

# It's an Every Day Thing

Discipleship in a postmodern,  
individualistic society



# It's an Every Day Thing

By Andrew Paul

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This publication is the result of a class assignment for Dr. R. Bruce Carlton's Introduction to Evangelism at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Oklahoma. I greatly admire Dr. Carlton's "tell it like it is" lecture mentality and for his connection with God in constant prayer.

I would like to thank, especially, those people who I have considered great mentors over the years of my life thus far:

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Dr. Alan S. Bandy  
Dr. R. Scott Pace  
Rev. Butch Bradley

You have shown me through your example what discipleship was meant to be and what it was not: more than a program, but a lifelong commitment.

Check out these great titles, also by Andrew Paul:  
Six Feet Deep (fiction 2010)  
Rebellion (fiction 2011)  
Rules of Engagement (nonfiction 2012)



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# Introduction

Twenty-first century American Christianity is one of the most individualistic entities on the face of the planet. We attend meetings in the church house only to hear from God directly, on an individual level. We rely on Google results so that our questions about the faith might be answered. We dedicate our time to studying God's Holy Word on our own, hoping that we can come to a semi-coherent conclusion about its meaning and overall message without consulting those who have already done the study.

Have we forgotten that the body of Christ, of which we are members, is a community? Have we forgotten that we are not to forsake the assembly under Christ? How are we to be disciples if we only choose to learn on our own? How are we to make disciples if we choose not to even interact with the other members of Christ's Church?

I received an idea for this book as I thought about both the individualistic nature of the postmodern society we live in and our command in Matthew, chapter twenty-eight, to go and make disciples. I have heard my entire life that making disciples requires more than simply leading

someone to Christ. It is a lifelong investment. Sadly, though, I also realized that the commitment we, as Christians, make toward forming disciples is smothered by the individuality of the society we live in. That leaves us with one question, how can we truly make disciples in this strictly individualistic nation?

Though I had been considering this publication for quite some time, I did not feel God's impression on my heart to start working on it until I received an assignment from Dr. R. Bruce Carlton. The assignment given was to "develop a discipleship plan and curriculum for discipling followers of Christ". Dr. Carlton, as he briefly explained the assignment, stated teasingly, "You can either write me three pages, or write me a book. I don't care..." So, I naturally decided to take the later option, though I did not finish it in the time allotted for the assignment. While I respect the irony of the situation, I also respect the fact that I am writing to an audience much broader than Dr. Carlton. I can also ensure that I would not be doing so without God's impression on my heart to do so.

My hope is that all of those who read this publication will, not only be inspired to break away from the individuality of the society surrounding us and truly

invest in discipleship, but also to learn how to become a better disciple and a better teacher.

May God bless all those who read this book. Your faithfulness and support inspire me to continue pursuing God's call in my life. I only hope that one day I might be able to return that inspiration.



# Conversion vs. Transformation

An assumption that has been made by a vast majority within the Christian community is that making disciples is equivalent to making converts. It only requires of us a brief moment to make a convert before we leave them to learn and develop on their own. It takes a lifetime to make a disciple.

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## Conversion vs. Transformation

# What is Conversion?

Suppose you are attending a basketball game and are unequivocally disinterested in every aspect of the game. You sit courteously next to the friend who invited you while pretending to enjoy yourself. Suppose, now, that the game is nearing its end and the team your friend is cheering for is losing by two points, but is in possession of the ball. The crowd around you stands and, just so you don't feel even more out of place, you stand as well. After a series of passes, one of the team members in possession of the ball fakes a shot, takes a step, and then shoots what would be equivalent to a three point shot. Time seems to almost stand still as everyone around you throws up his or her hands. You find yourself unexplainably caught up in the moment, and before you know it your hands are also in the air. Everyone around you holds their breath as the ball bounces upward off the rim as the final buzzer rings. Anticipation grows as the ball begins its descent, and then begins to roll around the edge of the rim. You watch as the ball drops through the inside diameter of the basket scoring your friend's team the winning three points. The crowd around you goes wild, and you slow down enough to realize that you were just as caught up in the moment as everyone around you. Your heart was beating just as quickly

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and you anticipated victory. In all of this, you discover that basketball is not so bad of a game. In fact, you tell your friend that you would like to attend the next game, whenever it might be.

Conversion, in the aspect of religion, seems to be a much similar idea. It can be described as highly subjective and “most commonly understood to be a dramatic religious experience.”<sup>1</sup> Conversion, as it is more commonly understood, involves not only a dramatic religious experience, but also a dramatic, instantaneous change in one’s religious affiliation and life philosophy. Because these popular expectations exist, we also expect those we ‘witness to’ to have a dramatic encounter with God and to immediately decide that the Christian life is the life for them. One more result might be that we expect to have a deeply ‘spiritual’ experience each time we encounter God. The fact that conversion is subjective insists that religion, specifically Christianity, is centered on the idea of personal experience.

As Robert Ferm explores Schleiermacher’s rebuttal to Kant’s anti-experiential musings, he states,

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<sup>1</sup> Gillespie 1991, 3-4



## Conversion vs. Transformation

“A theology and a religious experience based upon content are far more vulnerable to attack than a religion that takes refuge in feeling. The universality of religious feeling provides a remarkable defense, and one can talk freely of experience. Talk of content, however, immediately begets criticism, and for fear of having religion destroyed because of its content, it is convenient to take refuge in a superrational type of mystical experience.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the concept that religious conversion relies on the subjective nature of one’s feelings is appealing because no one can truly argue against one’s personal experiences. While philosophers like Kant would disagree, those like Schleiermacher would promote the value of personal experience.<sup>3</sup>

The experiential aspect of conversion is what has become popular in twenty-first century American religious circles. Experience is what we yearn for because experience takes place on a subjective, individual level. The American ideal is itself subjective and individual, and therefore largely experience based. Why is it that we need the ostentatious religious services that tend to draw people in to see any numerical growth in God’s kingdom? Why is it that touching stories seem to impact people, at least apparently, more than

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<sup>2</sup> Ferm, 1959, 109

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

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