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## BOOK REVIEW

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Geiger, Eric, and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*, Nashville: B&H, 2016, 234 pp. \$22.99.

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The topic of leadership can befuddle Christians. Christians know leadership is important and that churches need good leaders, but pursuing a position of leadership seems contrary to much of what Jesus taught. For example, Jesus Christ said that if one wants to be great, he or she must be a servant (Matt. 20:26). In another interaction, Christ states that pursuing positions of prominence is self-promoting and that it is better to wait and be recognized by those who already have a prominent position than to attempt to improve one's own standing (Luke 14:8). But then the Apostle Paul writes what seems to be a contradiction when he says that aspiring to leadership is a noble pursuit (1 Tim. 3:1). So how does one appropriately

step into leadership?

In *Designed to Lead*, authors Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck provide a biblical exposition on leadership that is rooted in the foundational truth that mankind is made in the image of God and, consequently, is designed for leadership. Beginning with Adam and Eve and their God-given roles and responsibilities, the authors walk readers through both the Old and New Testament and demonstrate that every Christian is called to be a leader. Regardless of one's age, social status, or title, all Christians are called to lead wherever the Lord has placed them, and God's design for leadership development is discipleship.

The premise of the book is that the church is to be the locus of leadership development and that the plan for developing leaders is through intentional discipleship (3). The book begins with the conviction that every believer is a leader, addresses the impact that gospel-proclaiming Christians can have on culture, and concludes with the basic construct of discipleship for actual leadership development. The book also provides models for what discipleship ought to look like in the local church.

The authors insist that every Christian is a leader due to the fact that each is called to lead others to know and worship Jesus Christ (4). They push back against churches who exist to merely offer programs and services; rather, churches need to be centered around equipping and sending believers into whatever community the Lord has placed them with the understanding that they are designed and empowered to be influencers for the gospel as they "take hold of their destiny to advance the kingdom of God across the globe" (13). As the first man and woman were given leadership to steward God's creation and to fill the earth, this mission as God's representatives continues to this day (57). The primary purpose of the leadership mandate is to make known the glory of God by leading others to flourish in God's design (62), and "God-centered leadership is rightly employed when it aims to fill the whole earth with other renewed image bearers by spreading the gospel and multiplying children of God" through discipleship (64). Believers are God's vice-regents, His light to a dying world, and discipleship is the main method of replication (77).

*Designed to Lead* insists that if the church is to transform culture, it must first have a culture itself that is transformed. Spiritual leadership

requires Spirit-filled people, those whose character has been forged by the Lord and who are willing to take risks and make bold moves to advance the gospel (27). When a congregation embraces the vision and mission of God, write Geiger and Peck, there will be “a great swell of leaders desperate to be equipped for the task” of sharing the gospel and making disciples (118). According to the authors, discipleship is a pipeline where leaders are intent on replicating and replacing themselves, where they “develop and deploy” while aligning to a mutually shared conviction and vision (125).

The final portion of the book discusses strategies of discipleship for churches to establish constructs to communicate the vision, empower others, and multiply Christ-followers. The authors suggest that churches create short-term wins with an invitation to a few people to develop as leaders, and as leaders begin to be discipled, people in the church will take note and see that the church does more than just create programs and events (138). The key obstacle for churches is the willingness to move from a program-driven model to a people-driven paradigm. Emphasizing the importance of small groups, developing various levels of leadership with stated competencies within the local church, and having various teams of coaches and mentors to facilitate growth further will enable others to grow and aspire to various servant-leadership roles within the leadership pipeline. Geiger and Peck rightly point out that “Jesus still has no Plan B. Discipleship—developing believers who grow over a lifetime—is His method” (156). Discipleship is the only way to produce leaders that serve and bless the world (160).

*Designed to Lead* is a leadership book that every church leader should read, and the authors would insist that every Christian should also read it because the premise of the book is that all believers are designed by God to be leaders wherever the Lord has them. Geiger and Peck do a thorough job at expositing various texts of Scripture to build their case against the notions that leadership is a spiritual gift or that leaders are somehow naturally born.

As already noted, the premise of the book is solid and adequately proven. Where *Designed to Lead* is lacking is not in its philosophy of leadership but in its practical models for churches to emulate. Jesus commands all

believers to make disciples, but churches employ a variety of strategies, some of which are discipleship strategies and some of which are simply programs. Clearly, the authors are passionate about discipleship. The book inspires readers to disciple but does not adequately provide paradigms that are most effective. The authors write extensively on church culture, and their passion for the need to create culture is heartfelt. They even accurately note that culture and constructs must synergistically work together (152). What is missing in this book, however, are sufficient models or paradigms that serve as constructs. Some portions of the book make references to a few churches around the country that the authors believe excel at discipleship, but they are offered late in the book with the hope that readers might take additional time exploring those sites on their own. What would have been more effective is if Geiger and Peck had provided more details on those churches, included stories of life change, interviewed those leaders on the specifics of their plan, and then incorporated those concepts into their book. *Designed to Lead* builds a strong case for discipleship but falls short in helping church leaders implement the principles the book promotes.

The authors have extensive experience in developing Christian leaders within their own churches and around the country. Geiger and Peck are highly gifted, proven, and passionate about equipping others. In fact, *Designed to Lead* may be one of the best books on Christian leadership written to this point. A problem many readers might have, however, is assessing their own capacity to replicate in their churches what Geiger and Peck have done in their own. Pointing readers to churches that do discipleship well is helpful but not instructional. *Designed to Lead* would benefit from more details on how to implement a plan. For example, how does a pastor reorient his team to move from a program model to a relationship model? Geiger and Peck write that leadership development apart from discipleship becomes overly skill-based (160). This statement is true, so why not spend considerable time in the book on how to build a relationship-driven model? Also, in terms of discipleship, what will be the obstacles leaders will face? What types of people does a leader look for to train? How long might it take to process a core group of new leaders through the initial model and see those leaders reach the point of replication? What are the “core values” or content areas in such training?

What is the ratio of teaching to relationship-building? How does a pastor with a growing discipleship ministry establish a framework to monitor growth and ensure excellence? With multiple layers of leadership, what do those layers require? These types of questions arise within the mind of the reader but remain mostly unanswered. Perhaps this book is partially designed to light a spark within a church leader and then point him or her to other books (161, 181), and megachurch systems (186, 212). However, the authors could have supplied a more concrete process for implementation after presenting such a compelling vision.

The book ends with an extremely helpful appendix entitled “Jesus and Discipleship: Selections from the Gospels” (217-223). In this section, the authors walk readers through the gospels and show every passage where Jesus interacted with His disciples, but they classify those interactions as examples of Jesus passing along knowledge, involving His men in meaningful experiences, and finally coaching the disciples to use what they have learned in their own ministry. The closing section of the book offers an excellent foundation and resource for any pastor who desires to cast a vision for discipleship to his leadership team and congregation.

Overall, *Designed to Lead* is a tremendous book. The authors argue convincingly that all Christians are called to make a profound impact wherever God has them and that churches must take seriously the mandate to make disciples. The book is refreshing in its simplicity of insisting on a discipleship model rather than some gimmicky or strictly skills-focused model of leadership development. While Geiger and Peck could have provided more help on the process of implementing models, their emphasis on the need for discipleship is compelling. Readers are left wanting to know more and will be moved to explore a practical next step. And if that is the case, then *Designed to Lead* will serve the church well as Christians take up the charge to bring the transforming message of the gospel to a world that desperately needs to hear it.