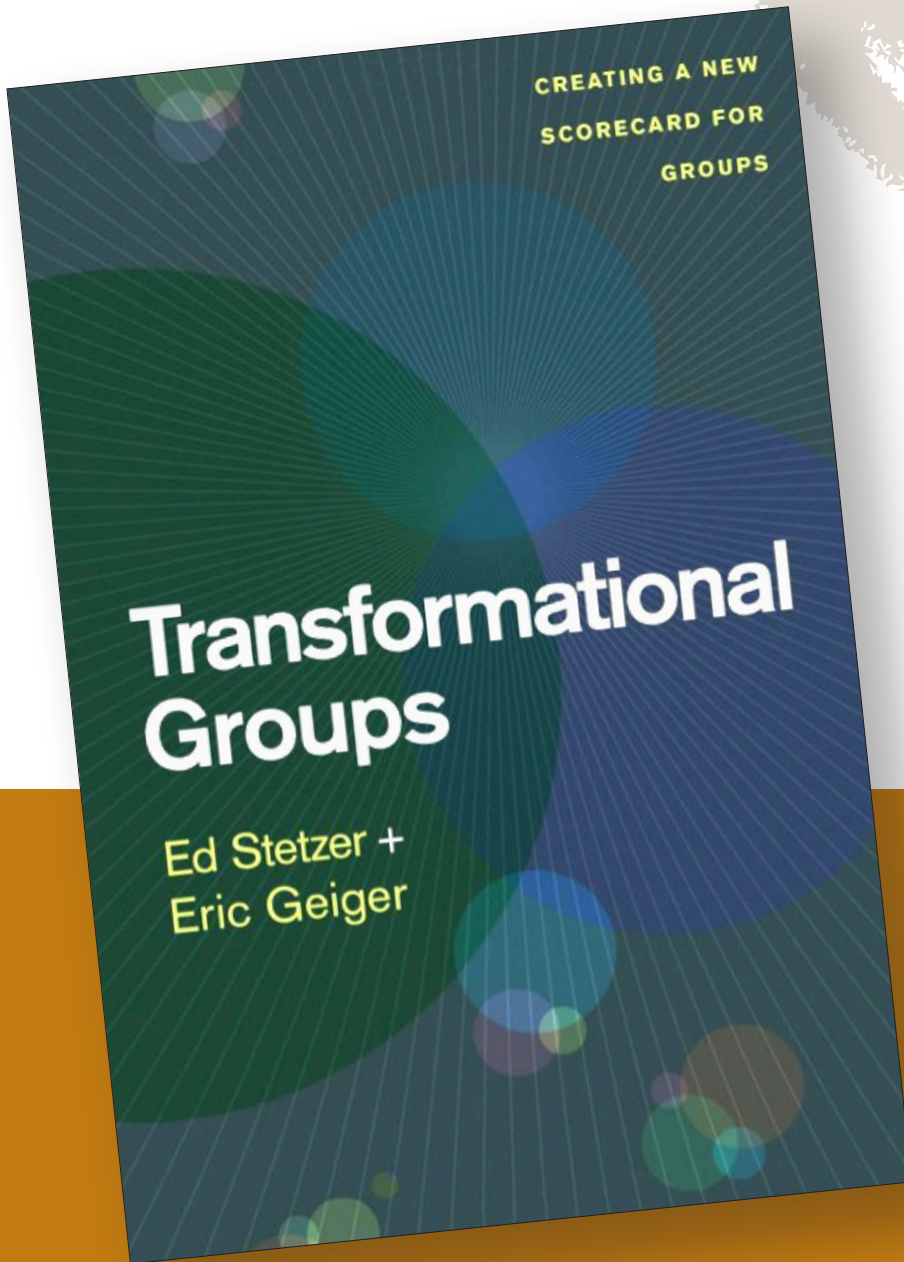


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Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger*

Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups
Broadman & Holman: Nashville, TN, 2014. 210 pages.

In a world that is pushing against community, the church must push for authentic community. We have to work to keep the values of the world out of the church body. The fact is that the world's values are not the values of the people of God.

The world pushes us to isolation and then offers superficial interactions as a false community. Part of what the church of God (as the people of God) must do is to show a better way. It's the biblical way of community.

In *Transformational Groups*, authors Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger share their hearts for community. The authors have developed nine steps to community through decades of pastoral leadership, countless small groups, and multiple research projects.

Transformational Group Manifesto

First Step: *Create an intentional group DNA*

Church leaders – including pastoral staff, elders, deacons, and leadership teams – must see community as a biblical nonnegotiable, an essential for transformation, and a necessity for building lives that stand the test of time.

Your church, no matter how together it looks on the surface, will never become all that God wants if community is just an annoying detail, just something else to place on the calendar.

Research indicates three disappointing findings that paint a sad picture of Christian community:

- Disorganized Discipleship – Many churches have no visible strategy for their group life.
- Comfort and Not Correction – Group attenders are primarily looking for comfort from groups more than accountability and correction.
- Personal Priority – Attenders seem to be looking for their own needs first.

Develop a manifesto, or core convictions, that drive the way your church does groups on a weekly basis. Here's an example:

- 1** The Bible – The Bible is God's love in writing, so pursue its truth as the center of all you do.
- 2** Gospel – The gospel is the power of God for salvation to anyone who believes, so pursue gospel conversations with people far from God.
- 3** Mission – God's mission compels us to live "sent" in all places where we find ourselves, looking for opportunities to both show and tell the gospel.
- 4** Grace – God's grace challenges us to live honestly with one another about our shortcomings and with hold judgment from others.
- 5** Glory – God's glory demands that we pursue community with one another, practice biblical conflict resolution, and live our lives for His Pleasure.



Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Find the right beliefs

Leaders influence people mostly by what they believe. Beliefs will lead to passionate discussions but, most importantly, beliefs lead to radical actions. Beliefs are powerful and inspirational. Beliefs unify people around vision and purpose.

Trees Don't Move the Wind

Next Step: Assess the transformation platforms in your church

Previous research by the authors have revealed eight areas of discipleship at work in maturing believers.

- 1 Bible engagement
- 2 Obeying God and denying self
- 3 Serving God and others
- 4 Sharing Christ
- 5 Exercising faith
- 6 Seeking God
- 7 Building relationships
- 8 Unashamed transparency

Since Jesus calls us to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) we must pray, think, and then plan about how to do that most effectively.

A Discipleship Deficit

Next Step: Design a community disciple-making strategy for your church

The first step in developing a healthy group culture in your church is to develop a strategy that governs your disciple-making process for the church as a whole.

The second step in developing a disciple-making strategy is creating a plan. While this may seem obvious, many churches do not have a plan at all.

The third step in your disciple-making strategy is

to evaluate the results. If this critical step is not done, even if you are looking for improvement you will not have anything measureable to determine what or how much progress is truly being made.

From monologue to dialogue

With the right group values, leaders, and environments, a supernatural process of discipleship happens. The potential for the multiplication of disciples and groups becomes greater. Disciples engage in community where they're dealing with issues of church, ministry, and mission.

A dynamic communicator and wonderful music may gather a crowd, but if people never move from sitting in rows to sitting in circles, the gospel impact will be insignificant. The end result of gathering in classrooms to get great information is that we end up in a discipleship deficit if monologue does not transition to meaningful dialogue.

The best churches help people move from proximity to community.

They help move people from **sitting** close to **being** close, by moving people from having a similar location to doing life together.



Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Discipleship methodology

Although groups are not the only place transformation happens, the authors are convinced it is the primary place.

Transformational discipleship is not merely rabbinical monologues but includes robust dialogues.

As people enter the sphere of a local church through multiple points, they are all over the map spiritually. It is vital for churches to provide a clear target explaining the attitudes and behaviors of a disciple – you must have a clear definition of *disciple*.

If your discipleship target is really clear, you will begin to say no to more good things than ever before, recognizing that often good things interfere in accomplishing the best thing.

Groups matter

For transformation the culture in churches must shift from mere classroom to community, a community that learns and processes God's Word together and encourages one another to live what they have learned. Learning is not only knowledge gained; it is truth lived out in the context of and under the watch care of a community of Christ followers.

Competing systems

Competing systems emerge in a church when no clear vision is consistently cast.

Informal conversations with staff and key leaders must always go back to the "why" of the church. If not, silos will dominate, and tension will always be just below the surface.

Immunity to community

Many churches are like an airplane. Everyone is headed to the same place and filled with people who associate but don't participate.

In order for participation to happen in your community, church leaders must do three things:

- 1** Be involved in or leading a transformational group
- 2** Be certain stories of transformation through groups are being told during weekend worship services
- 3** Be the primary promoter of groups to the congregation you lead

Integration

Next Step: *Identify the kind of group to support your church's disciple-making mission*

Groups that work

The primary reason most group ministries aren't working is due to the fact that church leaders are oftentimes most passionate about running programs. They see it as their role to run efficient programs rather than make mature disciples.

Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

What's next?	
1	Know the purpose of your groups.
2	Determine the purpose(s) for your groups, and stick to it.
3	Groups that gather with an attempt to be everything don't accomplish much of anything.
4	Match leaders with the purpose of your groups.

Three seismic shifts for integration

Shift 1: from people called to the ministry to people called to ministry

Shift 2: from exceptional to ordinary

Shift 3: from needing priests to being priests

The Right Leaders

Next Step: *Discover and develop the right leaders*

Teaching: Formation

Leaders who are skilled in teaching often lead groups that grow in their confidence of the Word.

Transparency and conflict resolution: Community

Leaders who excel in transparency and in conflict resolution often lead groups that excel in connection – and in growing in community with one another.

Delegation: Mission

Groups that value serving characterize their leaders as ones who freely delegate responsibilities to the group. The group leader is able to invite others to be involved in serving those the group for which he or she has accepted responsibility.

Here are some preliminary steps in a leader's discovery and development:

- Define the leader's role and responsibility.
- Remove barriers to leadership by using carefully chosen terminology.
- Find people who are passionate about groups.
- Assess their natural, spiritual, and social qualifications.

Pastoral staff and volunteer ministry directors in healthy, biblical churches fully embrace the importance of leadership development to the future influence for the kingdom.

Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

When you combine the incredible need for effective group leaders with the limited supply, you can easily default to some common and erroneous ways of finding them. Be careful of five types of people to use as group leaders:

- 1** The person who is ready – a mature believer who is new to your church will take time for their instincts to be molded by your DNA.
- 2** The person who is willing – if willing is their only motivating factor, then group leading is not their sweet spot.
- 3** The person who is able – they may have everything you could want, but do they have a single focus of willingness to take spiritual responsibility for a group of people?
- 4** The person with a resume – former pastors, seminary students, denominational leaders, or former nonprofit ministry leaders – can bring excellent skills to a church and its small groups. How can you maximize their gifts, experience, and perspectives in a commitment to create transformational environments?
- 5** The person who is reluctant – don't confuse humility with real reluctance.

Group Practices

Next Step: *Define your group practices*

Other people rubbing against us, challenging us, and encouraging us has a sanctifying effect on our lives. Far more important than changing habits, priorities, or behavior is the transformation of the heart. Only Jesus has the power to transform us, and He uses others to nudge us along in our relationship with Him.

Be clear about expectations

When thinking about small groups, clarity of values is essential. Pastors who fail to offer directional clarity leave a massive gap of leadership. Consequently, others will step in with compelling visions of what the church should be and do. And the church will move in a plethora of directions, unsure of who it really is.

Leaders need clarity, and if the church leadership doesn't clarify precisely what needs to happen and equip the leader to do that, the group leader will do whatever seems most natural and demands the least of them.

Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Certain behaviors tend to produce certain outcomes. Make your choices and then train, coach, and resource accordingly. Consider the following practices a menu of options:

- 1 Practice spiritual disciplines together (prayer, Bible study, Worship)
- 2 Care for one another during life's evolutions (birth, death, marriage, graduation, etc.)
- 3 Schedule time with one another between regular meetings
- 4 Have fun together
- 5 Serve to share the gospel in word and deed
- 6 Eat together
- 7 Open fellowship times to unchurched friends
- 8 Meet weekly
- 9 Metrics/Celebrations/Scorecards

Multiply

Next Step: *Focus on multiplying groups and disciples*

Culture is changed by influence, not by control.

You can move a leader's feet by force, or you can move their hearts by influence and inspiration.

When you take a closer look at how Jesus called His original twelve disciples, you discover some incredibly powerful elements of a multiplication culture:

- 1 He called them before they were believers
- 2 He sent them before they were ready
- 3 He cast vision before they could see
- 4 He invested before they proved they were worthy
- 5 He understood that not all of them would be winners



Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Community is essential when it comes to successfully living out the Christian walk in a day-to-day context.

Four facets of transformational groups:

- 1** Connectible – groups provide the best framework for significant relationships to develop.
- 2** Reproducible – for growth to occur in the church, people groups must continuously grow and multiply.
- 3** Assimilative – as people in groups grow in relationship together, they will readily serve alongside others and integrate into ministry opportunities.
- 4** Transferable – church planting generally necessitates a core group of people who are sent out to reach a new area.

Connect with Disconnected People

Next Step: *Connect with disconnected people for transformational groups*

Five ways to connect with disconnected people in the church:

- 1** Take advantage of the three-minute rule – after worship service ends, spend first three minutes looking around for people who are not connected.
- 2** Make yourself available as a group leader to be on the lookout for disconnected people.
- 3** Know where the groups meet and have a groups concierge in a prime location.
- 4** Connect with people by inviting them to a basic newcomer's class or informal gathering.
- 5** Following up quickly through various mechanisms will help disconnected people become connected people.

6 ways to connect to your disconnected neighbors:

- 1** Get to know your neighbors
- 2** Reach out to each of them monthly
- 3** Pray for your neighbors
- 4** Invite your neighbors to your group or church
- 5** Be present in the neighborhood
- 6** Have a neighborhood party

Imagine the Possibilities

Next Step: *Imagine the possibilities*

Of all people, Christ followers should be the last to lose our imagination when we serve the God who spoke an elaborate universe into existence. Creativity and innovation should be unleashed in our models of reproduction, our group structures, and our intentionality for connecting the unconnected.

Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Imagine the possibilities, let Scripture inform your dreams, and give your people the permission to do the same.

The intersection of the following three key ingredients is where discipling is most likely to occur:

- 1** Leader: Develop your leaders – healthy groups are healthy leaders. You small group leaders will reproduce who they are.
- 2** Posture: Launch new groups – without new groups you will not be giving new people who come to your church a place to connect.
- 3** Truth: Feed the people – regardless of the primary purpose of your groups (connection, mission, or formation), groups must be built on the word of God.

Transformational Groups creates a new scorecard that will provide a map for transformational success for your church's group's ministry.

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Transformational Groups | *Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger (cont'd)*

Recommended Resources

1. **Read** why small groups are the #1 vehicle for your ministry vision by Auxano Founder & Team Leader Will Mancini.
2. Watch an interview with *Transformational Groups* author Ed Stetzer: **Part 1** and **Part 2**.
3. **Read** Ed Stetzer's *Five Characteristics of a Transformational Group*.
4. **Read** about how people grow in groups by *Transformational Groups* co-author Eric Geiger.

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Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Bryan Rose

Vision Clarity Connection

Twenty years ago, as a fourth-year architecture student, a few friends and I spent the Summer backpacking throughout Europe. We struck out with an idea of what we wanted to see and do, but had very little plan or agenda. We relied on a well-thumbed field-guide, written by travelers who had seen and experienced the adventure that we had in mind. Eight weeks later, I returned home transformed by the experience, and my heart still beats with the desire to lead my wife, my kids and my friends to do the same.

Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger's *Transformational Groups* is like that field-guide to Europe. Many Pastors and leaders strike out on a journey to community through group life in their church with an idea what groups should be and do, but without a plan or process in mind to get there. **All churches have groups in some form, few churches have groups that transform.**

If you are a leader who wonders if there could or should be **more** to group life in your context, *Transformational Groups* is your field-guide for developing effectiveness in community written by travelers who have seen and experienced it.

Go Ahead

Using Stetzer & Geiger's first step, *Create an Intentional Group DNA*, anchor your pastoral conviction to **have groups**, in your leadership calling to **lead groups**.

In your church's unique context, how are your core convictions, or values (as we call them at Auxano) expressed in group life? Gather your core leadership team, elder board or staff for 2 hours in the next month.

During the first hour, make three lists:

1. How would we describe the current state of groups in one word?
2. What words or phrases paint the picture of what we would like groups to be?
3. What are the top 3-5 actions we can take in the next six months to move from list 1 to list 2?

During the second hour, split into groups of 2-4 and develop a concise statement for each core conviction that answers this question: How is this value lived out (or how should it be lived out) in our groups? Show where each statement is reflected in scripture. Consolidate the group work as a foundation to creating your intentional group DNA.



More About Bryan Rose

As Lead Navigator for Auxano, Bryan Rose has a strong bias toward merging strategy and creativity within the vision of the local church and has had a diversity of experience in just about every ministry discipline over the last 12 years.

With his experience as a multi-site strategist and campus pastor at a 3500 member multi-campus church in the Houston Metro area, Bryan has a passion to see “launch clarity” define the unique Great Commission call of developing church plants and campus, while at the same time serving established churches as they seek to clarify their individual ministry calling. Bryan has demonstrated achievement as a strategic thinker with a unique ability to infuse creativity into the visioning process while bringing a group of people to a deep sense of personal ownership and passion.

Bryan has a Master of Arts in Christian Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a B.A. in Architecture from Mississippi State University. He lives outside Houston, TX with his wife, Kelly and children Macy & Matthew.

Blog: LaunchClarity.com
Email: bryan@auxano.com
Twitter: [@TheBryanRose](https://twitter.com/TheBryanRose)
Bio: [Read More](#)



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