

## 8 Measures of Personal Discipleship

In 2008, LifeWay Research commissioned a survey of more than 7,000 churches to discover the principles involved with healthy congregations. That research made up the framework for [Transformational Church](#), a book I coauthored with Thom Rainer.

In 2011, we conducted another study to focus not on the church, but on the **individual believer**. In this study, we asked more than 4,000 people about their spiritual lives and level of maturity. This was not a convenience sample drawn from participating churches, but a randomly selected sample to ensure an even higher level of research accuracy.

[The results](#) allowed us to identify **eight Biblical factors** that consistently show up in the life of a maturing believer. Those "attributes of discipleship" are:

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

Spiritual growth does not happen by accident, and since Jesus has called us to make disciples of all nations, we wanted to discover the common traits for those maturing in their faith. It goes without saying that such attributes do not make you a Christian but, rather, are an outgrowth of being a Christian. Furthermore, these are measurements of growth, but only God causes the growth.

Yet, God shapes congregations through the shaping of the individual members' lives. This shaping doesn't just happen; God grows us as we place ourselves in a position of obedience to receive that growth. This requires intentional awareness and leadership on the part of both leaders and church members.

Preparing your church to receive the growth God provides almost always involves knowing where your people are in their spiritual walk. To help pastors, churches and individuals measure their spiritual development, we used the survey data to develop the [Transformational Discipleship Assessment \(TDA\)](#). The assessment results in a report on spiritual maturity using the eight attributes of biblical discipleship. The TDA also provides helpful and practical suggestions for individuals to take the next steps in their spiritual development.



## Transformational Discipleship Assessment

I'll be releasing more information about the specific factors later in the fall. Due to the sheer volume of material, however, it will take several months to complete our analysis and release all of the materials.

Here is some more information from the [news release](#):

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, said the new assessment tool zooms in to the personal level. "The Transformational Discipleship Assessment helps people see how they are doing with those eight attributes. It answers, 'Are you growing? Are you consistently following Christ?'" McConnell explained. "It also helps leaders know where to focus sermons, Bible studies, events and other disciple-building activities."

McConnell said the research was conducted in three phases. First recognized discipleship experts were interviewed. Their input was used to revise a set of questions that have been effective in measuring dozens of specific biblical principles that may be reflected in a believers actions, attitudes or beliefs. Then 1,000 Protestant pastors in the United States were polled. In the final phase, more than 4,000 Protestants from both the U.S. and Canada were surveyed in three languages, English, Spanish and French.

**What have been some of the key ways in which your church has been effective in the discipleship of believers?**

Read more from Ed [here](#).