

TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP: MAKING DISCIPLES A FEW AT A TIME

by Greg Ogden

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003

This is essentially a book length treatment of *one great idea*! Ogden lays out an approach to fruitful discipling in the context of a local church in America in which one-on-one individual discipleship is substantially transformed when a discipler works with two disciples rather than one. Working with people in a *discipleship triad* (group of three people) revolutionizes the impact of the discipling process compared to one-on-one discipling in twos.

Ogden has developed a model that envisions a discipler invite two people into a short-term covenanted discipleship relationship in which they work through a basic discipleship curriculum in the course of one to one and a half years. An explicit goal of the process is that each member of the triad be equipped to in turn find two others to disciple, once the discipleship period is completed. Ogden has seen this process of small group discipling reproduce throughout a church and substantially transform a church, as more and more people in the church are turned into engaged disciples of Christ rather than merely church goers (the multiplication principle is once again invoked – one disciples two, two disciple four, four disciple eight, with a new multiplying set being started in turn by the discipler each time as well...)

The reason I am reviewing this book here in *Seedbed* is because I think that Ogden's conviction that discipleship works better in small groups (3 to 4, maximum) is a *very helpful insight* that we can apply in discipling in our very different contexts. In the discipling that I was involved with in North Africa I 'stumbled' upon this principle and had perhaps three or four times when I was intimately involved discipling groups of two or three young men. As Ogden has observed, the impact of having two or three people being disciplined together greatly enhances the effectiveness of the discipleship process.

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Transforming Discipleship is a helpful treatment of discipleship and he does a good job of arguing that small group discipling is far more fruitful in seeing people's lives transformed than is any other form of church nurturing or teaching ministry. In an insightful little chart, Ogden illustrates the transformative power

of discipleship triads. He suggests that three vital ingredients that are needed to see people transformed into increasing Christ-likeness are a context of intimacy, the transmission of truth, and a relationship of accountability.

	INTIMACY	TRUTH	ACCOUNTABILITY
Small Groups	X		
Teaching		X	
Preaching		X	
Discipling	X	X	X

Ogden’s discussion of the key elements needed for life transformation is quite helpful. The main elements in *intimacy* are (1) transparent trust (2) encouraging affirmation (3) walking together through difficult times (4) true listening to each other and (5) confessing sin and addressing the addictions of the heart. The transmission of *truth* occurs through (1) immersion in the Scripture (2) teaching (3) reproof (4) correction and (5) training in righteousness. The sought for *life transformation* happens best in a context of mutual *accountability* in which the members of the discipleship group (triad) are covenanted to care for each other and keep each other honest and accountable to grow in Christ together.

My research into discipling BMBs affirms that these core principles are indeed vital. Though Ogden is speaking entirely in and to the American cultural and religious context, I believe that the central insights that he communicates in this book (which I have just given you in this review) can be applied in our discipling relationships with BMBs and with each other. If you need further fleshing out of these core ideas, then get and read the book. But, now that you understand Ogden’s insights I encourage you to go ahead and put them to use in your current discipling relationships.

Reviewed by Don Little