also the blog entry on [Total Church](#).