

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | DECEMBER 8, 2019



Class 8 – Trellis & the Vine Book Review (1 of 2)

PURPOSE: Determining what biblically warrants a given congregation formalizing their church membership, as it becomes a springboard for genuine church growth.

Introduction

Review of the book *The Trellis and the Vine*.

Book Authors: Collin Marshall and Tony Payne (Matthias Media, 2009).

The author has two trellises in his yard. One is just a nicely constructed trellis with no vine. The other is a trellis that is almost invisible and covered with a flourishing jasmine vine. He goes on to explain,

“...most churches are a mixture of trellis and vine. The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s spirit, and to see people converted, changed and grow to maturity in that gospel. That’s the work of planting, watering, fertilizing and tending the vine...”

“However, just as some sort of framework is needed to help a vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support. It may not be much, but at the very least we need somewhere to meet, some Bibles to read from, and some basic structure of leadership within our group. All Christian churches, fellowships or ministries have some kind of trellis that gives shape and support to the work. As the ministry grows, the trellis also needs attention. Management, finances, infrastructure, organization, governance -these all become more important and more complex as the vine grows. In this sense, good trellis workers are invaluable, and all growing ministries need them.”

(*The Trellis and the Vine*, p. 8).

I. **Book Organization**

A. Main Chapter Headers

1. The trellis and the vine.
2. Ministry and mind-shifts.
3. What in the world is God doing?
4. Is every Christian a vine-worker?
5. Guilt or grace?
6. The heart of training.
7. Training and gospel growth.
8. Why Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient.
9. Multiplying gospel growth through training co-workers.
10. People worth watching.
11. Ministry apprenticeship.
12. Making a start.

B. Epilogue Material

There is an acknowledgements and three appendixes.

II. **Synopsis of Chapters 1 through 6** (for this first half of Review)

A. Chapter 1 (the authors raise an introspective question)

“What’s the state of the trellis and the vine at your church? Perhaps the trellis work has taken over from the vine work. There are committees, structures, programs, activities and fund raising efforts, and many people put lots of time into keeping them all going, but the actual work of growing the vine falls to a very few. In fact perhaps the only time real vine-growing work happens is in the regular Sunday service, and then by the pastor as he preaches his sermon.”

(Ibid., p. 8-9)

Instead of letting the trellis work take over from the vine work, we need to follow the great commission of Matthew 28 and get involved with making disciples and growing the vine.

B. Chapter 2 (a shift in our thinking).

Our shift should be toward growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ. We need to concentrate on people first and build the ministries around them utilizing the gifts God has given them. We don't need to fill gaps in our trellis, we need to share the love of Christ and grow vines.

C. Chapter 3 (answer to, "What is God doing...?")

"This is what God is now doing in the world: Spirit-backed gospel preaching leading to the salvation of souls." (Ibid., p. 35).

"The vine is Jesus, and as we are grafted into him, we bear fruit (John 15:1-11)." (Ibid., p.37).

D. Chapter 4 (evangelism by the church).

Yes we are all vine workers and missionaries too!

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15).

E. Chapter 5 (emphasis on grace over guilt).

All of us in Christ share God's grace. We stand together in Christ, willing to contend with hostility and persecution.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16).

F. Chapter 6 (future vision of training the church).

What is training in Christian life and ministry?

“In the New Testament, training is much more about Christian thinking and living than about particular skills or competencies.” (Ibid., p.70).

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are trained in the scriptures in righteousness and equipped for every good work. We develop a quality of character based on sound doctrine and imitation of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Our training should be a lot like parenthood.

III. **Conclusion: The Three C’s of Training**

- A. Point 1: Conviction: to know God and understand the Bible.
- B. Point 2: Character: to have godly character and a life that fits in with sound doctrine.
- C. Point 3: Competency: the ability to prayerfully speak God’s word to others in a meaningful way.

Membership Matters Course Outline (Remaining Portion):

- (Thanksgiving Break – No Equipping Hour)
- Failed Systems of the Past
- *Trellis and the Vine* Book Review - Part 1 of 2
- *Trellis and the Vine* Book Review - Part 2 of 2