

# **DIGGING DEEPER**



**STUDY GUIDES**

**COMMENTARY, QUESTIONS & EXERCISES  
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# *The Trellis and the Vine*

by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne

## The Purpose of Digging Deeper Study Guides

Digging Deeper Study Guides are designed to help readers get the most out of their reading by focusing attention on understanding the main message of each book studied. Readers are then challenged to wrestle with that message—do they agree or disagree and why—and then ponder, reflect and apply what they are learning.

Individuals and groups will benefit from these study guides, but the best way to get the most out of any book is by doing both. Start by reading and answering the questions alone and then find a friend or two to gather regularly to discuss what each person is learning. The informed and lively discussion by a group of committed readers will take you places that you cannot go alone. This is the great benefit of learning theology within a community.

## Why a Study Guide for *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne

*The Trellis and the Vine* is about helping churches raise up Christians--in other words, disciple-making disciples--because that is what God calls each Christian to be with the gifts and abilities God has given him. We are reading this book with people in our congregation to help cultivate this vision with the prayerful hope of encouraging and equipping every member to be a minister of the gospel.

## Format of the Study Guide for *The Trellis and the Vine*

Page numbers in parenthesis are where suggested answers can be found. This Digging Deeper Study Guide is indexed to the Mathias Media copy of *The Trellis and the Vine*, published in 2009.

## **Chapter 1: The trellis and the vine**

1. What do the authors mean by “trellis” work? Give some examples from within your own church. (8)
2. What is “vine” work? What are some examples? (8-9)
3. When it comes to churches, what seems to be the inherent tendency (and danger) of trellis work? Why do you think this is so? (9)
4. What is the central command of Matthew's Great Commission? (11-13)
5. Where and when do you think most of the vine work happens in your church? How can you become more involved in the vine work?

## **Chapter 2: Ministry mind-shifts**

1. The authors suggest that a “conscious shift” away from structures and toward people is necessary for most churches. Do you agree? Why is this the case? (17)
2. If you had to pick 1 or 2 “ministry mind shifts” that are particularly applicable you and/or your church, which would they be? Take time to pray for your church and her leaders along these lines.

## **Chapter 3: What in the world is God doing?**

1. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12 and Colossians 1:3-6. What is God's plan for our world? How is he achieving this plan? How would you summarize the extraordinary thing that God is now doing in our world? (35-37).
2. Three implications are listed on pages 38-39. Which of these three strike you as most relevant or applicable to your own life and the life of your church? What changes must you make to bring yourself more in line with God's agenda?

## **Chapter 4: Is every Christian a vine-worker?**

1. Are there two classes of Christians in the Bible—those who are serious and those who are not? Why is this so important to understand? (42)
2. What do the following texts teach you about the role you and all Christians are to play in speaking the word of God to others (whether Christian or non-Christian)?

Matthew 28:16-20

Romans 15:14

Ephesians 4:15-16

Hebrews 3:12-13

Hebrews 10:24-25

3. Explain: “The Christian without a missionary heart is an anomaly.” (52)
4. What implications do you make in response to Penn Jillette’s statement on page 53?
5. On pages 54-56, the authors list a variety of different ways in which a Christian might be involved in vine work (see page 39 for a concise definition of “vine work”). Spend a few minutes coming up with your own list of five ways that you can speak the truth of God to other people (whether to other Christians or non-Christians). Be as specific as you can to your context.

### **Chapter 5: Guilt or grace?**

1. Read Philippians 1:27-30 and 2:14-16. What is the nature of the partnership that the Philippians had with Paul? What does this teach us about the motivations we should have as we partner in the work of Christ today? (62-65)
2. If “gospel partnership” is the normal Christian life, how is this being seen in your life? In other words, who are you in gospel partnership with, and how are you working together for the growth of the gospel? If not, what will you do to change this? (66-67)
3. Read the second to last paragraph on page 67 (“However, at a profound level . . .”). If you are a pastor or elder, is this how you view your role in your church family? Would a regular attender or visitor conclude that this was your view from what they observed about your life and practice?

### **Chapter 6: The heart of training**

1. Define biblical “training” in one sentence. How does this definition compare and contrast with what we normally think about “training” in our world? (69-70)
2. What role does the Bible and Christian doctrine play in training? (71)
3. Does the centrality of Christian teaching exclude the necessity of relationship? If not, what role does relationship play and why is a close personal relationship between disciple-maker and disciple important? (71-72)
4. What word is repeated in the verses cited on page 73?
5. What Bible text would you cite to argue that both doctrine and relationship are indispensable? (70, 73-75)
6. How is “spiritual parenting” a great metaphor for discipleship? (75-76)
7. What are the pros and cons of using formal training programs or courses in making disciples? (77)
8. In your own words, define what “conviction,” “character,” and “competency” have to do with disciple-making. What is the value of each? (77-78)

## Chapter 7: Training and gospel growth

1. What are some practical implications of the fact that training is about “people not programs?” (82-83)
2. Ponder: “[W]hile all Christians can and should be trained as vine-workers, not all will be gifted to minister in exactly the same way or to the same extent.” What sort of attitude should you have if this is true? (85)
3. Use the chart below to fill out your own version of the diagnostic tool on page 87. Try and think about five people in particular. How might you minister or train some of these people to help them grow in the gospel? (86-88)

Outreach	Follow-up	Growth	Training
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Name	Issues	Gospel	----	Needs Help	Solid	General	Specific

## Chapter 8: Why Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient

1. What are the pros/cons of the “pastor as service-providing clergyman?” (94-95)
2. What are the pros/cons of the “pastor as CEO?” (96-98)
3. What unique advantages does the “pastor as trainer” model give to the church? (100-101)
4. Explain what is meant by the title to this chapter? Why isn’t this an anti-church or anti-Word message? (102-103; *cf.* 89)
5. What lessons can be learned from the example of Richard Baxter? (104-108)

6. Very practically, what might pastoral ministry look like if it applied some of these lessons?

### **Chapter 9: Multiplying gospel growth through training co-workers**

1. Continue working on the chart you began filling out in Chapter 7. (87; 110)  
Based on the names listed, if you only had time to meet with two of these folks personally, which two would you choose and why? (110-111)
2. To what extent does your church operate with a team of co-workers in ministry? (112-114)
3. In what ways could you help develop a “band of brothers?” (116-118)
4. Have you seen instances where the wisdom given about “selection” was not followed in a church or ministry context? (118-119)
5. The authors give some great tips and suggestions for training co-workers on pages 120-126. What would God have you take away and apply from this discussion?

### **Chapter 10: People worth watching**

1. Re-read the passages cited on pages 129-130. What does it mean to be “called?” How does this clear up much of the confusion surrounding this term in the Christian world? (*cf.* 132-133)
2. If all Christians are called to serve Christ as “vine workers,” what is the difference between a vine-worker and a pastor (or one who leads a congregation)? (132)
3. Re-read the bullet-point summary of the Bible's teaching on “work” on pages 137-138. How does this differ from the way you tend to think about work?
4. What do vocational Christian workers and Christians in secular jobs have in common? What is different about their roles? (138-139)
5. Now that you are a “talent scout,” think about the Christians you know. Do any of them fit the bill of “people worth watching?” If so, pray for them—i.e. that they would grow in the character, conviction and competencies they will need one day to help lead Christ's church. (139)

### **Chapter 11: Ministry apprenticeships**

Note: We typically just have members “skim” this chapter.

### **Chapter 12: Making a start**

1. Now that you have read this book and the review on pages 152-157, how would you summarize what you have learned? Does one of the points made in the first half of this chapter really stick out to you as being of the utmost importance? What are you going to do with this new found conviction?

2. The second half of this chapter is directed primarily to pastors and other church leaders. If that is you, then prayerfully ask the Lord what he would have you do in light of this challenge to “Make a Start.” (158-165)
3. If you are not a pastor or church leader, will you pray for your church and her leaders to catch the vision of this book?
4. Ponder: If your pastor and leaders are receptive, consider giving them a copy of this book. If not—or if you do not know where they are in this regard—let me encourage you to pray and wait a little while. You have learned a lot in this book and, as tempting as it might be to approach your pastor and leaders to tell them what you have learned, the wise approach might be to sit back, pray and begin to implement the truth of this book in your own life. In other words, be a vine-worker. Serve the church. Before too long, you might have the pastor or leaders coming to asking you what is different about your life.
5. Action: Continue to fill out the Diagnostic Chart begun in Chapter 7. Try and list 10 people, note where they are in relationship to Christ, and then prayerfully consider how God might use you to speak the truth of Christ to them in a winsome way. Perhaps it's continuing to build a relationship of trust so the next step might be to invite them over for dinner. Perhaps it's raising issues so the next step might be you giving them an article to read or pointing them to a sermon that addresses their questions. Perhaps the next step is inviting them to church or to join in a Bible study or to read a book with you. The sky is the limit on what you can do. But be thinking about where they are, where they need to be, and how God can use you as an instrument to get your friend to that next point.