

THE TRELLIS AND THE VINE



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following discussion guide envisages that a group of people (perhaps five or six) from a particular congregation or fellowship will get together over six sessions to discuss *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne (available from matthiasmedia.com). If the reading/discussion group is made up of people from different congregations, you may need to adjust some of the questions accordingly.

DISCUSSION 1

(Before the discussion: read chapters 1 to 3.)

1. Summarize in your own words what a 'trellis' activity is, and what 'vine' work is.

2. Now list as many examples as you can of 'trellis' activities in your congregation or fellowship.

3. Where and when do you think most of the vine work happens in your congregation?

4. Give each member of the discussion group the opportunity to select one or two 'ministry mind-shifts' (chapter 2) that they think are particularly applicable to your congregation. Discuss why they are applicable. How does the need for these shifts show itself in your congregation?

5. Read carefully through 1 Peter 1:10-12 and Colossians 1:3-6:
 - a. What is God's plan for our world?

 - b. How is he achieving this plan?

 - c. How would you summarize in your own words the extraordinary thing that God is now doing in the world?

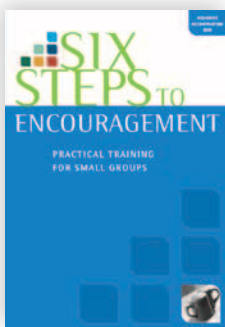
6. Look back at the three 'implications' described on pages 38-39. Which of these three strikes you as most relevant or applicable to your own situation?

DISCUSSION 2

(Before the discussion: read chapters 4 and 5.)

1. Read the following passages and discuss what they teach about the role of all Christians in speaking the word of God to others (whether to non-Christians or Christians):
 - Matt 28:16-20
 - Rom 15:14
 - 1 Cor 10:31-11:1
 - Eph 4:15-16
 - Heb 3:12-13
 - Heb 10:24-25

2. According to the definition on page 39, 'vine work' is when "a Christian brings a truth from God's word to someone else, praying that God would make that word bear fruit through the inward working of his Spirit". Pages 54-56 list a variety of different ways in which all Christians can be involved in vine work. Spend a few minutes coming up with your own list of vine-working possibilities—of different ways and contexts in which a Christian could speak the truth of God to other people (whether to other Christians or to non-Christians).



Six Steps to Encouragement

Six Steps to Encouragement is a six session course built on this simple but profound principle: "God's word changes me; through me, it can change others too". It's basic training in how to do the vine-growing ministry that God has given all of us—to encourage other people, to speak God's truth to them in love. Participants learn the why and how of personal encouragement through video input, Bible study, practical examples, discussions and hands-on exercises. For more information, visit the Matthias Media website: matthiasmedia.com



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3. Read Phil 1:27-30; 2:14-16. What is the nature of the partnership that the Philippians had with Paul?

4. What does Philippians teach us about the motivations for being a partner in the work of Christ? Why do we do it?



Partners for Life

Philippians is a favourite Christian letter, with its commands for us to rejoice in the Lord, to live in peace, to seek unity and to imitate the humility of our Saviour. Philippians also encourages us to be partners in the gospel—partners with Christ in the work of salvation, and partners with each other in giving, praying and serving the household of God. In these eight interactive studies, you will explore the meaning of this partnership, the threats to it, and the means by which we can persevere, knowing that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain”. Ideal for both individuals and groups. For more information, visit the Matthias Media website: matthiasmedia.com



5. If gospel partnership is the normal Christian life, how is this seen in your own life? Who are you in gospel partnership with, and how are you working together for the growth of the gospel?

6. "... at a profound level, all pastors and elders are also just partners. They do not have a different essence or status, or a fundamentally different task—as if they are the real 'players', and the rest of the congregation are spectators or support crew. A pastor or elder is a vine-worker who has been given a particular responsibility to care for and equip the people for their partnership in the gospel." (p. 67)

Is this how you view the role of leaders and pastors in your congregation?

If so, how does this view express itself in your congregational life? Would someone visiting your congregation conclude that this was your view from what they observed?

DISCUSSION 3

(Before the discussion: read chapters 6 and 7.)

1. See if you can come up with a one sentence definition of biblical 'training'.
2. How is this similar to but also different from how we normally think about 'training' in our world?
3. What is the place of the Bible in training?
4. Why is it important that a trainer has a close personal relationship with a trainee?
5. Come up with a list of dangers and benefits for using training programs and courses.

6. Training is about ‘people not programs’. What are some of the practical implications of this?

7. Have each person jot down the names of seven Christian people you know (friends, members of your small group, etc.). Do your own version of the ‘diagnostic tool’ on page 87 with respect to these people. How might you minister to or train some of these people to help them make progress in gospel growth?

Name	Outreach		Follow-up	Growth		Training	
	Raising issues	Gospel		Need help	Solid	General	Specific

Finding the right Matthias Media resource for the right person

Matthias Media’s publishing ministry is centred around providing resources that help you make progress in the gospel growth, and to help you to help other people do the same.

There are two ways to find the resource that might be just right (e.g. for using with the people you’ve listed above):

- 1**—Call or email our experienced Matthias Media customer service staff. They can quickly and easily provide you with advice and information.
- 2**—Browse our online store or our printed *Resource Guide*.

DISCUSSION 4

(Before the discussion: read chapters 8 and 9.)

1. Look at the three models of pastoral ministry described on pages 94-101. How would you describe the pastoral model at your church? Does it fit in one of these categories, or is it a mixture? Or something else entirely?
2. “Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient” (p. 102). Do you agree? Why or why not? What Scriptures would you use to support your position?
3. What could your church learn from the example of Richard Baxter (pp.104-107)?
4. Look back at the seven people you jotted down above (in Discussion 3). If you only had time to meet with two of them personally, which two would you choose and why?

5. Read 1 Cor 3:5-9; 16:15-18. What do we learn from these passages about the nature of team ministry?

6. To what extent does your congregation operate with a team of co-workers? What is going well in this regard? What could be improved?

7. What are the key things to look for in gathering a team of co-workers?

DISCUSSION 5

(Before the discussion: read chapters 10 and 11.)

1. If all Christians are called to serve Christ—if all are ‘vine-workers’—what is different about those who pastor or lead congregations?
2. In what sense are pastors or other full-time gospel workers ‘called’ into their role?
3. Read back over the bullet-point summary of the Bible’s teaching on ‘work’ on pages 137-138. How does it differ from the way you tend to think about work?
4. What do Christians in full-time or ‘recognized’ ministry and those in secular work have in common?

DISCUSSION 6

(Before the discussion: read **chapter 12** and **Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions**.)

1. Look back over the ten propositions in chapter 12 that summarize the argument of the book. Have each person choose one or two propositions that have been particularly helpful or challenging in your own context, and explain why.
2. If you were going to make a start in implementing 'Trellis and Vine' principles in your congregation or fellowship, what are the first three things you would do?
3. What would be the most difficult thing about making these changes in your situation?
4. Imagine your congregation went through the imaginary swine-flu situation described on pages 165-167. Which of your current structures and programs would you recommence when things got back to normal?

5. Get each member of the discussion group to choose one Frequently Asked Question that they found particularly relevant to their situation. Was the answer satisfactory? What would you add?

Matthias Media: your partner in vine work

Matthias Media's aim as a publisher is to provide the resources that help you do vine work: resources for outreach, follow-up, growth and training.

On pages 186 to 191 of *The Trellis and the Vine* you'll find a brief introduction to some of our resources. But there are many more resources designed to help you 'grow the gospel' where you are and to train others to do likewise.

For more information, visit the Matthias Media website at matthiasmedia.com or call our experienced staff who can advise you about the full range of our resources (see the website or page 2 of this *Discussion Guide* for contact details).

